



The Sea in the Hebrew Bible: Myth, Metaphor, and Muthos

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The Sea in the Hebrew Bible
Myth, Metaphor, and *Muthos*

A dissertation presented

by

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to

The Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

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Abstract

The dissertation recounts the variegated journey of the sea in the Hebrew Bible through the lens of myth, metaphor, and *muthos*. The journey begins outside the Bible in ancient Near Eastern sea myths exemplified by the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle* and the Mesopotamian *Enuma Elish*, which tell the story of a sea deity whose defeat in cosmic battle against a protagonist god precedes three goodly consequences: creation, kingship, and temple. The story continues with the analysis of the biblical presentation of creation, kingship, and temple with emphasis on the constellation of themes and characters of the sea myth. The dissertation next analyzes the use of the sea myth as a metaphor for three events on the plane of history: the exodus (Exodus 14–15), the Babylonian exile (Isaiah 40–55), and the eschaton (Isaiah 24–27 and Daniel 7). Finally, the discussion moves from the analysis of the ways in which the sea *muthos* functions as a metaphor for the biblical presentation of individual events to the examination of the role of the sea *muthos* as a metaphor for a biblical view of historical reality *in toto*. In sum, the dissertation extends the study of sea imagery in the Hebrew Bible from mythology to metaphorology and narratology to argue for the deep, enduring, and transformative place of the sea myth within biblical tradition.

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Abbreviations

<i>AJSL</i>	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature</i>
AnBib	Analecta biblica
AB	Anchor Bible
<i>ABD</i>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992.
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
<i>ANET</i>	<i>The Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> . Edited by J. B. Pritchard. 3d ed. Princeton, 1969.
ArBib	The Aramaic Bible
<i>AJSR</i>	<i>Association for Jewish Studies Review</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>BA</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
<i>BHS</i>	<i>Biblical Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> . Edited by K. Elliger and W. Rudolph. Stuttgart, 1983.
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca sacra</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
ConBOT	Coniectanea biblica: Old Testament Series
<i>DDD</i>	<i>Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible</i> . 2 nd ed. Edited by K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, and P. W. van der Horst. Leiden, 1999.
EEC	Eerdmans Critical Commentary
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses</i>
<i>ErIsr</i>	<i>Eretz-Israel</i>
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HAR</i>	<i>Hebrew Annual Review</i>
<i>HeyJ</i>	<i>Heythrop Journal</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSupp	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>Numen</i>	<i>Numen: International Review for the History of Religions</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library

OLP	Orientalia lovaniensia periodica
<i>QR</i>	<i>Quarterly Review</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLAIL	Society of Biblical Literature Ancient Israel and Its Literature
SBLABS	Society of Biblical Literature Archaeology and Biblical Studies
SBSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBLWAW	Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World
SAOC	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilizations
SBA	Studies in Biblical Archaeology
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
TB	Theologische Bücherei: Neudrucke und Berichte aus dem 20. Jahrhundert
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSupp	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZS</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Semitistik und verwandte Gebiete</i>
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare

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*to
my parents*

조친희
박순자

Part I. Introduction

Chapter 1. Introduction to the Topic and Theory

I. The Sea in the Hebrew Bible

The dissertation arises from a number of observations about the sea imagery in the Hebrew Bible and the questions that stem from them. By way of introduction, I organize the observations and questions into four clusters in rough analogy to the four Aristotelian causes that gave shape to what follows.

A. Material Cause

Sea imagery, in manifold variety, is prevalent in number and in importance throughout the Hebrew Bible as a vehicle for religious thought and for interpreting and writing history. To start with, a perusal of the Book of Psalms provides ample evidence of the diversity, abundance, and importance of the sea imagery to Israel's religious thought, an observation that holds true for the entire Hebrew Bible:¹

¹⁶ And the channels of the sea² were revealed,
And the foundations of the world uncovered,
At your rebuke, YHWH,
At the blast of the breath of your nostrils. (Ps 18:16)

¹ Unless otherwise noted, translations of the Hebrew Bible are the author's.

² Reading יָם with a number of manuscripts and 2 Sam 22:16 for MT מַיִם. See *BHS* apparatus ad loc.

⁶ For this let all the faithful pray to you at a time of distress³
that the flood waters shall not reach them. (Ps 32:6)

⁵ A river whose streams make glad the City of God,
The holy habitation of the Most High. (Ps 46:5)

⁸ The one who stills the roar of the seas,
The roar of their waves,
And the tumult of the peoples. (Ps 65:8)

⁶ He turned the sea into dry ground;
They crossed the river on foot;
There, we rejoiced in him. (Ps 66:6)

¹³ You split Sea with your might;
You shattered the heads of Dragon⁴ upon the waters.
¹⁴ You crushed the heads of Leviathan;
You gave him as food to the people of the wilderness. (Ps 74:13–14)

¹⁰ You rule the raging of the sea;
When its waves rise, you still them.

²⁶ I will set his hand upon the sea,
His right hand upon the rivers. (Ps 89:10, 26)

⁵ His is the sea, for he made it. (Ps 95:5a)

²³ Those who go down to the sea in ships,
Doing business on the mighty waters. (Ps 107:23)

³ The sea looked and fled,
The Jordan turned back. (Ps 114:3)

⁴ Praise him, you highest of heavens
And the waters above the heavens! (Ps 148:4)

³ Reading מצור for MT רק מצא.

⁴ Reading תנין for MT תנינים.

As is evident, the Psalms contain a rich panoply of sea imagery. The sea is beneath the earth and above the heavens. It flees from God and is commanded to praise him. The faithful pray that the flood waters will not reach them, and sailors go down to the sea in search of work. God rules over the sea and sets David's hand over the sea. The roar of the sea is like the tumult of the peoples, and the sea is a many-headed monster.

The diversity of the sea imagery in the Psalms, the frequency of its appearance, and the weighty themes with which the sea is related are all evidence of the importance of the sea to Israel's religious thought life. The sea deeply informed the poetic language of the Psalms, facilitating expression, enabling thought, and nurturing the imagination on a variety of themes: anthropology, cosmography, creation, exile, exodus, international politics, kingship, temple, and more.

The prevalence of the sea imagery is not limited to the Psalms but can be seen throughout the Hebrew Bible. Of particular interest for the dissertation is the observation that the sea imagery is associated with several key events on the plane of history. The sea, first of all, is there in the beginning when God starts creating the heavens and the earth:

² And the earth was formless and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved⁵ upon the face of the waters. (Gen 1:2)

The "deep" and the "waters" likely refer to the primordial sea, as we will discuss below.

The cosmic, chaos sea is also there in Daniel's vision of the eschaton:

⁵ For a recent discussion of the difficult word *ḥḥr*, see JoAnn Scurlock, "Searching for Meaning in Genesis 1:2: Purposeful Creation out of Chaos *without Kampf*," in *Creation and Chaos: A Reconsideration of Hermann Gunkel's Chaokampf Hypothesis* (Eds. JoAnn Scurlock and Richard H. Beal; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013) 48–62. In analogy to Ugaritic *ḥḥp*, Akkadian *ḥiātu*, and Syriac *reḥep*, she translates the Hebrew word "to survey."

^{2b} Behold, the four winds of heaven agitated the great sea. ³ And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. (Dan 7:2b–3)

In this way, sea imagery brackets the biblical vision of time at the beginning and the end. Furthermore, the sea also appears numerous times, in a variety of guises, in between the beginning and the end. To name those occurrences we will have occasion to examine in greater detail below, there are the Noahide flood (Genesis 6–9), the Sea Event that concludes the exodus narrative (Exodus 14–15), the Jordan crossing (Joshua 3–4), and conceptualizations of exile and return (Isaiah 40–55; Psalm 74; Daniel 9). The sea is not everywhere in the Hebrew Bible, but it is there at many critical junctures in biblical history, punctuating it, and unifies the disparate moments of crisis and redemption.

In sum, the Hebrew Bible and its motley collection of writings provide ample evidence that the sea was an important figure for Israelite religious imagination and for biblical historiography. In the Psalms alone, we find the sea in connection to a variety of themes, many of which we will examine in the following chapters. And the sea imagery meaningfully studs biblical historiography from the creation to the eschaton. These abundant data concerning the sea are the stuff of the dissertation, its material cause.

B. Formal Cause

Given the abundance of the data, it is not possible to examine all the texts that deal with the sea. It is necessary, therefore, to identify and implement a methodological filter that can identify a meaningful subset of the sea imagery for examination.

Hermann Gunkel published the first major comparative study of the sea imagery in the Hebrew Bible in 1895, the now classic, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit*, in which he argued that the mythological imagery found in Genesis 1 (and Revelation 12) has its ultimate source in the Babylonian creation epic, *Enuma Elish*.⁶ He argued that the Priestly authors of Genesis 1 employed the Babylonian myth concerning Marduk's battle and victory over Tiamat, the sea goddess of chaos, in order to portray creation. "Genesis 1 is not a free construction of the author," Gunkel wrote, but is dependent on the Babylonian creation myth.⁷

The discovery of the ancient city of Ugarit and its literary troves at modern Ras Shamra in 1929 led to a revision of Gunkel's traditio-historical hypothesis within biblical studies. Scholars began to argue that the West Semitic world, now better known thanks to the discovery of Ugarit, is the more proximate and likely source for much of the biblical traditions concerning God's battle with the sea and sea monsters than the East Semitic world of Mesopotamia.⁸ For example, scholars noted that there are clear parallels that range from the thematic to the lexical between the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle* and the Hebrew Bible. These parallels, especially the lexical parallels, place common

⁶ Hermann Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen 1 und Ap Joh 12* (mit Beiträgen von Heinrich Zimmer; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1985). English translation of the 1921 2nd ed., *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton: A Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12* (trans. K. William Whitney, Jr.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006). For recent discussions of Gunkel's seminal thesis, see JoAnn Scurlock and Richard H. Beal, eds., *Creation and Chaos: A Reconsideration of Hermann Gunkel's Chaokampf Hypothesis* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013).

⁷ Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos*, 5–12, 78–111.

⁸ See John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

heritage beyond doubt.⁹ The biblical sea tradition stands in close continuity with a broader West Semitic tradition.

At the present juncture in the history of scholarship, most critical scholars acknowledge that both the East and West Semitic sea myth traditions influenced the biblical sea traditions. Both Mesopotamian and Ugaritic literatures have yielded a wealth of comparative data that illuminates the rich mythic and symbolic world behind the often fragmentary reflections found in the Hebrew Bible. In this dissertation, we build on this past comparative work and attempt to clarify the development of the sea tradition internal to the Hebrew Bible. That is, we will assume the comparative data and focus on the ways in which the biblical writers preserved, rejected, and transformed the sea tradition.

It will be helpful at this point to introduce the key formal concept that we will use in the dissertation. We can identify a common pattern, what I call the sea myth pattern, in *Enuma Elish* and the *Baal Cycle*: A storm deity defeats a sea deity to establish the cosmos, his kingship, and his temple.¹⁰ Marduk or Baal is the storm deity in

⁹ See Loren R. Fisher, ed., *Ras Shamra Parallels: The Texts from Ugarit and the Hebrew Bible* (Vol. I; Analecta Orientalia 49; Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1972).

¹⁰ Wendy Doniger (*The Implied Spider: Politics and Theology* [American Lectures on the History of Religion 16; New York: Columbia University Press, 1998] 88), the renowned Indologist and comparativist, calls such patterns a “micromyth,” which she defines as “the neutral structure... the nonexistent story with no point of view... It is an imaginary text, a scholarly construct that contains the basic elements from which all possible variants could be created, a theoretical construct that will enable us to look at all variants at once and ask questions of all of them simultaneously... the micromyth is not merely a scaffolding on which each culture erects its own myth; it is more like a trampoline that allows each culture to fly far away to its own specific cultural meanings, leaping to make wildly different variants instead of remaining stuck to a limiting, constraining structure (a description often used for archetypes).” Doniger’s structuralist concept of the micromyth makes it possible to compare variations of a myth across cultures and is adopted here (ibid., 91). Specifically, the concept helps us to do two things. First, it helps us to recognize that the sea myth is comprised of a limited number of core thematic elements,

Mesopotamian and Ugaritic myths, respectively, and the sea deity is Tiamat or Yamam. The cosmic battle between the two opposing forces, with the storm god invariably defeating the sea god, leads to three goodly consequences: creation, kingship, and temple.¹¹ This matrix of themes (divine combat, creation, kingship, and temple) can also be found throughout the Hebrew Bible in varying degrees of completeness and exactitude. Importantly, however, the thematic matrix is not found in its mythic completeness *and* exactitude in the Hebrew Bible. That is to say, the Hebrew Bible contains no continuous narrative in which YHWH defeats a sea god and subsequently establishes the cosmos, his kingship, and his temple. Either some element of the pattern is seriously transformed – for example, the battle with the sea god is transformed into a battle against a historical enemy at the sea in the Sea Event (Exodus 14–15); or, only a fragment of the entire

to identify the individual elements, and to analyze them individually as they are fragmented and transformed within the biblical traditions. Second, it also helps us to analyze, not only the difference between Ugaritic sea myths and biblical reflections of the myth, but also the difference among the various appropriations of the sea myth within the biblical tradition. If we take the “sea myth pattern” as the “trampoline,” we will see how different biblical traditions from diverse historical and cultural situations have used the sea myth to create “its own specific cultural meanings.” We will discover family resemblances among the biblical works, but we will also find significant differences.

¹¹ Debate continues whether Baal’s victory over Yamam can be said to result in creation. For arguments for the non-existence of a connection between Baal and creation, see Dennis McCarthy, “‘Creation’ Motifs in Ancient Hebrew Poetry,” *CBQ* 29 (1976) 393–406; H.W.F. Saggs, *The Encounter with the Divine in Mesopotamia and Israel* (London: Athlone, 1978); David Toshio Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction: A Reappraisal of the Chaoskampf Theory in the Old Testament* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005); and Rebecca S. Watson, *Chaos Uncreated: A Reassessment of the Theme of “Chaos” in the Hebrew Bible* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005). For the opposing view, see Loren R. Fisher, “Creation at Ugarit and in the Old Testament,” *VT* 15 (1965) 313–24; Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos*; Day, *God’s Conflict*; Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988); and Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1970) 82–85.

pattern is represented in a continuous passage. As I discuss in greater detail below, in the Hebrew Bible, the sea myth pattern is fragmented into its component elements, transformed from its original mythic form, or often both fragmented and transformed.

In sum, the sea myth pattern – which is a heuristic construct, neither a root myth nor an archetype, but a matrix of themes that various and individuated sea myths share – can help us identify a meaningful subset of texts from among the fuller set of biblical texts that contain sea imagery. At the same time, the sea myth pattern effectively lays out the route the analysis should take, from conflict and combat to the trio of goodly consequences: creation, kingship, and temple. However, even with this delimiting, more than we can digest remains. Thus, what we will in fact analyze will be a representative subset of the delimited texts, selected with the efficient and final causes in mind.

C. Efficient Cause

The attentive reader will notice that the dissertation is not organized according to the sea myth pattern at the macro level – though much of the detailed textual analysis is. This is because the chapters are organized in response to a question about the dynamics of change, about how the sea imagery in the Hebrew Bible has changed with regard to the sea myth pattern.

The observation that a significant subset of the biblical sea imagery is related to the sea myth pattern gives rise to a set of questions: How does the sea tradition of the Hebrew Bible relate to the Canaanite and Mesopotamian sea myths and the sea myth pattern? Do they uncritically reflect a common mythic heritage, consciously adopt or

adapt the myth? And furthermore, how does the sea figure change within the biblical tradition? As we will see in greater detail below, diversity characterizes the relationship of the biblical sea tradition to the Semitic sea myths and the sea myth pattern. Some occurrences of the sea imagery in the Hebrew Bible reflect, with no sense of irony or unease, the mythic narrative that Israel likely held in common with her neighbors. Other occurrences are the result of traditio-historical processes, shorter and longer, more and less drastic, and preserve characteristic elements of the sea myth pattern but also transform them in light of the particular theological and historical needs and commitments of the author and his community.

There are a number of ways in which one might organize the diverse sea texts in order to facilitate the analysis of the different developmental trajectories of the sea imagery, the sea myth pattern, and the related themes within the Hebrew Bible.¹² The present dissertation divides the texts into two, apart from those that deal with the spatial sea (dealt with in chapter 2). First, after briefly reviewing the *Baal Cycle* and the *Enuma Elish* (chapter 3), we will deal with those texts whose relationship to the sea myth pattern is primarily thematic and use the sea myth to articulate or develop a theme (e.g., creation, kingship, and temple) (chapter 4). Second, we will deal with those biblical texts whose relationship to the sea myth is structural or narrative and use the plot of the sea myth as a metaphor for shaping or representing a temporal event (combat with the sea leads to goodly consequences) (chapters 5, 6, and 7). The analysis of the sea *muthos* (chapter 8)

¹² For example, Day (*God's Conflict*, v–viii) organizes the sea texts under four categories: “creation and the divine conflict with the dragon and the sea,” “the alleged naturalization of Leviathan and Behemoth,” “the historicization of the divine conflict with the dragon and the sea and the origin of the ‘conflict with the nations’ motif,” and “the eschatologization of the divine conflict with the dragon and the sea.”

technically falls under the latter but deserves, as we will see, special attention. In that chapter, we will examine the relationship between the sea *muthos* and the structure of the underlying narrative of the entire Hebrew Bible. Grouping the data in this way allows for analyzing the changes the sea and related imagery undergoes within the biblical tradition at two levels. We acknowledge that the traditio-historical processes governing the thematic and structural developments are not totally separable in fact or in practice, for they are co-dependent processes. Changing a thematic relationship within a larger pattern in effect changes the structure, and structural changes affect the constitutive themes. However, as I hope will become clear, there is an appreciable difference, one that bears close analysis, between the use of the sea imagery in order to illustrate, illumine, deepen, or develop a thematic concept and the use of the sea myth pattern in order to represent an event.

In sum, the organization of the dissertation attempts to facilitate the analysis of the types of traditio-historical changes the sea imagery, the sea myth pattern, and the related themes have undergone within the biblical traditions. The analysis is selective, but hopefully representative, and elliptical, but hopefully suggestive of a fuller account.

D. Final Cause

Fourth and finally, the goal of the dissertation is to formulate an analytical framework that addresses the above questions and observations, a framework that can help us to categorize a representative subset of sea imagery related to the sea myth pattern in the Hebrew Bible and, at the same time, analyze the growth process of the sea

imagery from mythology toward historiography, from metaphor toward *muthos*. In the process, the dissertation of necessity examines the sea as a feature of geography and the themes closely related to the sea in the sea myth pattern. But the goal remains to identify, trace, and explain the development of the sea myth pattern from myth to *muthos* by way of metaphor.

II. Myth, Metaphor, and *Muthos*

I would like to state at the outset that, since the goal of the dissertation is not a discourse on metaphor, I do not review the vast literature on metaphor.¹³ Rather, what I present here is a working definition of metaphor that is of adequate sophistication to serve as the umbrella concept for myth and *muthos* and flexible enough to allow for fine-tuning along the way.

A. Metaphor

The basic syntactical structure of metaphor – in which is hidden the semiotic and, as we will see, the semantic logic of all metaphors – is “A is B.” We can identify two topics for analysis within this basic syntactical structure. First, there are the metaphorical participants, “A” and “B.” What kind of things can be brought into a metaphorical

¹³ A concise and charitable review of the representative theories of metaphor, with helpful critical remarks, can be found in Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr., “When Is Metaphor? The Idea of Understanding in Theories of Metaphor,” *Poetics Today* 13 (1992) 575–606.

relationship? Second, there is the metaphorical copula “to be.” How does the metaphorical copula relate A and B?

Paul Ricoeur wrote that Aristotle “defined metaphor for the entire subsequent history of Western thought.”¹⁴ Umberto Eco went further: “of the thousands and thousands of pages written about metaphor, few add anything of substance to the first two or three fundamental concepts stated by Aristotle.”¹⁵ In contrast, there are those who, with reason, object to and fault Aristotle for tying metaphor to words and for characterizing the metaphorical function as the act of substituting an improper word for a proper word. According to this negative reading, Aristotelian metaphors are ornamental variations or catachreses, at best. I say “with reason” because Aristotle discussed metaphor in the *Poetics* as a species of the genus noun and wrote that “metaphor is the transference of the name of a thing to something else.”¹⁶ Metaphors are misused words. However, if we trust Ricoeur’s brilliant reading of Aristotle, Aristotle was prescient in writing about both the metaphorical participants and the metaphorical copula, about the things that can be related with each other metaphorically and about how that relationship functions, and anticipated some of the rich insights about metaphor in modern metaphor

¹⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary studies of the creation of meaning in language* (trans. Robert Czerny; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977) 3.

¹⁵ Umberto Eco, “The Scandal of Metaphor: Metaphorology and Semiotics,” *Poetics Today* 4 (1983) 216–55, here 217–18. John T. Kirby (“Aristotle on Metaphor,” *American Journal of Philology* 118 [1997] 517–54, here 520) agrees.

¹⁶ All translations of Aristotle’s *Poetics* are from Gerald F. Else’s translation, *Poetics* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1970) here 57. I have at times modified Else’s translation, with reference to the Greek text from S. H. Butcher, *Aristotle’s Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, with a Critical Text and Translation of the Poetics. With a Prefatory Essay, Aristotelian Literary Criticism, by John Gassner* (4th ed.; place not given: Dover, 1951).

scholarship. The key to Ricoeur's generous and perceptive reading of Aristotle on metaphor is to read the philosopher's explicit statements about metaphor within the larger context of the *Rhetoric* and especially of the *Poetics*.

Allow me to cite Aristotle's famous definition of metaphor from the *Poetics* in full:

Metaphor is the transference (ἐπιφορά) of the name (ὄνοματος) of a thing to something else, working either (a) from genus to species, or (b) from species to genus, or (c) from species to species, or (d) by proportion (ἀνάλογος).¹⁷

This concise definition identifies the metaphorical participants as nouns (ὄνοματος).

That is, metaphor is one element among other types of nouns, where nouns are themselves one element of *lexis* – which may be translated as “diction,” “speech,” “style,” or even as “language” – and *lexis* a component of tragic poetry.¹⁸ What distinguishes metaphor from other nouns has to do with how the metaphorical copula functions. The metaphorical copula transfers or transposes meaning from one word to another. As we will discuss below, what it means to transpose the meaning of one word to another is not obvious – it is itself a metaphor – and certainly cannot be reduced to a theory of substitution. But let us first discuss Aristotle's understanding of the metaphorical participants.

To begin in reverse and proceed from the general to the specific, Aristotle writes that tragedy, the poetic work with which the *Poetics* is primarily concerned, is made up

¹⁷ Ibid., 57.

¹⁸ Ricoeur (*Metaphor*, 13 and 325 n. 13.) notes the difficulty of translating *lexis* and writes that “the word has to do with the whole field of language-expression.”

of six parts: “plot (μῦθος), character, verbal expression (λέξις), thought, visual adornment, and song-composition.”¹⁹ He goes on to write that, among the six parts, “the greatest of these elements is the structuring of the incidents.”²⁰ “[T]he structure of events, the plot (μῦθος), is the goal of tragedy, and the goal is the greatest thing of all... So plot (μῦθος) is the basic principle, the heart and soul, as it were, of tragedy.”²¹ In contrast, Aristotle says that *lexis*, of which the noun and so metaphor are an element, is fourth in importance: “Fourth is the verbal expression (λέξις) of the speeches.”²² At the same time, he assigns to *lexis* a crucial role within tragedy, “I mean by this the same thing that was said earlier, that the ‘verbal expression’ (λέξις) is the conveyance of the thought through language (ὀνομασίας ἐρμηνείαν).”²³ *Lexis*, according to Aristotle, conveys or, perhaps better, translates extra-linguistic elements of tragedy, such as thought, into language. It gives expression to what, in itself, is not expressive.

What does this mean? Ricoeur sees in the role of *lexis* as that element of tragedy that performs “conveyance through language” or, as he puts it, “language-istic interpretation” (l’interprétation langagière, ὀνομασίας ἐρμηνείαν) a crucial link between *lexis* and *muthos*.²⁴ If the *muthos* is the “heart and soul” of tragedy, the internal ordering of events, as Aristotle put it, it might be said that *lexis* is the “body” or “flesh” of tragedy,

¹⁹ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 26–27.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 27.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 27, 28.

²² *Ibid.*, 29.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Ricoeur, *Metaphor*, 36.

the thing that makes tragedy exist palpably in language by translating thoughts, characters, and importantly plot – elements of tragedy that are extra-linguistic – into language and makes them appear concretely in language. Ricoeur writes,

we see the function of *lexis* taking shape as that which exteriorizes and makes explicit the internal order of *muthos*. We might even say that there is a relationship between the *muthos* of tragedy and its *lexis* like that between interior and exterior form.²⁵

Again, “*lexis*... exteriorizes and makes explicit the internal order of *muthos*.” It follows, therefore, that if words can be metaphorical, so too can *muthos*, thoughts, characters – anything that *lexis* exteriorizes. If tragedy is the enactment of the *muthos*, that *muthos* acted out by characters, the characters motivated by thought, and thought expressed by *lexis*, it is *lexis* that exteriorizes thought, character, action, *muthos*, and ultimately tragedy itself. “This, then, is how, within the tragic poem, *lexis* (of which metaphor is one part) is bonded to *muthos* and becomes, in turn, ‘one part’ of tragedy.”²⁶ The converse is also true. This is also how, within the tragic poem, *muthos*, to which *lexis* (so also metaphor) is bonded, becomes, in turn, metaphorical.

²⁵ Ricoeur, *Metaphor*, 37. Benjamin Harshav also articulates a similar insight about the relationship between *muthos* and *lexis*, between fictional constructs and language. He (“Fictionality and Fields of Reference: Remarks on a Theoretical Framework,” *Poetics Today* 5 [1984] 227–51, here 227) writes: “language in literature can be understood only as imbedded in fictional constructs... On the other hand, the fictional constructs in literary texts are mediated through language alone. This is one basic inherent circularity of works of literary art.” What Harshav means by “fictional construct” is not the same as Aristotle’s plot, more like the world of a literary work. But the relationship between language and the literary work is the same. Language is what exteriorizes, makes present, the internal world of literary works.

²⁶ Ricoeur, *Metaphor*, 37.

In sum, according to Ricoeur's reading of Aristotle, words and *muthos* are metaphorical. Ricoeur goes on to show that words, *muthos*, and everything in between can in fact be metaphorical. Indeed, modern studies of metaphor, which blossomed in the 1970's and have since spread into a wide range of academic fields, have filled out Aristotle's skeletal framework between *lexis* and *muthos* with a veritable bouquet of metaphorical participants. We need not survey this growing body of work or the many distinct theories about metaphor. Rather, a brief discussion of the poetics of Benjamin Harshav, the founding dean of the Tel Aviv School of literary criticism, can provide for us a sufficiently flexible definition of metaphorical participants.²⁷

The fundamental building block of Harshav's poetics and his theory of metaphor, what Harshav calls "the basic unit of semantic integration," is the "frame of reference."²⁸ The concept of "frames of reference" is highly flexible and is "anything we can talk about, no matter whether and how it exists."²⁹ That is, a "frame of reference" is anything that, in a discourse, we can refer to, whether it exists in the "real" world or in the "world" of literary (or any other kind of) art. The minimum requirement for something to be considered a frame of reference, therefore, is quite low, and it is that it be "any continuum of two or more referents."³⁰ Here are some examples Harshav gives: "an

²⁷ Alan Mintz, "On the Tel Aviv School of Poetics," *Prooftexts* 4 (1984) 215–35.

²⁸ Benjamin Hrushovski (Harshav), "Poetic Metaphor and Frames of Reference: With Examples from Eliot, Rilke, Mayakovski, Mandelshtam, Pound, Creeley, Amichai, and the New York Times," *Poetics Today* 5 (1984) 5–43, here 12.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

object, a scene, a situation, a person, a state of affairs, a mental state, a history, a theory... a pillow, a house, a city, a philosophy, a love story, the state of the economy, the haze in autumn trees,” anything that may exist “in the ‘real’ world or in the ‘world’ of a poem or a novel.”³¹ As you can see, a frame of reference may be spatial or temporal, small or large, punctual or durative, existing or fictional, concrete or abstract, so long as it is something we can talk about, something we can refer to.

Returning to the topic of metaphor, Harshav writes that “any metaphor, whether presented formally as such or not, requires a metaphorical *transfer* from one [frame of reference] to another.”³² We will return to the issue of what Harshav means by “transfer,” a term that appears to be related to Aristotle’s notion of “transference” (ἐπιφορά). What is important for now is that metaphor, according to Harshav, involves two (or more) frames of reference. Frames of reference are the metaphorical participants.

This way of defining metaphor may seem to distance Harshav’s theory of metaphor from Aristotle’s noun-centric definition, but they are in fact very much compatible. First of all, Aristotle’s fourth type of metaphor, transference by proportion, “requires a *transfer* from one frame of reference to another.” Consider the example Aristotle gives: “as old age is to life, so evening is to day; then he may call evening the old age of the day, or... old age the evening of life or the sunset of life.”³³ This metaphor brings together the diurnal frame of reference in which evening, as opposed to morning, marks the end of day and the frame of reference of biological life. Proportional or

³¹ Ibid., 12, 13.

³² Harshav, “Metaphor,” 17, emphasis original.

³³ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 57.

analogical metaphors easily fit Harshav's definition of metaphor as the transference of meaning between two frames of reference.

Aristotle's first three types of metaphors are also analyzable using Harshav's theory. As Umberto Eco demonstrates, the language of genus and species implies a network of vertical and horizontal relationships that can be represented using Porphyry's tree.³⁴ Each horizontal level in Porphyry's tree may be understood as a frame of reference and so the transfer between genus and species as involving two frames of reference. For example, to say "ten thousand" for "many," as in "Verily, ten thousand good things hath Odysseus wrought," is to transfer the name of a species for a genus.³⁵ And the species "ten thousand" belongs to a frame of reference comprised of other large numbers (e.g., one hundred, million, etc.), and the genus "many" belongs to a frame of reference of the genus of quantity (e.g., few, adequate, etc.). Even the simplest form of metaphor involves a metaphorical transfer from one frame of reference to another.

Harshav's theory of metaphor can also accommodate Aristotle's metaphorical *muthos*. Harshav does not explicitly speak of *muthos* and the relationship between the concept of frames of reference and *muthos*. However, a comparable concept might be found in the concept of the "Field of Reference," which Harshav defines as "a hypothetical continuum of frames of reference."³⁶ Furthermore, if this continuum of

³⁴ See, "Scandal of Metaphor," 221–26. Eco (ibid., 222) defines a "perfect" Porphyry's tree as being "constituted by an embedding of genus within species, or in lexical terms, by a hierarchy of hyperonyms and hyponyms."

³⁵ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 57.

³⁶ Benjamin Hrushovski, "The Structure of Semiotic Objects: A Three-Dimensional Model," *Poetics Today* 1 (1979) 363–76, here 372.

frames of reference is internal to a literary work, it is called an “Internal Field of Reference.” Harshav refers to the Internal Field of Reference as the “fictional world” of the novel or any poetic work.³⁷ Scenes, characters, settings, etc., all of which may be regarded as individual frames of reference, together form the Internal Frame of Reference of a literary work. Harshav writes, “A work of literature is different from other texts in one respect: it creates an (at least one) Internal Field of Reference.”³⁸ Note the potential for a work of literature to have multiple Internal Fields of Reference.

The Aristotelian concept of *muthos* is not synonymous with Harshav’s concept of the Internal Field of Reference of a literary work. However, they are comparable. Just as the *muthos* contains and unifies all the other elements of a tragic poem: the characters, their actions and words, the setting, etc., so too is the Internal Field of Reference the sum of the frames of reference internal to a work of literature: the setting, the characters, the events, etc. The differences between the two concepts arise, in part, from the fact that Aristotle and Harshav are interested in different types of literary work, Aristotle mainly in the tragic (and the epic) poem and Harshav in all works of literature. It makes sense, therefore, that Harshav’s theory is more general than Aristotle’s and can accommodate the latter’s concept of the *muthos*. The decisive difference between *muthos* and the Field of Reference is that a *muthos* has a temporal, dynamic dimension as is required for representing dramatic actions and events in sequence, whereas an Internal Field of Reference of, say, a surrealist poem need not have a temporal aspect. However, the Internal Field of Reference of a tragic poem of the kind Aristotle analyzes would have a

³⁷ Ibid., 373.

³⁸ Ibid.

temporal component. In sum, it might be said that *muthos* is to tragic poetry what the Internal Field of Reference is to all literary texts, the composite fictional world of a literary work, the orderly sum of the scenes, characters, actions, speeches, thoughts, etc.³⁹

The benefit of translating Aristotle's bipolar theory of metaphor, which talks only of the word or maximally of the *muthos* as metaphorical, into Harshav's poetics is that, now, we can more easily speak about words, characters, plots – frames of reference of all sizes and shapes – as metaphorical. Aristotle was right to locate metaphor in the word, since metaphorical transferences between frames of reference occur by means of words.⁴⁰ But Harshav's frame of reference, with its minimum requirement of two continuous referents but expandable to include an entire literary work, allows us to see more clearly that metaphor is a phenomenon that pertains to all aspects of language, not just to words and *muthos*.

Before moving on to the metaphorical copula, I would like to underline the fact that, for Harshav, a frame of reference is anything that exists “in the ‘real’ world or in the ‘world’ of a poem or a novel.” Consider W. H. Auden's poem, “Macao,” an example Harshav discusses:

A weed from Catholic Europe, it took root
Between the yellow mountain and the sea,
And bore these gay stone houses like a fruit,
And grew on China imperceptibly.⁴¹

³⁹ Ricoeur (*Metaphor*, 245) arrives at a similar conclusion and likens the *muthos* of tragic poetry to the mood of a lyric poem.

⁴⁰ See Ricoeur, *Metaphor*, 101–33.

⁴¹ Harshav, “Metaphor,” 7.

The subject of the poem is the Catholic city of Macao. That is to say, the actual city of Macao is one of the frames of reference of the poem. We can identify the language that belongs to this frame of reference in the poem: “A... Catholic Europe, it took root / Between the yellow mountain and the sea, and bore these gay stone houses... / and grew on China imperceptibly.” Note that the words of the poem far from fully describe Macao. Rather, the words have been carefully chosen, no doubt to correspond to the second frame of reference (weed, on which below), in order to highlight the most salient aspects of Macao. We should also note that the Macao of Auden’s poem refers to and must be contextualized by both the actual Macao of Auden’s time and by the mental image, accurate or false, that Auden’s readers are likely to have had of Macao. In sum, the *lexis* of the poem refers to a frame of reference that exists in reality outside the text and makes present in the text an image of Macao that is already shaped by the choice of language.

The other frame of reference, as noted above, is a weed. We can likewise identify the *lexis* that pertains to this second frame: “A weed... took root / Between the yellow mountain and the sea, / And bore... a fruit/ And grew... imperceptibly.”⁴² First, note the overlap between the language that belongs to the Macao frame and the weed frame. We can clearly see that they have been fused into one identity so that to talk about Macao is to talk about a weed: Macao is a weed. Second, note also that there is not an actual weed to which the poem refers. There are real weeds, but the weed of the poem is a figure that exists only in the poem. If the weed of the poem exists in the world, it is a creation of the poem and exists as Macao, which is (and is not) a weed.

⁴² Ibid., 8.

We can see from this example that, since frames of reference can exist in the “real” world and in the “fictive” world of a literary work, a metaphorical relationship can be established between text and world. An entire work of literature or any meaningful part of it can be metaphorically related to the world outside the text. Thus, the important question becomes, how does a metaphorical text relate to the world? When the eschatological prophet of the Isaiah Apocalypse writes, “On that day YHWH will punish... Leviathan,” he is speaking neither literally about the sea monster Leviathan nor symbolically about Babylon (Isa 27:1). He is speaking metaphorically. But what does it mean to “speak metaphorically”? How does the metaphorical copula “to be” work?

A fundamental aspect of the metaphorical copula “to be” is that, to put it bluntly, anyone who employs a metaphor and states that A is B is lying. Metaphors arise from “equating the unequal,” as Friedrich Nietzsche put it.⁴³ Thus, the non-equivalence of the

⁴³ Friedrich Nietzsche (“On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense,” in *Literary Theory: An Anthology* [eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan; Frome, UK: Blackwell, 1998] 358–61, here 359) wrote, “Every idea originates through equating the unequal.” By this, he identified metaphor as that faculty of human cognition responsible for ideas and concepts. First, Nietzsche argued that when we equate the unequal, that is, make a metaphor, and forget the difference between what are equated, the result is an idea: the idea of the chair in place of individual chairs. He further argued that the accumulated result of making metaphors and forgetting the differences, of creating categories, gives rise to concepts, such as the concept of “truth” or “love.” Thus, he (*ibid.*, 360) laments the production of concepts from the death of metaphors, “Whereas every metaphor of perception is individual and without equal and therefore knows how to escape all attempts to classify it, the great edifice of ideas shows the rigid regularity of a Roman Columbarium and in logic breathes forth the sternness and coolness which we find in mathematics.”

On the other end of this history of metaphors and concepts stands Jacques Derrida (“White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy,” in his *Margins of Philosophy* [trans. Alan Bass; Brighton, Sussex: The University of Chicago Press, 1982] 207–71, here 215) who wrote, “To read within a concept the hidden history of a metaphor is to privilege *diachrony* at the expense of system.” If Nietzsche lamented the hardening of

metaphorical participants is the “degree zero” of metaphor, the starting point. In other words, to use a metaphor is to use language (words, sentences, etc.) in an impertinent manner that deviates from its ordinary usage, as Aristotle said.⁴⁴ To say “A is B,” at the literal level, is to make a “planned category mistake.”⁴⁵

Yet, we must remember that to say “A is B” is precisely not to say “A is not B.” How do we understand this tension between the metaphorical “is” and the literal “is not” of the metaphorical copula? We must first dismiss the tempting solution of the simile to the enigma of the metaphorical copula. Aristotle said that “making good metaphors depends on perceiving the likeness in things.”⁴⁶ The initial attraction that leads to the birth of a metaphor is in the perception of a likeness or a resemblance between

metaphors into concepts that flatten the differences among the unequal things, Derrida exposed the forgotten differences that underpin concepts in his effort to destabilize philosophy and all systematic discourse.

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (*Metaphors We Live by* [London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003]) entered the discussion of the relationship between metaphor and concept *in medias res* and noted that the system of concepts that facilitate everyday acts of perception and thinking are, in actuality, metaphors. They (*ibid.*, 4) wrote, “Primarily on the basis of linguistic evidence, we have found that most of our ordinary conceptual system is metaphorical in nature.” The cognitive linguistic theory of metaphor Lakoff, Johnson, and others continues to exert considerable influence in a wide variety of academic fields, ranging from literary criticism to consumer behavior. Better understanding the beginning and end of the relationship between human cognition and metaphors, as adumbrated by Nietzsche and Derrida, will help us better assess the explanatory powers and limits of cognitive linguistics.

⁴⁴ The concept of deviation naturally leads to the issue of deviation from what. For a discussion of this and other issues related to the concept of metaphoric deviation, see Ricoeur, *Metaphor*, 134–72. It is important to note that deviation can exist at all levels of linguistic expression. Ricoeur (*ibid.*, 136–37) writes, “The whole effort of neo-rhetoric, therefore, is directed towards incorporating deviation among the other operations that take place, as structured semantic shows, at all the levels of articulation of language – phonemes, words, sentences, discourse, etc.”

⁴⁵ Ricoeur, *Metaphor*, 197.

⁴⁶ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 61.

metaphorical participants. Similarity is thus a necessary (but not sufficient) precondition for metaphor and is the reason that many metaphors can be said otherwise as a simile, the “to be like” of similitude replacing the “to be” of identity, with little to no loss in meaning.

However, to say “A is B” is not to say “A is like B.” A metaphor refuses to settle for the “is like” of simile and insists, despite the apparent inequality between A and B, that A “is” B. If the “is not” of the metaphorical copula is the degree zero of metaphor, the “is like” of similitude the precondition, then the metaphorical “is” is the *raison d’être* of metaphor. That is, the “is” marks the crucial difference between a metaphor and a simile and justifies the existence of metaphor as a distinct semiotic function. There is a hidden drama, a tension, within the metaphorical copula that moves from the “is not” of falsehood, through the “is like” of similitude, and finally to the “is” of metaphor. How does this happen? What is the result?

Ricoeur writes that the metaphorical word is an impertinent word that stands in the place of another pertinent, proper word. To refer to “old age” as the “evening of life,” at the literal level, is to use the word “evening” in a manner that deviates from normal usage. In order to resolve this deviation, the metaphorical word undergoes a “reduction of deviation.”⁴⁷ The impertinent, metaphorical word acquires or, stated strongly, creates a new meaning that is pertinent to the metaphorical context. The movement from literal impertinence to new pertinence by way of a “reduction of deviation” is the hidden drama of the metaphorical copula. Thus, “metaphor is not deviation itself, but the reduction of deviation. Deviation exists only if words are taken in their literal meaning. Metaphor is

⁴⁷ Ibid., 149–57.

the process through which the speaker reduces the deviation by changing the meaning of one of the words... [M]etaphor is truly a trope, that is, a change of the meaning of words.”⁴⁸ In short, metaphors can create new meanings in language.

Going beyond language, metaphors can in fact create new beings in the world. Ricoeur argues that the study of metaphor must pass from semiotics to semantics because the statement has features not shared with the word. Chief among them is the distinction between sense and reference (*Sinn* and *Bedeutung*). The word, analyzed as a Saussurian sign consisting of an arbitrary signifier and a signified sound image, remains within the language system and has a sense but no referent. In contrast, the statement, as an event of language that is uttered, is the smallest unit of language that has a referent outside language. The statement “passes outside itself” and plays “its mediatory function between man and man, between man and world” by referring to a third thing.⁴⁹ As a consequence, the sentence has a meaning that may be evaluated separately from its sense. For example, the statement, “The president is black,” has a sense within language but also has a meaning that we can evaluate as either true or false in reference to the world outside language. In the United States in 2013, the statement is true. It was false – a dream – in 1963.

How about a metaphorical statement? The starting point of a metaphorical statement, as with the word, is the assumption of non-equivalence. The metaphorical statement has a literal sense that is avowedly false in relation to the world outside language. Yet, like the word, a metaphorical statement undergoes a reduction in

⁴⁸ Ibid., 152.

⁴⁹ Ricoeur, *Metaphor*, 73.

impertinence and in so doing acquires or creates a new pertinence. Unlike the word, however, because a statement “passes outside itself” to refer to the world outside language, the new pertinence has to do, not only with the sense of the statement, but also with its referent. Adopting words from Gaston Bachelard, Ricoeur writes that the metaphor “becomes a new being in our language, expressing us by making us what it expresses; in other words, it is at once a becoming of expression, and a becoming of our being. Here expression creates being.”⁵⁰ In other words, a metaphor is not only an event within language, the coming into being of a new meaning, but also an event in the world, the coming into being of a new being. Thus, to describe the world by means of a metaphor has the potential to recreate it.

Gary A. Anderson’s *Sin: A History* provides us with a powerful illustration of the last point.⁵¹ Anderson’s basic thesis is that sin has a history and that that history coincides with the history of metaphors used to talk about sin. He locates the crux of the history of sin in the Second Temple period when, under the influence of Aramaic, “the metaphor of sin as a burden was replaced by that of sin as a debt.”⁵² He devotes the majority of the book to tracing the history of the sin as a debt metaphor in biblical and subsequent Jewish and Christian literature. In so going, he handily demonstrates George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s thesis that conceptual metaphors, such as “sin is a debt,” strongly influence the way we think, perceive, speak, and act in everyday life.⁵³ In truth,

⁵⁰ Gaston Bachelard cited in *ibid.*, 214.

⁵¹ Gary A. Anderson, *Sin: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

⁵² *Ibid.*, 27.

⁵³ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors*.

he goes considerably beyond the conclusions of cognitive linguistics and demonstrates that the metaphor of sin as a debt creates a new reality.

Anderson cites Ricoeur's aphorism "the symbol gives rise to thought" a number of times in arguing that the metaphor of sin as a debt gives rise to expansive and explanatory narratives in both Jewish and Christian traditions about how God resolves the problem of sin.⁵⁴ He recognizes that the metaphor defines the frame of reference within which these narratives take place. He also recognizes that the metaphor allows for creative play. When Ricoeur says that "the symbol gives rises to thought," Anderson writes, he "did not mean that those metaphors rigidly determined the types of stories to be told. Rather, metaphors provided the raw material that religious traditions could shape in various ways."⁵⁵ For example, rabbis and St. Anselm, on the one hand, believed that God holds the bond to humanity's debt of sin. According to this understanding, God has the legal claim over sinful human beings. On the other hand, Narsai and Jacob of Serug, Syriac Christians from around the sixth century, believed that Satan holds the bond to humanity's debt of sin. Thus, Satan has a legal claim over human beings. What is important to note here is that, while both groups thought of sin within the frame of reference of debt, they could differ in the way they imagined the setting of the drama of sin and redemption, debt and credit, and the way it unfolds.

The drama of sin and redemption, therefore, plays out differently according to the different constructions of the dramatic situation. Thus Rabbi Eleazar is reported to have

⁵⁴ Anderson, *Sin*, 5–6, 38, 194. Anderson refers to Ricoeur's insight in *ibid.*, 23 and 109. The aphorism comes from Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (trans. Emerson Buchanan; Boston: Beacon, 1967) esp. 347–57.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 109. Here, I note that Ricoeur conceived of metaphors in similar terms as Doniger conceived of micromyths. See note 10.

said that, when the time for accounting one's balance between sin and merit, debt and credit, comes and "if one lacks [sufficient merit], God will provide some of his!"⁵⁶ Since God holds the bond and "is defined by the principle of charity, he is free to bestow his infinite merit to those who are lacking" and graciously redeem them.⁵⁷ In contrast, Jacob of Serug thought that Christ pays the debt humanity owes Satan through his meritorious death and thereby annuls Satan's claim over humanity: "The rich one [Christ] paid the debts of the sinners and tore up the bond [held by Satan] that all generations had not the resources to repay."⁵⁸ It is interesting to note that, according to this scenario, Christ pays something to Satan. In any case, the above example demonstrates that, while a metaphor sets the stage, it neither performs the casting nor gives precise stage directions. It allows for play and for innovation.

In working with Ricoeur's symbolic hermeneutics, Anderson in fact goes beyond the insights of Ricoeur of *The Symbolism of Evil* in two important ways. First, he identifies the productive power of metaphor as its ability to generate explanatory narratives. Anderson writes, "And for early Christians the primary symbol for sin was debt and the way to think through what that meant with respect to salvation in Christ was through narrative expansion."⁵⁹ The metaphor gives rise to thought, and that thought often takes the form of narrative. If we connect this insight to Aristotle's observation that it is *lexis* (of which metaphor is an element) that exteriorizes thought in language, we

⁵⁶ JT *Peah* 5a cited in Anderson, *Sin*, 109.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Jacob of Serug cited in *ibid.*, 128.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 194.

begin to see a fuller picture of the connections between metaphor, thought, and story.

The metaphor gives rise to thought; thought is expressed in language; the linguistic form thought takes is a story; therefore, as a child of a metaphor, the story reveals itself as a metaphor.

Second, Anderson effectively demonstrates that the metaphor can give rise not only to metaphorical narratives but also to reality, that “expression creates being,” by showing that a Jew or a Christian who conceives of sin as a debt lives in a world different from the one inhabited by those who conceive sin as a burden. Consider, for example, the importance of almsgiving in early Judaism and Christianity.⁶⁰ Anderson argues that the metaphor of sin as a debt gave birth to the complementary notion of credit and, in turn, the idea that almsgiving is a virtuous act that creates a heavenly treasury of merit, currency that can be used to pay down the debt of sin. On this, Anderson cites Augustine:

Study the money-lender’s methods. He wants to give modestly and get back with profit; you do the same. Give a little and receive on a grand scale. Look how your interest is mounting up! Give temporal wealth and claim eternal interest, give the earth and gain heaven... Listen to the Scripture telling you how to make the Lord your debtor, ‘Anyone who gives alms to the poor is lending to the Lord’ [Prov 19:17a].⁶¹

In both Judaism and Christianity, “the consideration of the poor [became] a *religious* obligation” with lasting, eternal benefits because of a metaphor.⁶² Thus Jews and Christians who thought of sin as a debt and, correspondingly, of almsgiving as creating

⁶⁰ Ibid., 9–13.

⁶¹ Augustine cited in *ibid.*, 159.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 11.

credit against that debt willingly parted with their money to help the poor and, perhaps decisively, to lay treasures in heaven. The palm of paupers became the altar of God. Anderson teaches us that a metaphor can change the way we think and act by changing the way we perceive the reality in which we live. To put it strongly, a metaphor can change reality and create a new world.

As I stated above, in this way, Anderson goes beyond the younger Ricoeur of *The Symbolism of Evil* and joins the more mature Ricoeur of *The Rule of Metaphor*. In the latter book, Ricoeur explains how redescribing reality by means of metaphor, e.g., thinking of sin as a debt and not as a burden, can be understood as an act of creation. The world in which we live, Ricoeur argues, is always already “pre-objective,” by which he means that the world is already shaped in a variety of ways by human work. The reality we discover, or in which we find ourselves, is not a world of objects only, a purely physical world, but a world also shaped by human work – by our words, ideas, concepts, stories, and metaphors. Ricoeur does not deny the objective world, but he questions our access to that world. Or, better, he says that the really real world in which human beings live is never simply the objective world but an objective world that always already bears the imprint of human work. Thus, because the world is in part shaped by human discourse, it is no surprise that humans can, in fact, change the world by changing the human component of reality. “Poetic discourse,” Ricoeur writes,

brings to language a pre-objective world in which we find ourselves already rooted, but in which we also project our innermost possibilities. We must thus dismantle the reign of objects in order to be, and to allow to be uttered, our primordial belonging to a world which we inhabit, that is to say, which at once precedes us and receives the imprint of our works.⁶³

⁶³ Ibid., 306.

For Ricoeur, metaphors have the potential to change the reality in which we live by redescribing it, by changing the words and stories that shape the world to which we belong. The human work of redescribing the world by means of metaphor is powerful, therefore important, work that leaves an imprint on the world. Thus, as Anderson demonstrates in history, Ricoeur argues in theory that words and the world are plastic, in complementary senses of the word.

To summarize, we defined the metaphorical partners as frames of reference. According to this definition, a single word (e.g., debt), an entire literary work (e.g., *The Sound and the Fury*), everything in between (e.g., “The Grand Inquisitor” in *The Brothers Karamozov* or the *muthos* of a novel) and beyond (e.g., a sound pattern or a philosophical system) can be a metaphor. We identified a tension within the metaphorical copula “to be” that moves from similarity, literal impertinence, reduction of deviation, and finally to creation (of new meaning and new being). In regard to creation, we noted that metaphoric production leads to linguistic creations that can change the world in which we live. For example, we noted that the sin as a debt metaphor generated commentary, concepts, narrative, and theological systems at the linguistic level that have in history changed the world in which Jews, Christians, and others live. As we will have occasion to discuss more fully below, a metaphor participates in a double tension, “submission to reality and fabulous invention, unflinching representation and ennobling

elevation.”⁶⁴ This tension is captured in the Catalan phrase, *Aixo era y no era* (“It was and it was not”).⁶⁵

B. Muthos

The task that remains is to clarify further what I mean by *muthos* in this dissertation and the related concept of myth. Let us first turn to *muthos*.

Eric Downing demonstrates that Aristotle used the term *muthos* in at least five distinct ways, a fact that has led to translation and interpretative confusion among classicists.⁶⁶ We need not concern ourselves with this problem. From among the five definitions of *muthos*, I use the term in its most basic sense: Muthos is

the reconstituted story. The totality of related events as reconstructed by the reader out of the play [or other literary work] and, more or less strictly, projected upon a chronological line – i.e., the relation between events is primarily presented in terms of time sequence – with more or less equal weight given to each event in the sequence.⁶⁷

In other words, *muthos*, as I use the term, refers to the story or plot, not necessarily as it is represented in the text (what Russian formalists call the *syuzhet*), but as it is reconstructed

⁶⁴ Ricoeur, *Metaphor*, 40.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 265.

⁶⁶ Eric Downing, “Οἶον Ψυχή: An Essay on Aristotle’s ‘*Muthos*,’” *Classical Antiquity* 3 (1984) 164–78, especially the appendix on 178.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 178, see also 165.

in chronological order (*fabula*).⁶⁸ As a sequential reconstruction of the story, the *muthos* implies a structure of causality: “A then B then C” is understood as “A causes B causes C.”

It is worth noting that larger works of literature may have multiple *muthoi* that crisscross or run parallel to each other. Thus, as we will see below, the Hebrew Bible contains a large number of local and metalocal *muthoi*. Some *muthoi* run parallel to each other, others are linked together in a more or less continuous chain, and still others exist in relative isolation. We find instances of the sea *muthos*, I will argue, at both local and metalocal levels that deserve a place next to other prevalent *muthos*-like themes, such as the promise and fulfillment pattern that is argued to unify shorter and larger compositions in the Hebrew Bible.

As will become clear below, there is a strong analogy between what I call the sea myth pattern and the sea *muthos*. Indeed, the sea myth pattern in total is indistinguishable from the sea *muthos*. However, there is an important distinction between the two as I use the terms. The sea myth pattern, as the word pattern indicates, is a frozen cluster of elements, thematic elements that may be treated independently. On the other hand, the sea *muthos* always takes into account the total temporal sequence of events that connects the thematic elements. The sea myth pattern is a simultaneous unit of themes, the *muthos* frozen in time, that gives us a single thematic matrix.⁶⁹ The sea

⁶⁸ *Fabula* and *syuzhet* are terms from Russian formalism. Apparently, Aristotle used the single term *muthos* to refer to both the *fabula* and the *syuzhet*; see Downing, “Aristotle’s ‘*Muthos*.’”

⁶⁹ Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: the Bible and Literature* (San Diego: Harvest, 1981) 63.

muthos, on the other hand, in addition to containing the matrix of themes, refers to the dramatic development of the themes in time.

Moving on to the topic of metaphor, a metaphorical *muthos* in regard to history participates in the tensional dynamic of all metaphors. In submitting to reality, the Hebrew Bible faithfully represents historical reality and, as a fabulous invention, elevates and transforms it. The *muthos* is and is not history. Failure to take seriously this tension within the metaphorical copula has led to misunderstanding and controversy within academic and confessional readings of the Bible. On the one hand, the Bible is not an allegory since, in an allegory, the story is recognized to be a fictional conceit. The Bible is not aware of the category of the purely fictional. On the other, the Bible is not history, at least not as we understand history in modern academia. What I hope to show is that, biblical history is a hybrid genre – as perhaps all historiography is to a lesser or greater degree – and that the sea *muthos* plays a crucial role in shaping the telling of important events and, going further, in conceptualizing all of history from the creation to the eschaton.

In sum, *muthos* refers to the reconstructed plot of a story. It is temporal and has a definite temporal trajectory. The component events of the *muthos* are not understood as random. The *muthos* is not the sum of unrelated, independent events. Rather, the events are understood as codependent and in fact causal. Furthermore, a metaphorical *muthos*, like the metaphorical statement, passes outside itself, outside language and outside the world of literature, and claims identity with the world – while at the same time acknowledging their nonequivalence. It is literally impertinent. But in seriously insisting

on its equivalence, it undergoes a reduction of impertinence through which it acquires a new meaning and, in redescribing the world, recreates it.

C. Myth

Myth is related to *muthos*. At the most basic level, myth is a story. To be a bit more descriptive, as Robert Segal puts it, myth is a special type of story whose main figures are personalities and which deals with weighty matters.⁷⁰ Therefore, myth, like all other stories, has a *muthos*, a chronological sequence of events. Thus, Theodore Gaster correctly makes a distinction between the *muthos* of myth (calling it Myth, with a capital M) and the verbal expression of myth (myth, with a lower case M).⁷¹ The sea *muthos*, according to this nomenclature, would be the sea “Myth,” and the *Baal Cycle* would be a sea “myth.” In short, a sea myth (e.g., the *Baal Cycle*) is the sea *muthos* exteriorized and made explicit by *lexis*.

Distinguishing myth from *muthos* enables us to see that the same *muthos* can be exteriorized into language in a variety of forms, including myth, legend, fable, and history. However, we must note an important difference between the relationship a sea myth (e.g., the *Baal Cycle*) has with the sea *muthos* and the relationship an account of a historical event (e.g., the Sea Event [Exodus 14–15]) might have with the sea *muthos*. On the one hand, a sea myth and the sea *muthos* are no more separable than a dancer is separable from the dance. A sea myth is as literal and direct an exteriorization of the sea

⁷⁰ This working definition of myth is adapted from Robert A. Segal, *Myth: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 4–6.

⁷¹ Theodore H. Gaster, “Myth and Story,” *Numen* 1 (1954) 184–212, here 185.

muthos as is possible. Thus, there is no metaphorical tension between the sea myth and the sea *muthos*: the sea *muthos* is the sea myth. On the other hand, the sea *muthos* is and is not the Sea Event. The sea *muthos*, in relation to history, can at most be a metaphor and can claim neither literal nor direct correspondence to history.

In conclusion, scholars since at least Gunkel have noted and studied the continued vitality and relevance of sea myths within a variety of biblical traditions. However, few have tried to articulate the development of the sea tradition within the Hebrew Bible. This is the scholarly lacuna this dissertation proposes to address. Thus, I argue that one of the important ways in which sea myths continued to inform biblical thought and historiography is as a metaphor. As metaphors, the sea myth pattern and the sea *muthos* facilitated the transfer of meaning from one frame of reference (myth) to another (the realm of concepts or history). The sea myth pattern informed the conception and development of three important themes: creation, kingship, and temple. And the sea *muthos* became one of the dominant *muthoi* of the Hebrew Bible that, time and again, helped the biblical writers to conceive of the past and the present as a time of chaos and death that, in the imminent future, will be transformed into a time of life and order by a decisive divine intervention on the plane of history. It has allowed biblical writers to conceive of all time as an unfolding of the sea *muthos*: Yesterday and today, the sea roars; but tomorrow, God will silence the sea and reign over all creation from his holy temple.

III. Outline

In Part I. Introduction above, I have defined the topic, methodology, theory, and thesis of the dissertation. In chapter 2, more specifically, I will go on to discuss the sea as an element of space: the sea in cosmography, in geography, and in sacred space.

In Part II. Sea Myth, I will treat the sea as a character that takes part in a dramatic narrative or pattern that deals with the themes of creation, kingship, and temple. In chapter 3, I will survey the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle* and the Mesopotamian *Enuma Elish* and define the sea myth pattern. In chapter 4, I will analyze the various ways in which biblical writers, particularly the psalmists, develop the three major themes of the sea myth pattern (namely creation, kingship, and temple).

In Part III. Sea Metaphor, I will treat the use of the sea myth pattern in the representation of three key events in the Hebrew Bible: the exodus (chapter 5), the exile (chapter 6), and the eschaton (chapter 7). I will argue that the dynamics of influence in regard to the sea myth pattern do not only flow from the outside to the inside but that there exists an internal dynamic that flows from the exodus tradition to the traditions about the exile to eschatology.

In Part IV. Sea *Muthos* (which is also chapter 8), I will synthesize the previous discussion to argue that the sea *muthos* is an important, even a dominant, *muthos* among the numerous biblical *muthoi*. The sea *muthos* informs the conceptualization of not only specific historical events, as demonstrated in chapters 5–7, but also the conceptualization of all history from creation to eschaton. The sea *muthos* gives expression to the danger and chaos that characterize yesterday and today and to the glory that is to come tomorrow. Crucially, it also illuminates a path from here to the coming kingdom in identifying a pattern in primordial and historical time that will repeat in the imminent future: God will

defeat the chaos of the sea and create a holy kingdom of righteous judgment, abundant life, and everlasting feasting. It is true that, according to a certain biblical view of time, *Endzeit gleich Urzeit*. In this dissertation, I argue that all of history is in fact shot through with repetitions and reactivations of God's first and final triumph over the sea so that all of history can be mapped onto the sea *muthos*. Not only does *Endzeit* resemble *Urzeit*, the cosmic drama plotted in the sea *muthos* unfolds throughout *Gesamtzeit*.

Chapter 2. The Sea

The sea in particular and water in general dominate the cosmos which the ancient Israelites believed they inhabited. Water is the most abundant element in the cosmos, and the sea surrounds the patch of dry ground called earth, above, below, and all around. In such an aquatic world, life on earth is a double miracle. The first miracle, in much of the Hebrew Bible, is that of earth itself: God established the earth (Pss 24:1–2; 93:1; 104:5) in the space he created by dividing the primordial and chaotic waters into two, the upper sea and the lower sea (Gen 1:6–7), and earth continues to exist by divine decision to maintain the boundary between land and sea (Jer 5:22; Ps 104:9; Job 38:8–11). The second miracle that enables life on earth is that of life-giving water. Were the separation between sea and land absolute, earth would be a dry and desolate place. But by divine command the upper sea lets fall rains in their season (Deut 28:12; Job 38:25–30), and the lower sea bubbles and gushes up as springs, rivers, and lakes (Gen 2:6, 10–14; Ps 104:10). Blessings, that is, life-giving water from above and below fructify the land to water the vegetation, which provides shelter for the birds of the air and food for wild beasts, sheep and cattle, and human beings (Ps 104:10–18). In a cosmos dominated by the sea, life on dry ground is a precarious miracle and the evidence of enduring divine grace – for the Yahwistic Israelites, proof of the sovereignty of YHWH who reigns over the sea.

In this chapter, I will define the sea from the perspective of the ancient Israelites, focusing on its spatial aspect and leaving the important topic of the personified sea for the following chapters. I will use the Hebrew Bible as the primary source of information and

draw from other witnesses to the world of the ancient Near East, archaeological discoveries and literatures from neighboring peoples, to supplement the biblical data. I will divide the discussion of the sea in this chapter into three sections: the sea in cosmography, the sea in geography, and the sea in sacred space. This division is not an arbitrary exercise in categorization. The ancient Israelites recognized the distinction among these dimensions of space and the significance of one dimension over the others for corresponding life activities. For example, their geographical and scientific knowledge of the sea and seafaring ways enabled them to set sail on Tarshish ships to Ophir and beyond to bring back “gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks” (1 Kgs 10:22).¹ A rather different emphasis on the cosmic sea energized the symbolic power of the Bronze Sea in the Jerusalem Temple (1 Kgs 7:23–26, 38–39, and 44).² Finally, the Gihon spring on Mount Zion, for a combination of geographical and cosmological reasons, was considered a sacred site where Israelite kings might be anointed (1 Kgs 1:32–40). It should be noted from the outset, however, that no single dimension of the

¹ Robert R. Stieglitz (“Long-Distance Seafaring in the Ancient Near East,” *BA* 47 [1984] 134–42, here 141) correlates the duration of the sea expeditions of Solomon and Hiram’s fleets, three years (1 Kgs 10:22), to Herodotus’ report that it took the same amount of time for a Phoenician fleet to circumnavigate Africa to suggest that the Israelite-Tyrian fleet may too have circumnavigated Africa.

² The symbolic significance of the Bronze Sea in Solomon’s Temple is ambiguous and may have been deliberately demythologized by the Chronicler (see 2 Chr 4:2–6, 10, 15). We know of parallel practices of erecting an image of the sea in temples from Sumer and Babylon (see Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos*, 100–101). In fact, Sumerian *abzu* and the related Akkadian *apsū* can refer to “Apsu temples and shrines, cultic water basins, and the god Apsu, as well as ... the cosmic Apsu” (Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1998] 321). These parallels suggest that the Bronze Sea in Solomon’s Temple was a mythological symbol of the primordial sea that YHWH defeated and subdued in creation. See also Cory Daniel Crawford, *Architecture and Cultural Memory: Iconography and the Visual Program of the Solomon Temple in Historical, Political, and Social Context* (Diss, Harvard University, 2009) 134–42, 259–62, etc.

sea can be totally divorced from the others. Rather, the three together form a unified entity. The sometimes drastic differences between the ways the Bible portrays the sea and its waters, I propose, are due to the extent and nature of God's control over them and not to any essential difference among them. In fact, one important conclusion of this study will be that, in Israelite culture as presented in the Hebrew Bible, one's relationship to the sea was mediated by a prior relationship, both in terms of time and importance, to YHWH. Thus, while focusing on the spatial aspect of the sea, we will have to deal with God in the not so distant background. God's relationship to the sea adds a dynamic and a historical dimension to the study of space. We will keep our treatment of these dimensions to a minimum in this chapter and defer the full discussion until the following chapters.

It bears repeating at this point that the present work aims to analyze the narrative structure of the Hebrew Bible, more specifically the role of the sea as a unifying and centripetal force in that narrative structure. One might ask, then why an entire chapter on the spatial aspect of the sea? Broadly, there are two reasons. First, the sea is as much a fact of the physical world as it is a character in the Hebrew Bible. As such, its analysis calls for a description of its physical attributes: its girth, the size and shape of its nose, its complexion. The second reason is that the sea is as much the stage of the drama as it is a character. Yohanan Aharoni perceptively wrote, "Without an awareness of the stage, the action of the drama cannot be fully understood."³ By "drama," Aharoni meant the story of God and his people Israel as recorded in the Hebrew Bible, for him, a decidedly historical story, reflecting Israel's "unique conviction that the God of Israel acts through

³ Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography* (trans. A. F. Rainey; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962) xi.

history.”⁴ Correspondingly, by “stage,” Aharoni meant primarily historical geography. The argument was that, if God is one who acts in history, as G. Ernest Wright famously claimed, then the geographical world is “the stage for His dramatic and redemptive acts.”⁵ We can accept the conclusion and the basic premise of this argument. However, we must acknowledge, on the one hand, that the belief that gods act in history was not unique to Israel, as Bertil Albrektson and H. W. F. Saggs have forcefully argued, and, on the other, that the stage for the biblical drama is not only historical-geographical but also cosmic and sacred because God’s activities were thought to span the totality of reality.⁶

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid. G. Ernest Wright (*God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital* [Studies in Theology, First Series 8. London: SCM, 1952] 38) writes that history is “the arena of God’s activity” and that “the facts of history and of tradition... are the facts of God.” Wright emphasizes the (non-cyclical) temporal aspect of history. Aharoni correctly draws our attention to the complementary dimension of space and identifies geography as the stage for history.

⁶ Bertil Albrektson, *History and the Gods: An Essay on the Idea of Historical Events as Divine Manifestations in the Ancient Near East and in Israel* (Lund, Sweden: Gleerup, 1967); Saggs, *Divine in Mesopotamia and Israel*, esp. 64–92. Albrektson, in *History and the Gods*, was responding directly to Wright’s emphasis on the distinctiveness of Israel’s conception of God as one who acts in history. The numerous examples that Albrektson culls in defense of his essentially negative thesis make the position of Wright and others indefensible. Albrektson, on his part, tries to find Israelite distinctiveness in the realm of speech: the “divine revelation through the word” (*History and the Gods*, 122). In this, Albrektson comes close to Wright who emphasized history but also characterized biblical theology as a “recital”: “Biblical theology is *the confessional recital of the redemptive acts of God*” (*God Who Acts*, 13, emphasis original). Wright and Albrektson together teach us the intertwined nature of deed and word in the Hebrew Bible, the difference and interdependence of critically reconstructed history and the sacred history of confession. For a judicious discussion of the ways in which history marks Israelite distinctiveness, see Peter Machinist, “The Question of Distinctiveness in Ancient Israel: An Essay” in *Ah Assyria...: Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor* (ed. Mordecai Cogan & Israel Eph‘al; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1991) 196–212, esp. 208–212.

Therefore, in order fully to understand the action of the drama, knowledge of the various dimensions of the nautical stage is paramount.

So we embark.

I. The Sea in Cosmography

Water makes up the majority of the cosmos, and the seas are the most conspicuous feature of cosmography, spanning horizon to horizon both above and below the earth. Dry land, in the mind of the ancient Israelites, was a miraculous exception to the pervasiveness of water. Indeed, a brief consideration of Israelite cosmology reveals that the sea is everywhere regnant and that land exists by virtue of the sea's forced expulsion. However, this basic observation about Israelite cosmology was hidden from view because, for a time, biblical scholars actively denied the importance of cosmology to Israelite religion.⁷ Cosmology was thought to contradict the fundamentally historical nature of Israelite religion and was thus either ignored or suppressed in defense of Israelite distinctiveness.

Gerhard von Rad, perhaps the most influential figure in this regard, argued that the belief that God created the cosmos was integrated late into the framework of salvation history in the Hebrew Bible. In his opinion, Israelites were aware of a doctrine of creation, which they must have encountered living among the Canaanites, but did not worship YHWH as the creator until late in their history. "In the old cultic Credo there

⁷ See Douglas S. Knight, "Cosmogony and Order in the Hebrew Tradition," in *Cosmos and Ethical Order: New Studies in Comparative Ethics* (eds. Robin W. Lovin and Frank E. Reynolds. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985) 133–157, esp. 133–35; Robert A. Oden, "Cosmogony, Cosmology," *ABD* I:1162–71, here 1162–68.

was nothing about Creation.”⁸ In fact, von Rad argued that “more comprehensive statements about the creation of the world by Jahweh are only found in texts of a later time,” such as Deutero-Isaiah, the Priestly writings, and a few psalms, because “Israel only discovered the correct theological relationship of the two when she learned to see Creation too as connected theologically with the saving history.”⁹ The resolution of the theological problem that the doctrine of creation posed to Israel’s belief in a God who redeems his people in history and the integration of the doctrine into the main body of Israelite religion became pressing, so the explanation goes, only when Israel encountered the cosmological religion of her Babylonian captors. Deutero-Isaiah and the Priestly writings were the fruits of the theological agon of that era. And in both, the category of history remains dominant over cosmological speculation.

Another influential figure in this regard was G. Ernest Wright, von Rad’s American contemporary. Wright characterized biblical theology as “*the confessional recital of the redemptive acts of God in a particular history, because history is the chief medium of revelation.*”¹⁰ In analyzing the cosmological and mythological language of the Hebrew Bible, Wright argued, “The vocabulary of the nature of myths of Canaan was used extensively but it was set in a historical context.”¹¹ For example, “Yahweh’s control

⁸ Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols. (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; London: Westminster John Knox, 2001) I:136.

⁹ Ibid.; see also his “The Theological Problem of the Old Testament Doctrine of Creation” in *Creation in the Old Testament* (ed. Bernhard W. Anderson; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 53–64.

¹⁰ Wright, *God Who Acts*, 13, emphasis original.

¹¹ Ibid., 48.

over the sea and its monster was a language which could be historicized and used to describe the deliverance at the Egyptian Exodus; and this in turn was the ground for the hope of a new exodus in Second Isaiah.”¹² For Wright, mythological and cosmological speculations were ornaments to the basic historical foundation of Israelite religion that perhaps lent vivid language and imagery to its articulation but certainly remained peripheral, unable to infect the core of the religion. Again, history trumped cosmology.

We must concur with von Rad, Wright, and numerous other scholars and argue for the centrality of narrativity, be it that of history, epic, or story, to the shape and character of the Hebrew Bible. But we do not agree with the biased emphasis on history at the expense of other defining aspects of the Hebrew Bible.¹³ Denying that ancient Israel shared with all peoples a curiosity about the form and content of the cosmos and with her neighbors a common cosmology, in the face of the available information from comparative cultures, is no longer a viable option. To boot, failure to take seriously Israelite cosmography precludes the possibility of a full and correct understanding of the drama, historical or otherwise, of the Hebrew Bible. According to Douglas Knight, the blinding bias for history and historical geography has been corrected in recent decades, thanks to the careful studies of the comparative materials from Egypt, Mesopotamia, and most decisively from Ugarit that have illumined the cosmological and mythological

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Von Rad’s late dating of creation is also problematic. Genesis 1 is likely late, but the Chaoskampf, an important aspect of creation, was certainly early (e.g., Exodus 15). See below.

fragments contained in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁴ However, the consequences of the bias remain, perhaps nowhere more evidently as in the study of biblical conceptions of space. Whereas there are numerous monograph length studies of the historical geography of the Bible, to my knowledge, there is only one that deals with its cosmography: Luis Stadelmann's helpful but dated *The Hebrew Conception of the World: A Philological and Literary Study* from 1970.¹⁵ More sophisticated thinking on the complex issue of space in the Hebrew Bible is needed.¹⁶ Unfortunately, the present work cannot pretend to be such a work. However, this chapter is a sketch for future work on biblical conceptions of space at the same time that it sets the stage for the drama that will occupy the rest of the work.

Ancient Israelites, at one level, divided the cosmos in two: the heavens and the earth. Thus, the Bible begins with a most majestic proclamation: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1; Psalm 148).¹⁷ Several times, in contrast, the

¹⁴ Knight, "Cosmogony," 134. See also Ronald A. Simkins, *Creator and Creation: Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994) 82–88.

¹⁵ Luis I. J. Stadelmann, *The Hebrew Conception of the World: A Philological and Literary Study* (AnBib, *Investigationes Scientifcae in res Biblicas* 39; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1970).

¹⁶ It should be noted that this question is receiving much overdue attention in the recent years, as evidenced by a dedicated *SBL* consultation, headed by Gert T. M. Prinsloo and Christl M. Maier. Some have voiced frustration that, theoretically, the biblical field is overly dependent on the works of Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soja. And I must confess that the present work falls under that criticism. However, dependence on the theoretical work of others is an inevitable and invited aspect of interdisciplinary work. It allows for rapid expansion of the scope of the questions being asked and the types of possible answers. What is important is the judicial application of theory, grown in another field, adopted for the target field of biblical studies.

¹⁷ For a review of the translation problems and options for the opening clause, בראשית, ברא אלהים, see Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary* (Minneapolis:

cosmos is represented as being made up of four levels: heaven, earth, sea, and Sheol (Job 11:8–9).¹⁸ The most common depiction of the cosmos, however, is as a three-tiered structure made up of heaven, earth, and the underworld.¹⁹ This is, for example, the assumption of the Decalogue: “You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth” (Exod 20:4; Deut 5:8). Within this *Weltbild*, there are two cosmic seas, the upper and the lower. But we may, for the sake of analysis, treat the lower sea under two headings: the sea beneath the earth and the sea around the earth.

Before we begin a more detailed discussion, three general comments are in order. First, the three seas above, below, and around the earth can be thought of as one.²⁰ At least according to P, the primordial sea was originally an undifferentiated mass, in a state of chaos before creation, that God divided in two in order to create space for the earth between the upper and lower seas (Gen 1:2, 6). Furthermore, there is no difference between the sea beneath the earth and the sea around the earth, as the earth was thought

Augsburg, 1984) 78, 93–101. We will return to the important issue of whether or not God created the sea. We may note preliminarily that already within the Hebrew Bible, God is said to have created the sea; Exod 20:11; Ps 95:5. Judith 9:12 calls God “Creator of the waters.”

¹⁸ See also Ps 139:8–9, where earth is implied and the other three parts named. The four-tiered world matches with what we find in Sumer: heaven, earth, *Apšu*, and underworld; W. G. Lambert, “The Cosmology of Sumer and Babylon,” in *Ancient Cosmologies* (ed. Carmen Blacker and Michael Loewe; London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975) 42–65, here 48.

¹⁹ See Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction*, 64.

²⁰ Arent J. Wensinck, *The Ocean in the Literature of the Western Semites* (Wiesbaden: Dr. Martin Sändig oHG, 1968) 36–37.

to be a flat disk, borne upon the lower sea.²¹ Thus, the three seas of Israelite cosmography were thought to share a common origin at some level of the biblical tradition.

Second, God can dispense the water from either the upper or the lower sea as a form of blessing or a curse. The worldwide flood during the time of Noah is a spectacular demonstration of the destructive potential of water, said to burst forth from the “fountains of the great deep” below and to crash down from above through “the windows of the heaven” (Gen 7:11). God is ultimately responsible for releasing the destructive flood. Indeed, the prophets several times depict God’s judgment as a flood or an overwhelming sea and confirm that the power of water to wreak havoc lies in God’s hands to withhold or to unleash (Isa 8:68; Jer 51:42; Jon 2:4). Water can also be a beneficent element in God’s hands. Moses says, “YHWH will open for you his rich storehouse, the heavens, to give the rain of your land in its season and to bless all your undertakings” (Deut 28:12; see also 33:23). Ezekiel has a vision in which the waters from below and around the Temple, surging up from the subterranean sea, heal and vivify the Dead Sea (47:1–12).²² Jacob’s blessing for Joseph gives further evidence that the Israelites believed that it lay in God’s power to make the supernal and infernal waters a blessing:

²¹ For the notion of the earth as a round disk, see Isa 40:22., where the earth is pictured as a *תַּג*, “round disk.” For the notion that the earth is flat and floats on the sea, see Ps 136:6, where the verb *רָקַע* implies that the earth is beaten flat and the preposition *עַל* implies that the sea is under the earth. See the discussion in Paul Seely, “The Geographical Meaning of ‘Earth’ and ‘Seas’ in Genesis 1:10,” *WTJ* 59 (1997) 231–55, esp. 236–39 and 246–50.

²² See Philippe Reymond, *L’eau, sa vie, et sa signification dans l’Ancien Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1958), 200–202. This parallels Sumerian cosmology where “all springs draw their supplies from “a huge subterranean body of sweet water, called the Apšū”; Lambert, “Cosmology,” 47.

²⁵ By El of your father who will help you,
And by Shaddai who will bless you
With blessings of heaven above,
Blessings of the deep that lies beneath,
Blessings of breast and womb. (Gen 49:25)

The connection between God and the goodly nature of water was so strong that Jeremiah could call God the “fountain of living water” (2:13; 17:13; cf. Ps 36:10).²³

Third, related to God’s power to use water as a destructive force or a beneficent blessing is his power to transform saline and poisonous water into sweet water. Some scholars have found evidence that Israelites believed wells and other sources of fresh water to be seats of spirits in the Song of the Well (Num 21:17–18).²⁴ Fresh, life-giving water was an attribute of a benevolent spirit, according to this view. However, if indeed the Song of the Well evinces an animistic belief, the canonical context transfers the power to provide fresh water to YHWH: “Gather the people together, and I will give them water” (Num 21:16).²⁵ Similarly, Elisha attributes the power to heal poisonous water to God (2 Kgs 2:21), and Ezekiel witnesses the (fresh) water from the Temple heal the stagnant waters of the Dead Sea (Ezek 47:8). In much of the Hebrew Bible, YHWH is responsible for the provision of fresh water and the transformation of saline and other

²³ Michael Fishbane (“The Well of Living Water: A Biblical Motif and Its Ancient Transformations,” in *“Sha‘arei Talmon”: Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992] 3–16, here 5–6) argues that Jeremiah’s equation of God and “the fountain of living water” is an instance of inner-biblical interpretation of Deut 6:10–13.

²⁴ Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: JPS, 1990) 460. Consider the “dragon well” (עֵיץ יְהִתְנֶה) in Neh 2:13.

²⁵ Milgrom (ibid., 461) rejects that the Song of the Well is evidence of animism, noting that the song focuses on the labor of digging the well and makes no mention of divine spirits.

harmful water into sweet water. This power, it may be conjectured, is an extension of his power over all water generally, stemming from his victory over the primordial sea. The ancient Israelites appreciated the difference between saline and sweet water, the difference dramatically evident in the two great lakes of Israel, the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. However, a significant layer of biblical tradition attributed the vital difference between sweet and saline water, between life-giving and death-dealing water, to God's mastery over all water. The difference between saline and sweet water was not only a matter of geography, the difference between the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee, or of cosmography but also a matter of divine decision.

This flexibility in the ancient conception of water should not surprise us. The Mesopotamians, for example, differentiated between the salt water of Tiamat and the subterranean fresh water of Apsu. They also believed that the supernal waters and the waters around the earth, both saline, originated from Tiamat. However, the fact that rain, sweet water, came from the supernal sea did not bother them. They recognized a difference between saline and sweet water but ascribed to Marduk, who defeated Tiamat, the power to transform originally saline water into fresh water. It is true that Canaanite mythology differentiates between the sea deity Yamm and Baal the storm deity. However, this differentiation does not depend on a distinction between salt and sweet water, since Yamm (sea) is also known as Nahar (river).²⁶

In sum, it may be deduced from the unity of all water, on the one hand, and the antithetical nature of water as punishment or blessing and as saline and sweet, on the other, that the differentiating principle is God who exercises mastery over the sea. It is

²⁶ Crawford (*Solomonic Temple*, 333 n. 34) notes that "most ancient Near Eastern cultures did not differentiate between salt and fresh water, at least in their mythology."

God who opens the gates of heaven to allow rain to fall as a blessing and he who allows the sea to transgress the boundary he set between it and land for punishment, he who transforms salty water into life-giving water. This fact of God's mastery, what Yehezkel Kaufmann called "the basic idea of Israelite religion," is enacted and symbolized, within Israel's conception of the cosmos, in God's enthronement over the sea (Ps 29:10).²⁷

A. The Sea in Heaven Above

The upper sea can be called תהום (Prov 8:27), תהומות (Ps 33:7) or אַד (Job 36:27).²⁸ According to the Priestly creation account, this sea is separated from the lower sea by a firmament (Gen 1:6–8), a solid, dome-like structure, itself supported by columns (Ezek 1:22–26; Job 26:11). There are apparently storehouses for rain, snow, and hail above the firmament (Deut 28:12; Job 38:22; see also Ps 33:7). The various forms of precipitation pass through the firmament through sluices, called "windows of heaven"

²⁷ Cited in Levenson, *Creation*, 3.

²⁸ The third appellation (אֲדָ) is uncertain. It occurs once elsewhere in Gen 2:6 and describes a subterranean stream. Thus, it may be best understood as a cosmic stream, regardless of its location in heaven or below the surface of the earth. For a brief summary of the various proposals, see Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 200–201, and Marvin H. Pope, *Job* (AB 15; New York: Doubleday, 1965) 235–36. The heavenly sea may also be called מֵיִם רְבִיִּים (Ps 29:3) or מְבוּל (Ps 29:10), but these appellations are uncertain. Whether they refer to the heavenly sea depends on whether you locate YHWH's throne upon the paradisaic sea or the infernal sea. As will be discussed below, both locations are correct.

(ארבת השמים) or “doors of heaven” (דלתי שמים), which can be opened (Deut 28:12) or shut (Deut 11:17).²⁹

The existence of the upper sea and the fact that rain falls directly from heaven to earth demonstrate that, for the ancient Israelites, heaven is a physical place that is contiguous with the earth. On one occasion, a human being is said to go up to heaven directly from the earth (2 Kgs 2:11). And it was the prayer of prophets that God would come down to earth from his abode in heaven (Isa 63:19). One may wonder, at this point, about the spatial location of God’s heavenly abode in relation to the sea. The Hebrew Bible actually does not preserve much in the way of speculations concerning this issue. Psalm 29 does say that “YHWH sits enthroned over the flood (מבול)” (29:10). But this ancient hymn, likely originally a hymn to Baal, does not specify whether the “flood” (מבול), a word otherwise used only in Genesis 6–11 in reference to the worldwide flood, is supernal, terrestrial, or infernal.³⁰ Another psalm, Psalm 104, speculates that God’s abode is on top of the heavenly sea.³¹

¹ My soul, bless YHWH!
YHWH my God, you are very great.
You are clothed with honor and majesty,
² Wrapped in light as with a garment,
Who stretches out the heavens like a tent,

²⁹ For ארבת השמים, see Gen 7:11; 8:2; 2 Kgs 7:2, 19; Isa 24:18; Mal 3:10. For דלתי שמים, see Ps 78:23. See also Ps 135:7 and Jer 10:13; 51:16, where if we read בַדָק for בָרָק, we may have here another reference to the sluices of the firmament.

³⁰ Aloysius Fitzgerald, “A Note on Psalm 29,” *BASOR* 215 (1974) 61–63. Concerning מבול as the supernal sea, see Joachim Begrich, “Mabbul. Eine exegetisch-lexikalische Studie,” *ZS* 6 (1928) 135–53. The flood also refers to YHWH’s defeated aquatic enemy, on whose carcass he sits enthroned.

³¹ For comparative data, consider Nabupaliddin’s endowment of the sun temple at Sippar. See Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 54–55.

³ Who sets the beams for his chambers in the waters,³²
Who makes the clouds his chariot,
Who rides on the wings of the wind. (Ps 104:1–3)

In verse 3, the psalmist specifically praises God for constructing his abode upon the heavenly waters.

The picture of God enthroned over “the flood” (Psalm 29) or the supernal sea (Psalm 104) is not merely descriptive of a spatial relationship. It actually describes a power dynamic between God and his aquatic foe, as we will see in greater detail in the next chapter. God’s enthronement upon the (upper) sea is at once an enactment and symbol of his lordship over all the seas and points to a history of conflict and triumph between YHWH and the sea. Thus the psalmist of Psalm 104 continues to praise God for founding the earth upon the lower sea, just as he constructed his abode on the upper sea (104:5), and for rebuking and setting boundaries for it (104:6–9). Furthermore, God is praised for making beneficent waters surge up from below the earth to water the land and give drink to his creatures (104:10–13, 16). God restrains and distributes the waters of both the upper and lower seas at will. The psalmist comes short of claiming that God created the sea, and he does not suppress a reference to myth. Nevertheless, throughout the psalm, the lordship of YHWH over the sea is never in doubt, the certainty achieving perfect articulation in the unassuming, almost irenic, depiction of Leviathan:

³² Mitchell Dahood (*Psalms III, 101–150* [AB 17A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970] 31, 34) translates this line: “Who stored with water his upper chambers,” on rather loose reasoning that the piel of קרה means “to store.” His contextual explanation, that “the proposed translation naturally follows the sequel in verse 13, ‘Who waters the mountains from his upper chambers,’” lacks conviction since the verse does not say that the waters are contained in the upper chambers (*ibid.*). The image may be of YHWH controlling the waters below him from his abode.

²⁵ Yonder is the sea, awesome and vast,
There are creeping things without number,
small creatures with large ones.
²⁶ There go the ships,
Leviathan whom you formed to play with. (104:25–26)

Leviathan, once a proud sea-monster that epitomized the power of the sea, is here transformed into a plaything of God, sporting in the sea. It does not pose a threat to the passing ships and the seamen they carry on their pelagic ventures.

B. The Sea Under the Earth

The sea beneath the earth is called by various names: הים, תהום, תהומות (Deut 8:7; Prov 8:24), מים רבים (Ezek 31:15), and מצולה (Jon 2:3; Ps 69:16; Job 41:31; etc.). The subterranean sea can, as it did during the time of Noah, erupt violently and inundate the surface of the earth. However, just as the firmament separates the supernal waters and regulates its dispensation through its sluices, so too the earth itself acts as a permeable barrier that allows for regular and beneficial distribution of the water by means of wells, springs, rivers, and lakes.

Like the upper sea, the lower sea is a physical place, contiguous with the earth. The underworld, sometimes called Sheol, was thought to be located somewhere beneath the earth, a place you go down to (Num 16:30; Isa 14:11; 57:9; Job 7:8), and thus was identified with the infernal sea and conceived of as a watery place (2 Sam 22:5–6 = Ps 18:5–6; Jon 2:3–7; Job 26:5–6).³³ Sheol is occupied by the dead (Isa 14:9–11; Ps 88:4–

³³ Stadelmann, *Hebrew Conception*, 170, n. 899. The conflation of the underworld and the infernal sea is also attested in Sumerian cosmology; see Lambert, “Cosmology,” 48.

8), and there is evidence that one reaches the watery abyss by crossing a river (Job 33:18).³⁴ In contrast to heaven, God does not dwell in the underworld. In fact, it is said that the inhabitants of Sheol are outside the reach of divine faithfulness (Isa 38:18). If a deity resides in Sheol, it is Death, related to the Canaanite god Mot (Isa 28:15, 18; cf. 25:8; Hos 13:14; Hab 2:5).³⁵ This does not mean that the subterranean realm is outside YHWH's reign. As Jon D. Levenson argues, the foundation of the cosmic mountain, Zion, on which YHWH's Temple stands, lies in the underworld.³⁶ Thus, just as God is enthroned upon the upper sea, so too God is enthroned upon the lower sea, his throne located on Mount Zion. From there, God exercises his dominion over the sea on earth as in heaven.

C. The Sea Around the Earth

The Hebrew phrase for the “ends of the earth,” אַפְסֵי־אָרֶץ, itself suggests that earth was conceived as being surrounded by the sea. The Hebrew word אַפֶּס is a loanword from

³⁴ The belief that one has to cross a river agrees with conceptions of other ancient Near Eastern cultures; see Nicholas J. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969) 147–151; Édouard P. Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job* (trans. Harold Knight; London: Nelson, 1967) 496–97. This notion, however, may agree more with a four-tier cosmos where the underworld is found beneath the subterranean sea. In Sumer, such an “arrangement either contributed to, or arose from the idea that to reach the underworld it was necessary to cross a river, either the Ḫubur in Babylonia corresponding to the Greek Styx, or another body of water” (Lambert, “Cosmology,” 48). Perhaps, so too in Israel.

³⁵ Stephanie Ulrike Gulde, *Der Tod als Herrscher in Ugarit und Israel* (FAT 2, 22; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

³⁶ Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (New Voices in Biblical Studies; New York: HarperCollins, 1985) 122.

Mesopotamia and is related to the Akkadian noun *apsu*, the subterranean sea and the realm of Enki/Ea.³⁷ There is doubt concerning the suggested Mesopotamian background.³⁸ However, Arent J. Wensinck cites verses where the phrase אַפְסֵי־אֶרֶץ preserves the original meaning “sea.”³⁹ Zech 9:10b and Ps 72:8 both read:

מִיָּם עַד־יָם	from sea to sea
וּמִנְהַר עַד־אֶפְסֵי־אֶרֶץ	and from the river to the ends/seas of the earth

The parallelism in these lines strongly suggests that אַפְסֵי־אֶרֶץ here means something like “seas of the earth.” In the first line, “sea” parallels “sea.” Between the first and second lines, “sea” parallels “river,” a common word-pair. In the second line, “river” parallels אַפְסֵי. This argues for the meaning “sea” or “river” for אַפְסֵי, a meaning that preserves its Akkadian etymology. We propose that, in the history of the development of the phrase, there was a time when אַפְסֵי־אֶרֶץ meant the “seas (around) the earth.” Later, because of the equation of the seas around the earth with the limits of the earth, the phrase came to mean “ends of the earth.”

Reymond, while accepting the Akkadian etymology for אַפְסֵי, disagrees that the Israelites thought the world was surrounded on all sides by the sea. Reymond points out that the Hebrew Bible does not mention either a northern or a southern sea, only a western and an eastern sea (Joel 2:20; Zech 14:8). Furthermore, noting that Deut 30:13

³⁷ For a brief survey of the issues involved and a suggested Semitic etymology, see Bob Becking, “Ends of the Earth אַפְסֵי־אֶרֶץ,” *DDD*: 300–301.

³⁸ See *ibid.*

³⁹ Wensinck, *Ocean*, 21–22.

mentions a place “beyond the sea” (עבר הים), he argues that the Israelites did not share the Mesopotamian belief that there is nothing beyond the sea.⁴⁰

Two arguments may be put forward in defense of Wensinck’s position. First, the circular shape of the earth strongly suggests that what lies to its west and east also exists to its north and south. If the ancient Israelites believed that the dry earth is shaped like a coin and that the sea borders it to the east and west, what beside the sea did they believe lies to the north and south? Second, “The Babylonian Map of the World” is the clearest pictorial evidence that the Mesopotamians conceived of the earth as a disk and that a circular ocean (labeled *marratu*) surrounded it on all sides.⁴¹ However, the map depicts a number of triangular areas that lie beyond the sea called *nagû*. Wayne Horowitz identifies a variety of meanings for *nagû*: administrative districts, distant unspecified areas, or islands that lie across the sea from the continent.⁴² Whatever the meaning, the *nagû* represents some sort of land beyond the sea. This considerably weakens Reymond’s objection that reference to a place beyond the sea (Deut 30:13) negates the conception of a sea around the earth. In sum, we can conclude with Wensinck that the Israelites conceived of the earth as being surrounded by the sea, “a well known type of Semitic cosmography.”⁴³

⁴⁰ Reymond, *L’eau*, 171.

⁴¹ For a sketch of the *Mappa Mundi*, the translation of the accompanying text and labels, see Horowitz, *Cosmic Geography*, 20–25.

⁴² Horowitz, *Cosmic Geography*, 30–33.

⁴³ Wensinck, *Ocean*, 23. For a discussion of similar cosmography from diverse cultures, from Japan to North America to the Near East, see Seely, “Geographical Meaning,” 231–55.

D. Conclusion

We have tried here to describe the cosmic sea as the Israelites would have perceived it, as a dominant feature of the cosmos above, below, and around the earth. It is evident that the Israelites looked upon the seas with awe, both because of its destructive as well as its life-giving power. We have noted, however, that the allegiance of the Israelites was not directed to the sea but to YHWH, who they believed ruled over the sea, demarcating its boundary and dispensing its blessings from above and below. As we will see, the demonstration and repetition of mastery over the sea is the preeminent work of God as creator. And it is here that we light upon an important element in Israelite religion.

For the Israelites, their commitment and allegiance to YHWH as creator and lord mediated their relationship to the world. Thus, as we will see more fully in a later chapter, the cosmography of the Israelites points to their relationship with the creator of the cosmos. That is, cosmography points to theology. The two cannot to be equated. At the same time, the two cannot be separated. The belief that there exists a sea in heaven points to the belief in a gracious God who has the power to loose its destructive waters but rather demonstrates his care for his creation in sending down rain, hail, and snow. The belief that the sea surrounds the earth points to the belief that God himself set and maintains the boundary between water and land. The belief that there is a sea under the earth points to the belief that God, even there, exercises ultimate lordship from his earthly Temple at the center of the world, Zion. In exploring the spatial nature of the sea, we are

at the same time opening a window onto a relationship, a relationship that has a past and a future – that is, a history.

II. The Sea in Geography

The geographic sea cannot be sharply distinguished from the cosmic sea that surrounds the earth as if they are incommensurable.⁴⁴ This is not to say that ancient Israelites did not recognize the difference between the cosmic and geographic dimensions of the sea. They appreciated knowledge we would call scientific. However, unhampered by the tyranny of scientific knowledge, the ancients were able to identify the geographical with the cosmological and at the same time appreciate their differences. In this section, we will focus on the geographical dimension of the sea.

A basic geographical significance of ים, usually translated “sea” or “ocean,” is as a general designation of that part of the surface of the earth that is covered by water: the watery sea as opposed to the dry land (Gen 1:26; Exod 20:11; etc.). The semantic range of the Hebrew ים is broader than that of the English word “sea” or “ocean.” ים most often refers to what we call in English seas and oceans, but it can also refer to lakes and to large rivers. For example, the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea, respectively called ים כנרת and ים המלח in the Hebrew Bible, are lakes (or inland seas). In fact, there is no word for “lake” in biblical Hebrew. On the other hand, Hebrew does have a word for “river,”

⁴⁴ See Ps 74:13–14; 104:25–26; and Isa 51:9–10. Ann Gardner (“The Great Sea of Dan. VII 2,” *VT* 49 [1999] 412–15, here 413–14) argues that ים in these passages “blurs the distinction between an actual and a mythological sea.” See also Isa 27:1 and Dan 7:2 and the discussion below.

יָם, but is content to call large rivers such as the Euphrates River and the Nile River יָם.⁴⁵ יָם, then, refers to any “large body of water whose shores are far distant from each other”: seas, lakes, and rivers.⁴⁶

A. Seas

The large body of water par excellence in the Hebrew Bible is the Mediterranean Sea. It can simply be called יָם or יַמִּים.⁴⁷ But fittingly its common proper name is the Great Sea (יָם הַגָּדוֹל).⁴⁸ It can also be called the Western Sea (הַיָּם הַמַּחְרֹוֹן), as we discussed.⁴⁹ In fact, because the whole of the western side of Israel borders the Sea, יָם is used to designate the westerly direction.⁵⁰ By synecdoche, the Mediterranean can also be called by more local names: the Sea of the Philistines (יָם פְּלִשְׁתִּים; Exod 23:31) or the Sea of Joppa (יָם יַפּוֹא; Ezra 3:7 and 2 Chr 2:15).

⁴⁵ For the Euphrates River, see Jer 51:36, 42; and possibly Isa 21:1 (see below). For the Nile River, see Isa 18:2; 19:5; Ezek 32:2; and possibly Nah 3:8.

⁴⁶ Stadelmann, *Hebrew Conception*, 155.

⁴⁷ For יָם, see Num 13:29; 34:5; Deut 1:7; Josh 5:1; 1 Kgs 5:23; Jon 1:4; etc. For יַמִּים, see Judg 5:17.

⁴⁸ Num 34:6, 7; Josh 1:4; 9:1; 15:12; 23:4; Ezek 47:10,15, 19, 20; 48:28; and possibly Dan 7:2.

⁴⁹ Deut 11:24; 34:2; Joel 2:20; and Zech 14:8. As with Dan 7:2, the references to the Mediterranean Sea in Joel 2:20 and Zech 14:8 conflate geography and cosmography.

⁵⁰ There is at least one possible exception. In Ps 107:3, יָם is paired with צָפוֹן. Here, יָם seems to designate the southerly direction. However, it is possible that the psalmist means that YHWH gathers them, his redeemed, literally from the sea. Verses 23–32 tell of those who are saved from having dared go down into the sea in ships (יִרְדֵי הַיָּם בַּאֲנִיּוֹת).

The other great sea of the Near East is the Red Sea (יַם־סוּף). The arm of the Red Sea on which Ezion-geber and Elath, important port cities, were located is the Gulf of Aqabah, which was certainly called יַם־סוּף (1 Kgs 9:26; 2 Chr 8:17). But יַם־סוּף applies to the entire complex of the Red Sea, including both its two northern bays, the Gulf of Aqabah and the Gulf of Suez.⁵¹ The Gulf of Suez was also called “the tongue of the Sea of Egypt” (לִשׁוֹן יַם־מִצְרַיִם, Isa 11:15; see Josh 15:5; 18:19).⁵² Jan Jozef Simons identifies the Sea of Egypt with the Mediterranean Sea.⁵³ But his argument that the Sea of Egypt must refer to the Mediterranean Sea by synecdoche, as do the Sea of the Philistines and the Sea of Joppa, applies equally to the Red Sea and cannot be definitive.⁵⁴ On the other hand, two observations favor an identification with the Gulf of Suez. First, the northern end of the Dead Sea is called “the tongue of the sea” in Josh 15:5 (also 18:19). By analogy, “the tongue of the Sea of Egypt” must refer to the similarly shaped northern part of the Gulf of Suez. Second, the Sea of Egypt is mentioned once in the Hebrew Bible in an oracle that refers to Israel’s exodus from Egypt:

¹⁵ And YHWH will utterly destroy
 the tongue of the Sea of Egypt;
 and will wave his hand over the [Euphrates] River
 with his scorching wind;
 and will split it into seven channels,
 and make a footpath. (Isa 11:15)

⁵¹ Jan Jozef Simons, *The Geographical and Topographical Texts of the Old Testament: A Concise Commentary in XXXII Chapters* (Leiden: Brill, 1959) 78.

⁵² Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27* (trans. Thomas H. Trapp; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997) 496; Robert Raphael Stieglitz, *Maritime Activity in Ancient Israel* (Diss, Brandeis University, 1971) 65.

⁵³ Simons, *Geographical Texts*, Simons 61.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

The oracle, as verse 16 makes clear, mentions the miracle at the Sea (of Egypt) as a typological prefiguration of how YHWH will deliver Israel out of Assyria in the future. For a complex of reasons, biblical tradition locates the miracle at the Sea at the Red Sea (יַם־סוּף).⁵⁵ Whether or not this is indeed the historical-geographical location of the sea-crossing, if Isaiah does not reflect another tradition that remembers the sea-crossing happening at the Mediterranean Sea, the Sea of Egypt must refer to the Red Sea, specifically the Gulf of Suez.

The so-called Red Sea of the Exodus tradition, as already mentioned, cannot be confidently equated with the Red Sea (יַם־סוּף), nor can the Reed Sea (יַם־סוּף) be located with any certainty.⁵⁶ The Red Sea has been so infused with mythic and sacred significance that its historical-geographical identity has become virtually undecipherable. We will return to the composite nature of the Red Sea in a later section. For now, while the exact identity of the geographic Red Sea is a matter of continuing dispute, it is important to note that its historical-geographical existence is of paramount theological importance, as it is related to Israel's claim to its historical origins. As we will see in more detail below, creation language saturates the account of the Sea Event and suggests a coincidence between the birth of Israel as a nation and the creation of the cosmos. However, here as elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, cosmogony “is *not* identical with

⁵⁵ See Bernard F. Batto, “The Reed Sea: Requiescat in Pace,” *JBL* 102 (1983) 27–35, esp. 27–30.

⁵⁶ See *ibid.*

national history.”⁵⁷ Though cosmogonic motifs have been integrated into a historical memory, cosmogony neither dominates nor displaces the category of history. That God’s redemption and creation of Israel took place in a real geographical place remains a foundational theological claim about Israelite identity and about the nature of her God and is not to be facilely brushed aside.

Before we come to a consideration of the lakes and the rivers that were called יַם in the Hebrew Bible, we must take a closer look at the ancient Israelite perception of the geographical seas.

A prominent geographical significance of the Mediterranean Sea in the Hebrew Bible was as a border and a barrier. In the Hexateuch, the Mediterranean Sea constantly demarcates the western border of the Promised Land (Exod 23:31; Num 34:6; Deut 11:24; 34:2; Josh 1:4), and the Hebrew Bible contains no clear record of an Israelite expedition beyond this barrier. Thus George Adam Smith memorably commented that “the sea was a barrier and not a highway.”⁵⁸ He ascribed Israel’s refusal to embark for the Mediterranean Sea to “the inhospitable character of the coast,” having no usable harbor or port south of Carmel.⁵⁹ Smith provides a first-person description of the treacherous coast, which I cite at length for its lyric quality:

I have thrice sailed along this coast on a summer afternoon with the western sun illuminating it, and I remember no break in the long line of

⁵⁷ Machinist, “The Question of Distinctiveness,” 208.

⁵⁸ George Adam Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land* (25th ed.; London: Harper & Row, 1966) 105.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 103.

foam where land and sea met, no single spot where the land gave way and welcomed the sea to itself. On each occasion the air was quiet, yet all along the line was disturbance. It seemed as if the land were everywhere saying to the sea: I do not wish you, I do not need you.⁶⁰

He goes on,

And this echoes through most of the Old Testament. The sea spreads for us for spectacle, for symbol, for music, for promise, but never for use... In the Psalms the straight coast serves to illustrate the immovable limits set by the Almighty between sea and land. In the Prophets its roar and foam symbolize the futile rage of the heathen beating on God's steadfast purpose for His people... in the History the sea was a barrier and not a highway... Throughout the language the sea is a horizon.⁶¹

Various geographers and historians have repeated the view that the Israelites were not a seafaring people. Philippe Reymond writes that there was “une sorte de hiatus entre la vie de la mer et la vie de l’Israélite” and explains that the typical ancient Israelite was “un terrien, un paysan qui a peur de la mer.”⁶² Martin Noth goes so far as to claim that “seafaring and sea-trading played no part at all in Israel.”⁶³ Like Reymond, Noth alludes to mythological fear to explain why Israelites remained landbound: “wherever the sea is mentioned in the Old Testament it... appears... as a menace on the edge of the inhabited world, whose dangerous and uncanny power is broken only when it meets dry land.”⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Ibid., 104.

⁶¹ Ibid., 104–105.

⁶² Reymond, *L'eau*, 163.

⁶³ Martin Noth, *The History of Israel* (trans. Stanley Goodman; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1958) 13. Noth later mentions Solomon's fleet at Ezion-geber (ibid., 204).

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Noth also, like Smith, proposes that the main geographical reason that the Israelites did not embark is because “the [Mediterranean] coast of Palestine, which is accompanied by a straight line of low-lying dunes, is almost entirely lacking in natural harbours which might have tempted the inhabitants to go in for seafaring and might have attracted foreign sailors.”⁶⁵ Aharoni too cites “the lack of convenient harbours and natural anchorages.”⁶⁶

More recent scholarship has challenged whether vague allusions to mythological fear and schematic descriptions of the harborless Mediterranean coast can explain Israel’s relationship with the sea and whether the Israelites were indeed as landbound as previously thought. At issue here is the extent of Israel’s knowledge of the geographical sea and, thus, the nature of her attitude toward the composite sea as informed by her geographic circumstances.

Robert R. Stieglitz, in his 1971 dissertation and in subsequent publications, has repeatedly argued that “the sea played a most significant role in the history of ancient Israel.”⁶⁷ He took his cue from Cyrus H. Gordon who emphasized “the Mediterranean factor in the Old Testament,” particularly during the second millennium B.C.E.⁶⁸ However, he differed from Gordon in that, whereas Gordon thought that the “trend in Israel of the first millennium B.C. was away from nautical enterprise,” Stieglitz set out to

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ *Land of the Bible*, 9.

⁶⁷ Stieglitz, *Maritime Activity*, 11. See also, Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (London: Westminster John Knox, 2001) 178–85. See also Oded Borowski, *Daily Life in Biblical Times* (SBLABS 5; Atlanta: SBL, 2003) 58–59.

⁶⁸ Cyrus H. Gordon, “The Mediterranean Factor in the Old Testament,” in *VTSupp* 9 (1963) 19–31, here p. 31.

show that the Israelite kingdoms actively pursued maritime trade during the monarchic period in both the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea.⁶⁹

In his dissertation, Stieglitz characterized the era of the judges (Iron Age I; 1200–1000 B.C.E.) as a time when native Canaanites, the Sea peoples, and the emerging Israelite tribes engaged in a “struggle for the coast.”⁷⁰ He argued that Manasseh and Dan, originally coastal tribes, lost control of the coast during this period. Manasseh lost control of Dor to a contingency of the Sea Peoples, the Sikkuls (a.k.a. Tjekker), also known from the Tale of Wenamun. The tribe of Dan, who once controlled the coastal area south of Joppa, were forced to migrate inland and northward by another group of Sea Peoples, the Philistines, who eventually gained control over the coast south of Joppa to Gaza.

On the other hand, Stieglitz optimistically judged that the tribes of Asher and Zebulun were successful in gaining and maintaining control over “almost the entire coastal strip from the vicinity of Tyre to Jaffa” by the time of the United Monarchy.⁷¹ In his 2001 article, however, Stieglitz revised this view and denied the Israelites any substantial control of the coast before David: “the Canaanite coast of the Early Iron Age was dominated by the Sea Peoples and the remaining coastal Canaanites, those called ‘Phoenicians’ by Homer and the later Greeks.”⁷² He correctly came to agree with Gordon and the majority of scholars that “[a]ncient Israel was more or less cut off from

⁶⁹ Gordon, “Mediterranean Factor,” 31; Stieglitz, *Maritime Activity*, 11.

⁷⁰ Stieglitz, *Maritime Activity*, 120.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 145; see Gen 49:13.

⁷² Stieglitz, “Hebrew Seafaring,” 8.

direct access to the Sea by the Philistines and Phoenicians.”⁷³ Independently, Asher, Zebulun, Manasseh, and Dan, once coastal tribes, lost control over the coast to the Sea Peoples and the Phoenicians, leaving Israel landlocked. United under David, this situation would change.

Stieglitz’s most significant contribution to the ongoing debate concerning Israel and seafaring comes in his reconstruction of “the maritime policies of the Hebrew kings.”⁷⁴ At the center of the argument for a robust and continuous Israelite maritime interest and policy is Israel’s alliance with Tyre. Stieglitz argues that the alliance began in the reign of David, was strengthened under Solomon, and continued in modified form well into the 8th century. Stieglitz ties the inception of the alliance to David’s military successes: chiefly, his victories over the Philistines and his gaining control of the Mediterranean coast from Dor to Tell Qasile, just north of Joffa; and the subjugation of Edom, which gave him an access point to the Red Sea (2 Sam 8:13–14; 1 Chr 18:12–13). The Israel-Tyre alliance benefited both parties at the Philistines’ expense. Israel battered the Philistines on land, and Tyre gained dominance over the lucrative trade routes in the Mediterranean Sea.⁷⁵ Israel exported agricultural goods to Tyre, and Tyre her exotic goods to Israel.⁷⁶

⁷³ Gordon, “Mediterranean Factor,” 31.

⁷⁴ Stieglitz, *Maritime Activity*, 147. See also his, “Hebrew Seafaring,” 9. See also the earlier work of S. Yeivin (“Did the Kingdoms of Israel Have a Maritime Policy?” *JQR*, New Series, 50.3 [1960] 193–228).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 153–54.

Solomon strengthened and expanded this alliance. He married a Tyrian princess.⁷⁷ He imported Tyrian goods and labor for the construction of the Temple and his palaces.⁷⁸ And he established a lucrative joint sea-trade venture at Ezion-geber, near Elath on the Red Sea (1 Kgs 9:26–28; 2 Chr 8:17–18), and possibly, as Stieglitz argues, also at Dor.⁷⁹ The sea-venture – the abundance of gold (from Ophir) and silver (from Tarshish?) during Solomon’s reign may be attributed to its success (1 Kgs 10:14–22, 25, 27) – continued the Israelite-Tyrian policy of weakening Philistine operations in the Mediterranean and additionally challenged Egyptian dominance of the Arabian sea-trade. The hypothesis that the Israel-Tyre venture at Ezion-geber was successful at considerable cost to Egypt gains traction in light of the probability that Shishak, during his 925 B.C.E. military campaign through Judah and Israel, made it a point to destroy Solomon’s fort at Ezion-geber.⁸⁰ As Lawrence E. Stager has persuasively argued, port cities and the related sea-trade exerted great power in ancient societies and played a significant role in national and international affairs.⁸¹ Therefore, it is not surprising that Israel, endowed with access

⁷⁷ Among Solomon’s foreign wives was a Tyrian princess; see 1 Kgs 11:1, where Sidon is likely a general term for both Sidon and Tyre. Psalm 45 may have been composed on the occasion of Solomon’s marriage to this Tyrian princess.

⁷⁸ The exact nature of Solomon’s relationship to the Tyrian king Hiram is ambiguous. 1 Kgs 9:10–14 suggest Solomon may have been less than his equal.

⁷⁹ See 1 Kgs 4:11. Stieglitz, *Maritime Activity*, 155–57; “Hebrew Seafaring,” 10; and Yeivin, “Maritime Policy?” 204.

⁸⁰ Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, 290; Stieglitz, *Maritime Activity*, 158ff.; Yeivin, “Maritime Policy?” 207–209. See 1 Kgs 14:25–26; 2 Chr 12:2–4.

⁸¹ Lawrence E. Stager, “Port Power in the Early and the Middle Bronze Age: The Organization of Maritime Trade and Hinterland Production,” in *Studies in the Archaeology of Israel and Neighboring Lands: In Memory of Douglas L. Esse* (SAOC 59; ed. S. R. Wolff; Atlanta: ASOR, 2001) 625–38.

to the two great seas of the Near East and having won an ally well versed in seafaring, nurtured nautical ambitions and that Egypt responded so forcefully soon after the death of Solomon and after Judah became an independent, weaker state.⁸²

It is also not surprising, in light of the lucrative nature of sea-trading, that Jehoshaphat (871–849 B.C.E.) attempted to refortify Ezion-geber and rebuilt a fleet there (1 Kgs 22:47–49; 2 Chr 20:35–37). Stieglitz is probably correct in arguing that the nautical knowledge to build seafaring ships and to launch a long-distance operation was not native to Judah (163–64). The necessary knowledge came directly from Tyre or, more likely, indirectly through Israel (2 Chr 20:35–37).⁸³ Stieglitz argues that an alliance among Jerusalem, Samaria, and Tyre, which continued long after Solomon, explains the exchange of goods and knowledge that made Jehoshaphat’s sea venture possible. A glance at the marriage relationships illustrates this well: Ahab married Jezebel, daughter of the Tyrian king Ethbaal II (1 Kgs 16:31), and Jehoshaphat allied himself to Ahab by marriage, presumably by marrying his son Jehoram to Ahab’s daughter, Athaliah (2 Chr 18:1; 2 Kgs 8:18). These alliances explain how Ahaziah, Ahab’s son, had the necessary nautical knowledge and why he helped Jehoshaphat (re)build a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber (2 Chr 20:35–37; cf. 1 Kgs 22:49). Jehoshaphat’s (failed) attempt to emulate Solomon was an international affair that involved Judah, Israel, and Tyre.

The Bible preserves no record of other sea-ventures, either successful or disastrous, after Jehoshaphat. However, Uzziah (776–736) is said to have rebuilt Elath,

⁸² Egyptian attempts to wrest control of the maritime trade in the Red Sea may go further back to during Solomon’s reign, resulting in a marriage alliance; see Yeivin, “Maritime Policy?” 203–204, 211–12.

⁸³ Stieglitz, *Maritime Activity*, 163–64.

near Ezion-geber on the Red Sea (2 Kgs 14:22; 2 Chr 26:2), which was lost to Edom under Joram (849–842) (2 Kgs 8:21–22) and regained by Uzziah’s father Amaziah (796–776) (2 Kgs 14:7). Because Elath was located where the King’s Highway and the Way of the Red Sea, important overland trade routes, met, it is possible that Uzziah rebuilt Elath only to protect and to tax the caravans that passed by there.⁸⁴ However, Elath’s location on the Red Sea, thus its strategic access to the Arabian market by sea, cannot be ignored. Judean kings likely continued to embark for the gold of Ophir from Elath until Edom wrested it from Judah one last time during Ahaz’s reign (735–715) (2 Kgs 16:5–6). A shard from Tell Qasile that reads “gold of ’Ophir,” dated to circa 700 B.C.E., further corroborates Stieglitz’s reconstruction of an aggressive, though not always successful or uninterrupted, maritime policy of Judahite and Israelite kings.⁸⁵

If Stieglitz is correct in hypothesizing that at least a contingency of the Israelites were seafaring, then we must take the geographical dimension of the sea more seriously as we try to understand Israel’s conception of the sea. “Without an awareness of the stage, the action of the drama cannot be fully understood.”⁸⁶ The Mediterranean Sea (and the Red Sea) was not just an awesome barrier to the Israelites, and it cannot be said that “seafaring and sea-trading played no part at all in Israel.”⁸⁷ Seafaring was not as important to Israel’s economic and political fortunes as were her agricultural,

⁸⁴ Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, 37.

⁸⁵ Stieglitz, *Maritime Activity*, 171–72; “Hebrew Seafaring,” 10.

⁸⁶ Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, xi.

⁸⁷ Noth, *History*, 13.

horticultural, and pastoral enterprises and controlling the overland trading routes.⁸⁸ But any account of the complex matrix of Israelite economy and politics must take account of her ventures at sea. Far from being landbound, the Israelites knew well both the great promise, realized under Solomon, and the fearsome danger, as Jehoshaphat witnessed, the sea affords. The sea was both a source of boon and bust.

Psalm 107 bears eloquent witness to Israel's two-sided attitude toward the sea and demonstrates that the sea was a part of the quotidian life for at least some Israelites and a part of the religious imagination of many worshipful Israelites:

²³ Those who went down to the sea in ships,
Doing business on the mighty waters,
²⁴ They saw the deeds of YHWH,
His wonders in the deep.
²⁵ He spoke and raised the stormy wind,
Which lifted up its waves.
²⁶ They rose to heaven, they went down to the depths.
Their courage melted away in the calamity.
²⁷ They reeled and staggered like drunkards,
And all their skill was confounded. (107:23–27)

Israelite seamen recognized that they risked their lives when they embarked for the sea. But they did, first because of the promise of “business” (מלאכה) but also because of their faith that YHWH is lord over the chaotic waters:

²⁸ Then they cried to YHWH in their trouble,
And he brought them out from their distress.
²⁹ He made the storm be still,
And the waves of the sea were hushed.

⁸⁸ John S. Holladay, Jr., “How Much Is that in... ? Monetization, Money, Royal Estates, and Empires” in *Exploring the Longue Durée: Essays in Honor of Lawrence E. Stager* (ed. David Schloen; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009) 207–222.

³⁰ Then they were glad because they had quiet,
And he brought them to their desired haven. (107:28–30)

YHWH, who is able to deliver them from the mighty waters, was their cause for
thanksgiving:

³¹ Let them thank YHWH for his steadfast love,
For his wonders to humankind.
³² And let them exalt him in the congregation of the people,
And praise him in the assembly of the elders. (107:31–32)

Here, we find a natural marriage between Israel’s geographic knowledge of the sea as a
place of work and her appreciation of it as a cosmic entity whose power would
overwhelm them were it not for God who is for them and quiets the raging sea and brings
them to safety. We note that this picture is not too different from another psalm that
sings of how YHWH delivered Israel from the sea:

² Had it not been for YHWH who was for us...
⁴ Then the waters would have swept us away
And the torrent would have gone over us,
⁵ Then over us would have gone
The raging waters. (Ps 124:2a, 4–5)

B. Lakes (Inland Seas)

Ancient Israelites did not distinguish sharply between seas and oceans, on the one
hand, and lakes and inland seas, on the other. Seas and lakes were both large bodies of
water they called יָם.⁸⁹ The two major lakes of Israel, Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea,

⁸⁹ They did distinguish, however, fresh water (מים חיים) though this might simply mean
“running water”; Gen 26:19; Lev 14:50; etc.; or מים מתוקים: Ex 15:25) from salt water.

together with the Jordan River, form the eastern border of the Promised Land. The northern lake, the Sea of Galilee, is characterized by sweet water and its abundant life. The southern lake, the Dead Sea, is salt and characterized by death.

It is for good reason that the Rabbis said of the Sea of Chinnereth (ים־כְּנֶרֶת or (סֵי־תֹרֵנֶכ),⁹⁰ “The Lord hath created seven seas, but the Sea of Gennesaret [Chinnereth] is His delight.”⁹¹ The Sea of Chinnereth, the only sweet water lake in Israel, teemed with life. Though it was subject to “sudden storms which blow down from the surrounding mountains,” as we see in the New Testament gospels (Matt 8:23–27 and parallels), it was home to an abundance of fish and fishermen (Luke 5:1–11; John 21:4–8).⁹² In fact, “the affluence of the seas” with which Moses blesses Zebulun may refer not only to the Mediterranean Sea but also to the Sea of Chinnereth (Deut 33:19).

If the Sea of Chinnereth is a source of fresh water and fish, the Dead Sea is its antithesis. Connected by the Jordan River to the Sea of Chinnereth, the Dead Sea is one of the saltiest bodies of water in the world and supports no life.⁹³ The Dead Sea is known by several names in the Hebrew Bible: ים המלח (Gen 14:3; Deut 3:17), ים הערבה (Deut 3:17), הים הקדמוני (Ezek 47:18; Joel 2:20; Zech 14:8), and simply ים (Isa 16:8; Jer 48:32; Ezek 39:11; 47:8). Its primary Hebrew appellation, the Salt Sea, is quite apt, since its

⁹⁰ ים־כְּנֶרֶת: Num 34:11, Josh 13:27. ים־כְּנֶרֶת: Josh 12:3. The lake owes its name to the city of Chinnereth on its western shore (Deut 3:17; Josh 11:2).

⁹¹ Cited in Smith, *Historical Geography*, 286.

⁹² Aharoni, *Land of the Bible*, 30.

⁹³ It does support microbial life.

saltiness was well known even in antiquity.⁹⁴ Smith captures something of the beauty and terribleness of the Dead Sea in relating it to the tradition concerning Sodom and Gomorrah, cities closely related to the Dead Sea:

In this awful hollow, this bit of the infernal regions come to the surface, this hell with the sun shining on it, primitive man laid the scene of the most terrible judgment on human sin. The glare of Sodom and Gomorrah is flung down the whole length of Scripture history. It is the popular and standard judgment of sin.⁹⁵

The name that has come to dominate in modern times, then, is also fitting: ἡ θάλασσα ἡ νεκρά.⁹⁶ The Dead Sea and its lifeless environs symbolized sin and its punishment often in the Hebrew Bible and became, for Ezekiel, the perfect stage on which God would demonstrate his mercy and power in transforming this most infernal place into a site of miraculous healing and revivification, full of fish for fishing and fruit for eating (Ezek 47:1–12).

C. Rivers

⁹⁴ Aristotle (*Meteorology* [trans. E. W. Webster; Raleigh, NC: Alex Catalogue, 2000] II.3) mentions the Dead Sea in his inquiry concerning the saltiness of sea water: “Again if, as is fabled, there is a lake in Palestine, such that if you bind a man or beast and throw it in it floats and does not sink, this would bear out what we have said. They say that this lake is so bitter and salt that no fish live in it and that if you soak clothes in it and shake them it cleans them.”

⁹⁵ Smith, *Historical Geography*, 324.

⁹⁶ Pausanias seems to have first used the term around 175 C.E., though it may go back as far back as the 1st century C.E.; F.-M. Abel, *Géographie de la Palestine*, 2 vols. (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1933 & 1938) 502.

Ancient Israelites distinguished rivers from seas and lakes. However, large rivers could be and were called ים. This synonymity was not simply poetic or hyperbolic.⁹⁷ The parallelism between ים and נהר is common in Ugaritic texts and is not uncommon in the Hebrew Bible.⁹⁸ The lexical fluidity, as we will see in more detail shortly, allowed for the transference of themes and motifs from one body of water to the other.

The Nile River, usually called היאר or יאר, is called ים in Isa 18:2; 19:5; Ezek 32:2; and Nah 3:8. The plural יארים (as in יארי מצרים; Isa 7:18) probably refers to the numerous branches into which the Nile splits as it empties into the Mediterranean Sea. And שיחור (“waters of Horus”; Jos 13:3; Isa 23:3 and Jer 2:18) is a religious name for the Nile.⁹⁹ The Nile River defined the wealth and might of Egypt. Smith puts it well: “Every one knows the incomparableness of the Nile, solitary and stupendous, which, unfed for a thousand miles by tributary or by rain, has sustained of its own resource the civilization of a mighty empire, and still, by his annual flood, bestows on the desert a fertility not excelled in any country, which has the fountains of heaven and of the great deep in its fortune.”¹⁰⁰ The annual flooding of the Nile, which Smith mentions, was well known. Jeremiah and Amos mention it (Jer 46:7–8; Amos 8:8; 9:5). In Genesis 41, Pharaoh’s dream clearly ties Egypt’s fortunes to the Nile. For Ezekiel, the Nile was the foremost among the pride of Egypt and the topic of Pharaoh’s boasting (Ezek 29:3, 9). Finally,

⁹⁷ Pace the opinion of Simons (*Geographical Texts*, 32, 69).

⁹⁸ For instances where ים stands in parallel to נהר (or נהרות) in the Hebrew Bible, see Isa 11:15; 19:5; 48:18; 50:2; Ezek 32:2; Jon 2:4; Nah 1:4; Hab 3:8; Ps 24:2; 66:6; 80:12; 89:26; and Job 14:2. For instances in Ugaritic literature, see *KTU* 1.2 III 20-21; 1.3 III 38-39; etc.

⁹⁹ Simons, *Geographical Texts*, 69; Reymond, *L'eau*, 89.

¹⁰⁰ Smith, *Historical Geography*, 301.

Jeremiah, who has a penchant for daring equations, identifies Egypt with the Nile (Jer 2:18).

Jeremiah also identified Assyria with its great river, the Euphrates (Jer 2:18). נהר is the proper name for the Euphrates in Hebrew. However, it is often called the Great River (נהר הגדול: Gen 15:18; Deut 1:7)¹⁰¹ or simply the River (הנהר: Deut 11:24; 2 Sam 10:16; 1 Kgs 5:1, 4; etc.).¹⁰² In the Hexateuch, it marks the northern/western border of the Promised Land (Ex 23:31; Deut 1:7; 11:24; Josh 1:4). The Euphrates River is called ים in Jer 51:36, 51:42, and possible also in Isa 21:1.¹⁰³ The Euphrates, with the Tigris, is the great river that defines Mesopotamia, the land “between the rivers.”

The great river in Israel is the Jordan River. The Jordan River constitutes a formidable boundary and a barrier because of the deep valley through which it flows and the impressive mountains that outline either bank.¹⁰⁴ Thus, as with the Euphrates, one can refer to the land on either side of the Jordan River as “beyond the Jordan” (עבר

¹⁰¹ The only exception occurs in Dan 10:4, where it refers to the Tigris.

¹⁰² The Euphrates is called “the River” in the phrase, “beyond the River” (עבר הנהר or עבר-הנהר), which can designate the land west of the Euphrates (Ezr 4:10) or more often the land east of the Euphrates (Josh 24:2; 2 Sam 10:16; Isa 7:20).

¹⁰³ Isa 21:1 introduces an oracle concerning Babylon as “an oracle concerning the wilderness of the sea” (משא מדבריים). מדבריים, “the wilderness of the sea,” is problematic and numerous emendations and explanations have been offered; see Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 301–302. Babylon is located near neither the wilderness nor the sea (ibid., 301). However, Franz Delitzsch (*Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah* [trans. James Denney; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1891] 344) points out that southern Babylonia was called *mat tihamtiv*, “sea-land,” and its king *sar (mat) tihamtiv*, “king of the sea(-land),” and conjectures that מדבריים may be a (loose) translation of the Akkadian term *mat tihamtiv*. Joseph Blenkinsopp (*Isaiah 1–40* [AB 19; New York: Doubleday, 2000] 324) agrees; but Wildberger (*Isaiah 13–27*, 301) disagrees. If Delitzsch is correct, then we have here another instance where the Euphrates, with the Tigris, is called ים.

¹⁰⁴ Smith, *Historical Geography*, 316.

(הַדְרִיָּה).¹⁰⁵ But unlike the Euphrates and the Nile, the Jordan is never called יַם in the Hebrew Bible. Perhaps, the immediately apparent contrast between the Jordan and the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea was too great to allow for this equation. In any case, the conceptual fluidity between seas and rivers persisted and allowed the Israelites to compare the Jordan River with, most importantly, the Red Sea of the Exodus tradition. The comparison between the Jordan River and the Red Sea formed an *inclusio* in the early history of Israel, bracketing the wilderness wanderings. Israel's crossing the Jordan River to enter the Promised Land became the typological repetition and the mirroring event of her crossing the Red Sea in exiting Egypt. Within this narrative structure, the end resembles the beginning. Israel's identity, forged at the Red Sea, did not fully solidify until she entered the Promised Land: redemption and land, exodus from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan, are two sides of the same coin.

Psalm 114 illustrates this point beautifully.¹⁰⁶ Verses 1–2 introduce the topic:

¹ When Israel went out from Egypt,
The house of Jacob from a people of strange language,
² Judah became his sanctuary,
Israel his dominion.

Verse 1 briefly recounts Israel's exodus from Egypt. Then the scene in verse 2 jumps abruptly to a moment after Israel's conquest of Canaan as if to suggest, by poetic ellipses,

¹⁰⁵ As we saw with the phrase “beyond the River,” the analogous phrase, “beyond the Jordan” could refer to either the land to the east (Deut 1:5; etc.) or the west of the Jordan (Josh 5:1; 12:7; 22:7; 1 Chr 26:30), depending on one's perspective.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Ps 66:6.

that coming out of Egypt is tantamount to entering the Promised Land.¹⁰⁷ This jarring, and for that reason powerful, equation is played out in verses 3 and 5, where crossing the Red Sea is repeatedly juxtaposed to and identified with crossing the Jordan River:

³ The Sea looked and fled.
The Jordan turned back.

...
⁵ Why is it, O Sea, that you flee?
O Jordan, that you turn back?

The almost artless and rigid synonymous parallelisms insist that the Red Sea and the Jordan River are one and the same, yet they resist total equation. The miracle at the Red Sea under Moses and the equally awesome miracle at the Jordan River under Joshua are here typologically equated but not confused.¹⁰⁸ The miracles at the Red Sea and the Jordan River remain distinct even as they are celebrated as a single event. They are two moments in the single event of Israel's birth as a nation. This typological logic accounts for the ability of biblical writers to see fundamentally the same mythological event in radically different historical moments. We suggest that, in this particular instance, the lexical fluidity between ים and נהר made the conflation of the Sea Event and the miracle at the River Jordan not only possible but also believable and powerful.¹⁰⁹

D. Conclusion

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Joshua 3–4, esp. 4:23.

¹⁰⁸ It is not necessary, for our present purposes, to determine which of the two traditions arose first.

¹⁰⁹ For an extended treatment of this topic, in light of comparative materials, see Stéphanie Anthonioz, *L'eau, enjeux politiques et théologique, de Sumer à la Bible* (VTSupp 131; Leiden: Brill, 2009) 157–222.

Oceans, lakes, and rivers make up what the ancients Israelites understood by יָם, a flexible word that can denote any large body of water whose shores are distant from one another. This lexical and the related conceptual fluidity between rivers, lakes, and oceans is an important datum for our efforts to reconstruct an emic definition of יָם. The ancient Israelites were well aware of the different characteristics between these bodies of water, as Raymond's careful study of terms used to describe water demonstrate.¹¹⁰ At the same time, this fluidity allowed them to compare seas and rivers, a conceptual flexibility that, as we saw briefly, powerfully colored their perception of their physical world and their history.

III. The Sea in Sacred Space

Mircea Eliade defines sacred space, as opposed to profane space, as a place where heirophany takes place, where there occurs “a break in the homogeneity of space” and a “revelation of an absolute reality, opposed to the nonreality of the vast surrounding expanse.”¹¹¹ He demonstrates, through the survey of evidence from a variety of cultures, that the sacred, for the religious person, “reveals absolute reality and at the same time makes orientation possible; hence [that] it *founds the world* in the sense that it fixes its

¹¹⁰ Raymond, *L'eau*, discussions throughout and esp. pp. 256–71, where he lists all Hebrew terms related to water.

¹¹¹ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (trans. Willard R. Trask; New York: Harcourt, 1959) 21.

limits and establishes the order of the world.”¹¹² Thus, every hierophany is a repetition of a cosmogony, the creation and ordering of space, and marks the center of the world.

This does not mean that, within a given religious system, there can exist only one, central sacred space. Rather, Eliade recognizes that “the symbolism of the center is the formative principle not only of countries, cities, temples, and palaces but also of the humblest human dwelling.”¹¹³ A multitude of “centers” can exist in sacred space, though not all of the same centrality. In concrete terms, the humble family cult center shares, be it in lesser intensity, the sacrality of the royal temple at the cosmic mountain as a locus of hierophany.

We can supplement Eliade’s phenomenological description of sacred space, within the framework being constructed in this chapter, with the categories of geographical space and cosmological space. Thus we define sacred space as the coincidence of geographical space and cosmic space, or more precisely the revelation of the cosmic significance of geographical space.¹¹⁴ Bethel, in this regard, is a clear example of sacred space, of geographical space whose cosmic significance is revealed in a revelatory vision (Gen 28:10–22). In a dream of the night, God appears to Jacob and promises him that he and his descendants will inherit the land to the west, east, north, and

¹¹² Ibid., 30.

¹¹³ Ibid., 65.

¹¹⁴ Here, I echo Henri Lefebvre’s triadic notion of physical, mental, and social space, where space as it is perceived (physical) and conceived (mental) is unified under the category of lived (social) space. The space we occupy is not only physical but also mental. And the process of transforming the physical space into a space as it is conceived produces the space in which we actually live. Thus, according to my application of Lefebvre, the space in which the ancients lived is sacred space defined by both its physicality and its cosmic significance as or in relation to a sacred center.

south of Bethel (28:14), thus making Bethel the center of a new spatial order. Upon waking up, Jacob anoints the stone he had used as a pillow and marks as sacred the literal locus of the propitious vision. The place of the vision thus attains cosmic significance as the center of the world.

In defining sacred space as the coincidence of geographic space and cosmic space, we note that all geographic space is sacred to some extent, since all geographic spaces constitute a part of cosmic space. Thus the whole earth, within the Israelite conception of space, is sacred by the very fact that God established it upon the sea and safeguards it from the threat of chaos by divine decision and volition. The entire earth is a revelation of and a witness to divine activity. The psalmist declares:

¹ The earth is YHWH's and the fullness thereof;
The world, and all its inhabitants;
² For he has founded it on the seas,
And established it on the rivers. (Ps 24:1–2)

The sea, in contrast to earth, might be thought of as the least sacred of any space, even as anti-sacred. In Psalm 46, the sea and its waters (and the nations) rebel against what Levenson describes as “the one great fact of reality: that YHWH is God.”¹¹⁵ It would appear, therefore, that the sea was thought to be an exception to the sacralizability of space. However, even the seas become the seat of God's throne within the biblical understanding of space. As we discussed above, God is enthroned upon the upper sea in his heavenly temple and upon the lower sea in his earthly temple. God's mastery over all the cosmos, in one sense, was thought to be revealed in his enthronement over the seas, and the controlled behavior of the sea in restraint and release testifies to God's office and

¹¹⁵ Levenson, *Sinai*, 153.

work as king and creator. Thus the psalmist sees in the raging sea and the silent sea cause to praise and thank God. The raging sea points to God as the one who stirs the sea (107:25) and the silent sea to God as the one who quiets it (107:29). All of creation, even the seas, could be thought of as testifying to “the one great fact of reality: that YHWH is God.” It is without irony that the psalmist commands:

⁴ Praise him, you highest of heavens
And the waters above the heavens! (Ps 148:4)

If all space in Israelite cosmology is sacred or at least sacralizable, it no longer makes sense to talk in terms of a “break” in the homogeneity of space or the “revelation” of absolute reality. All space, understood within its appropriate cosmic context, has an absolute value, negative or positive, and therefore is sacred. The sacredness of all space, however, should not blind us to the fact that there exists a hierarchy among spaces, between center and periphery, between above and below, that determines the relative value and potency of the sacrality of a place. Eliade’s observation that “the tent of a nomad hunter, the shepherd’s yurt, or the house of a sedentary cultivator” can be and is conceived of as the center of the world because “every religious man places himself at the Center of the World and by the same token at the very source of absolute reality” is correct.¹¹⁶ However, this same person and the society to which he belongs recognize and appreciate the difference between lesser and greater sacred spaces between, say, his family cultic nook and the Holy of Holies.

Ronald Abler, John S. Adams, and Peter Gould provide a helpful description that differentiates between lesser and greater centers of the world:

¹¹⁶ Eliade, *Sacred*, 65.

It is tiresome and even humbling for the observer to be thus fettered, to be obliged to carry with him everywhere the center of the landscape he is crossing. But what happens when chance directs his steps to a point of vantage from which, not only his vision, but things themselves radiate? In that event the subjective viewpoint coincides with the way things are distributed objectively, and perception reaches its apogee. The landscape lights up and yields its secrets.¹¹⁷

This description helps us distinguish the centrality of a nomad's hut from the centrality of a cosmic mountain. The former is center to the private life of an individual or a family, the latter to the life of an entire people. The difference lies in that, in the former, only its regular occupants recognize its sacrality perhaps as a consequence of habit whereas, in the latter, all those who come to the space either by chance or by ritual custom experience the coincidence of “the subjective viewpoint... with the way things are distributed objectively.”

A given culture can support a limited number of “objective” centers. To move our discussion to the biblical world, within ancient Israel, Bethel, Dan, Gilgal, and Shiloh were such centers at one point in history. There is, however, only one enduring center of the world for biblical Israel: the Jerusalem Temple on Zion. While cults were established at family residences, local high places, and regional temples, the Jerusalem Temple came to dominate the religious landscape since the time of David and Solomon and continued to do so well after the Israelites lost control of the space.¹¹⁸ Not surprisingly, the sea plays a significant role in defining the sacrality of the Jerusalem Temple.

¹¹⁷ Ronald Abler, John S. Adams, and Peter Gould, *Spatial Organization: The Geographer's View of the World* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971) 10.

¹¹⁸ Christopher C. Park (*Sacred Words: An Introduction to Geography and Religion* [London: Routledge, 1994] 18) defines “religious geography” as a the study of geography

Jon D. Levenson, building on the works of Richard J. Clifford and Eliade, provides an excellent discussion on Zion as the cosmic mountain and on the Temple. For our purposes, we will focus on the traditions surrounding the Gihon spring. It will be argued that the Gihon was thought to be the sacral, cosmic, and paradisaical river whose waters swell up from the subterranean sea to water Jerusalem, Israel, and the entire world. The beneficent nature of the waters of Gihon speaks directly to God's dominion over the lower sea, a dominion which his enthronement over the sea enacted and symbolized.

Soon after David was anointed king over all Israel, he conquered the Jebusite city of Jerusalem, more specifically the Stronghold of Zion (2 Sam 5:6–7). He renamed it the City of David and established it as the capital of the young nation (5:9). Under David and Solomon, the City of David became not only the seat of political authority but also the religious center of Israel, the City of God (Ps 46:5). It became, both literally and metaphorically, the headquarters of the House of David and the House of YHWH.¹¹⁹

Mount Zion, on which Solomon built the Temple, was a hill in the southeast of the city between the Tyropoean and Kidron valleys.¹²⁰ On the eastern side of Mount Zion, in a cave in the Kidron Valley, there was a spring, the Gihon. The name Gihon, from the root גיה or גהג (“to burst forth”), means something like “Gusher.” Mordechai

“which ‘focuses on religion’s role in shaping human perceptions of the world and of humanity’s place within it; its primary concerns are the role of theology and cosmology in the interpretation of the universe.’”

¹¹⁹ Levenson, *Sinai*, 97–101.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 92; Jan Jozef Simons, *Jerusalem in the Old Testament: Researches and Theories* (Leiden: Brill, 1952) 60–64.

Hecker estimates that its daily output varied from 200–1200 m³ of water from summer to winter.¹²¹ The frequency and volume of its intermittent flow was dependent on the season and the amount of rainfall. Fittingly, Isaiah described the Shiloah, a channel that carried water from the Gihon outside the city walls, as “gently flowing” (Isa 8:6). Despite its modest output, however, the Gihon spring was vital to the possibility of life on Zion and Jerusalem.¹²² Since the time of the Jebusite occupation of Jerusalem, a complex waterworks was developed throughout the centuries with the Gihon as its source.¹²³ Its importance as a source of water is evident in the fact that kings concerned themselves with the vulnerable outlet of the Gihon outside the city walls in times of war (Isaiah 7). And Hezekiah’s Tunnel, whose wonder visitors to Jerusalem can experience to this day, was a waterworks project undertaken to conceal the outlet outside the city wall and to redirect the water to an access point from within the protection of the city walls (2 Kgs 20:20; 2 Chr 32: 22–4, 30). Gihon was the only perennial freshwater source in Jerusalem, its lifeline.

Gihon was likely considered sacred already by the Jebusites. Before his death, David commanded the priest Zadok, the prophet Nathan, and Benaiah to anoint Solomon down by the Gihon, as opposed to on top of the Zion as might be expected (1 Kgs 1:32–34). If this was indeed David’s idea, he was following a Jebusite tradition. The presence of Zadok at the head of the Solomon group, as opposed to the Adonijah group headed by

¹²¹ Cited in David Tarler and Jane M. Cahill, “David, City of (Place),” *ABD II* (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 52–67, here 61.

¹²² Kathleen Mary Kenyon, *Jerusalem: Excavating 3000 Years of History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1967) 16.

¹²³ Simons, *Jerusalem*, 164–94.

the priest Abiathar, is telling. Zadok, who some scholars have argued was a Jebusite priest, may have informed David, too new to Jerusalem to have already developed strong traditions concerning its water source, about the sacred nature of Gihon.¹²⁴ The priest Abiathar, who was co-priest with Zadok in Jerusalem under David and supported Adonijah's claim to the throne, may have considered the nearby En-Rogel sacred, ignorant about the native Jebusite tradition about Gihon. This explains why Adonijah attempted to have himself proclaimed king at En-Rogel (1 Kgs 1:9–10, 41–48).¹²⁵ In the political race to succeed David as king, the strategic location of Gihon within the City of David and its sacramentality may have proved decisive. In any case, when Solomon became king, he built the Temple on Zion. The erection of the Temple further augmented the sacrality of Zion, and as Zion and Jerusalem grew in importance, so too did the importance of the humble spring Gihon.

¹²⁴ That Zadok was a Jebusite priest is far from certain. The supporting arguments discredit Zadok's genealogies (2 Sam 8:17; 1 Chr 5:29–34; 6:35–38) linking him to Aaron as "patent fictions" and note that the Hebrew root of Zadok's name, זָדוֹק, appear frequently in the Hebrew Bible in connection with Jerusalem (Melchizedek, Gen 14:18; Psalm 110; Adoni-zedek, Josh 10:1; Zekeiah, 2 Kgs 24:17–18) (George W. Ramsey, "Zadok (Person)," *ABD* VI: 1034–36). Frank Moore Cross (*Canaanite Myth, Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973] 209) criticizes these arguments as "painfully weak." He (*ibid.*) notes that the Semitic root *sdq* is common in Amorite, Ugaritic, Canaanite, and Hebrew names and far from secures a link between Zadok and Jerusalem. He (*ibid.*, 211–14) also argues against Wellhausen's judgment that Zadok's connection to Ahitub, and through him to Aaron, in 2 Sam 8:17 arose from textual corruption and finds no reason to doubt the authenticity of the Chronicler's genealogy. Positively, he (*ibid.*, 208) writes that David appointed as priests in his new capital of Jerusalem "Abiathar, scion of the Mushite house of Eli of the old northern sanctuary at Shiloh, and Zadok, scion of the Aaronide house of Hebron" in the south as a diplomatic linchpin to bind the north and the south by means of this unparalleled diarchy. The ambiguity of Zadok's lineage does not impinge on the core argument, that Gihon was considered to be sacred before the erection of the Temple and increased in its sacrality afterward.

¹²⁵ See Simons, *Jerusalem*, 158–60.

The Solomonic Temple was built according to a Canaanite pattern, known best to us from the remarkable excavation of a Syrian temple at ‘Ain Dara.¹²⁶ Thus the reign of Solomon would have been a period when other Canaanite conceptions about temples, cosmic mountains, and cosmic rivers were adopted. In the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle*, “the mountain of El” is repeatedly located “at the springs of the Rivers, amid the streams of the Deeps” (*KTU* 1.4 IV 20–24; also 1.3 V 6–7). Thus scholars have tried to identify a suitable geographical location for “the mountain of El” where both mountains and rivers exist. Mark Smith, in his extensive commentary on the first two tablets of the *Baal Cycle*, lists several candidates: Khirbet Afqa in the Lebanon where “the Nahr Ibrahim emerges from a cavern to plunge into a deep and verdant gorge,”¹²⁷ Mount Haman, “which bubbles with fountains at its foot,”¹²⁸ Mount Hermon where the Jordan River has its sources, and another “location in inland Syrian [*sic*].”¹²⁹ It is possible that each of these locations was regarded at some point by some group as the cosmic mountain and graced with an El temple.

The geographical location of biblical Israel’s cosmic mountain can only be at Zion. And if the Canaanite motif of cosmic rivers were to be integrated into Israelite tradition, it had to be attached to Gihon. One might object, at this point, that sacred geography does not need a physical referent. Certainly, it would be misguided to demand

¹²⁶ See John Monson, “The New ‘Ain Dara Temple: Closest Solomonic Temple,” *BAR* 26.3 (May/June 2000) 20–35, 67.

¹²⁷ Mark Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle, Volume I* (Leiden: Brill, 1994) 227. Henceforth *UBC I*.

¹²⁸ Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 38.

¹²⁹ Smith, *UBC I*, 227–230, here 230.

that a comparison of the characteristics of the cosmic mountain and the physical Jerusalem produce a perfect one-to-one map of correspondences. The sacred geography of Zion is shaped as much by the various traditions concerning the cosmic mountain as it is by the geographical givens of Mount Zion. However, sacred geography requires a physical referent, because sacred geography is a mode of perception more than the creation of fancy. It perceives the absolute reality underlying the physical world but does not lose sight of the latter. It cannot see a reality that is utterly alien to the world in which the religious person finds himself, lest it lose conviction. This is true for the sacred world of the Iron Age Israelite as it is, as we will see, for the apocalyptic visions of Daniel. The religious mind yearns for visible signs of invisible sacredness, and though it may augment reality so as to ascribe to what might appear to be an inconsequential object dignity and honor befitting its religious significance, say a small spring, it does not fabricate sacred reality out of figments of pure imagination. It is for this reason that I insist that the Gihon was host to the cosmic rivers of Canaanite tradition.

Given the modesty of the Gihon, it is perhaps not surprising that the Canaanite motif of the cosmic river in the Hebrew Bible becomes miniaturized. The sacred waters flowing from the Temple mount are called “stream” (פלג) and “fountain” (מקור) as often as they are called “river” or “torrent” (נהר or נחל). For example, Psalm 46 speaks of “a river (נהר) whose streams (פלג) make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the most high” (46:5). And Psalm 36 speaks of “the river (נהל) of your delights” and “the fountain (מקור) of life” in reference to “your,” that is, God’s house (46:9–10). Tellingly, Isaiah contrasts “the waters of Shiloah that flow gently” (8:6) with “the mighty flood waters of the Euphrates River” (8:7). The cosmic river at Zion is the quiet sort. In contrast to the

modesty of the psalmist's and Isaiah's portrayal of the streams of water in Zion, however, Ezekiel frees the Gihon from the limits of geography and describes the supernatural waters issuing from the Temple as risings like the waters of a flood, not for destruction but for revivification, for transforming the moribund scenery of the Dead Sea to one teeming with life (Ezek 47:1–12; cf. Isa 8:8; 30:28). In a similar fashion, Zechariah prophesies that the waters will, after cleansing Jerusalem (13:1), reach the ends of the earth (14:8).

There is a third and final source of tradition that shaped the miraculous characteristics of the Gihon, a development internal to Israel. According to the pre-exilic J account of creation (Gen 2:4b–14), “a river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches”: the Pishon, the Gihon, the Tigris, and the Euphrates (vv 10–14). The final two rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, are well known and suggest a northern, Mesopotamian location for the Garden of Eden.¹³⁰ The first two are less well known. In fact, the first river, the Pishon, from the root פִּישׁוֹן (‘‘to spring about’’), meaning something like ‘‘Bubbler,’’ is unattested outside of this passage. It is said to flow through the land of Havilah (Gen 2:11), but the location of Havilah itself is uncertain. The Table of Nations (Genesis 10) mentions Havilah twice along with the descendants of Ham (v 7) and of Shem (v 29). These references suggest a location for Havilah and Pishon either in the Egyptian world or in the Semitic world, probably Arabia, but importantly not in the north with the Tigris and the Euphrates.¹³¹ As for the

¹³⁰ Levenson, *Sinai*, 129–30.

¹³¹ Cf. Gen 25:18. See Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 217–18, for a review of scholarly opinions concerning the location of Havilah.

Gihon, some scholars are hesitant to equate the paradisaal Gihon to the Gihon in Zion.¹³²

That the Edenic Gihon River “flows around the whole land of Cush” (Gen 2:13), Ethiopia or the country of the Kassites, supports non-identity.¹³³ However, we cannot ignore the fact that the sacred spring in Zion was known by the same name.

Furthermore, the divergence of the locations of the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers, on the one hand, and the Pishon, on the other, loosens the tie between the description of the paradisaal landscape and geography. The aim of the passage was not, as von Rad thought, to transpose paradise into “our historical and geographical world.”¹³⁴ Rather, it may have been to link the cosmic waters of Zion to the paradisaal waters of Eden that waters the entire surface of the earth. If not, later readers of the early J tradition would certainly have made the link. Levenson writes, “Thus, whatever *Gîhôn* originally meant, it surely served as a conduit between two similar complexes of tradition, that of Jerusalem-Zion, whose roots lie most immediately in the Late Bronze Age Canaan, and that of the Garden of Eden, whose roots lie ultimately in Mesopotamia.”¹³⁵ As he suggests, it is likely that Zion, the cosmic mountain, and Eden,

¹³² Richard J. Clifford (*The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament* [HSM 4; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972] 101 n. 5) rejects an identity between the two Gihons.

¹³³ E. A. Speiser (*Genesis* [AB 1; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964] 20) favors its location in the land of the Kassites, where he locates the other three rivers. Westermann (*Genesis I–II*, 218) entertains both Ethiopia and the land of the Kassites but judiciously concludes, “We cannot then identify the first two rivers [Pishon and Gihon] with any rivers known to us.”

¹³⁴ Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*. Revised Edition (trans. John H. Marks; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972) 79. See Levenson, *Sinai*, 131.

¹³⁵ Levenson, *Ezekiel*, 29.

the paradisaal garden, were equated long before the exilic Ezekiel (Ezek 28: 13–14).¹³⁶ In sum, the miraculous properties of the water of Gihon in the various psalms and prophetic visions may stem from its connection to the Garden of Eden and God’s creative power manifest in it. For the psalmists, the waters flowing from the Temple sustain life, that is, creation. In the eschatological visions of Ezekiel, Joel, and Second Zechariah, the living waters of Zion usher in a new era of vitality and perfection, the second creation, just as the river of paradise made herbs and plants grow out of the dry ground at first creation.

As we discussed above, in the Hebrew Bible all waters were thought to be linked. The seas below and around the earth are, in fact, continuous. And this sea, the lower sea and the supernal sea were thought to have been, at least in the Priestly writings, originally a unity. Despite the unity of the seas, however, we have also seen that water can be both malevolent and beneficent. The destructive power of water is not dependent on whether it falls from the upper sea or rises up from the lower sea. The differentiating principle lies in God’s exercise of his mastery over the waters in their dispensation. He can allow the waters to rise from below to nourish, as in the case of the paradisaal rivers, or unleash it to decimate, as in the case of Noah’s flood. He can also let fall rain from above in

¹³⁶ For a fuller discussion of the equation of the Garden of Eden with Zion, the Mountain of God, see Jon D. Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40–48* (HSM 10; Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1976) 25–36; Howard N. Wallace, *The Eden Narrative* (HSM 32; Atlanta: Scholars, 1985) 84–86; Lawrence E. Stager, “Jerusalem as Eden,” *BAR* 26.3 (May/June 2000) 38–47; and Job Y. Jindo, *Biblical Metaphor Reconsidered: A Cognitive Approach to Poetic Prophecy in Jeremiah 1–24* (HSM 64; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010) 152–79. Contra Clifford (*Cosmic Mountain*, 159), Levenson and Wallace argue that the equation between Eden and Zion occurred long before Ezekiel, during the United Monarchy or shortly thereafter. The Mesopotamian parallels that Stager (“Jerusalem”) mentions strengthen the probability of an early convergence of motifs.

season or out of season to destroy. The withholding of water is consistently understood as a curse in the Hebrew Bible.

The waters of Zion, because they originate at the mountain of God, cannot do ill. They are always good. Isaiah, in comparing the waters of the Shiloah and the waters of the Euphrates, suggests that volume makes a difference (8:5–8). Too much water is destructive, whereas the gently flowing waters of the Shiloah are for life. This is half correct. When it comes to the waters that issue from Zion, the goodly effects of water are not dependent on the volume of water. Whether the waters are gently flowing (Isaiah 8) or engulf the entire landscape (Ezekiel 47), they always do good. Water that proceeds from the center of world, the Temple of God, is always a revelation of God's kingship and the means of dispensing his creative power.

God's enthronement over the lower sea at the Temple enacts and symbolizes his kingship. Various strands of tradition worry about how God can dwell in an earthly temple. So the Deuteronomist speaks about the Name of God: "But you shall seek the place that YHWH your God will choose out of all your tribes as his habitation to put his name there" (Deut 12:5). The Priestly writers and Ezekiel prefer to speak of the Glory of God: "This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of YHWH" (Ezek 1:28). Trito-Isaiah locates God squarely in heaven and seems to reject the very notion of an earthly temple:

¹ Heaven is my throne
And the earth is my footstool;
Where is the house that you would build for me,
And where is my resting place? (66:1)

Yet the visionary experience of Isaiah of Jerusalem in the Temple reveals a telling image: “In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple” (6:1). To enter the Temple was to enter the very presence of God enthroned therein.¹³⁷ Thus, what we have in the Temple on Zion, whose base is in the lower sea, in at least some strands of Israelite tradition, is a figuration of God’s enthronement over the upper sea. God’s enthronement over the supernal sea in heaven and the infernal sea in the Temple symbolizes and enacts his lordship. From there, he exercises his kingship, a kingship – as we will soon see – he established at the time of creation, maintains throughout history, and promises to fulfill in glory in the eschaton.

¹³⁷ “The earthly Temple is thus the vehicle that conveys the prophet into the supernal Temple, the real Temple, the Temple of YHWH and his retinue, and not merely the artifacts that suggest them. The Temple is an institution common to the heavenly and the terrestrial realms; they share it” (Levenson, *Sinai*, 123).

Part II. Sea Myth

In the previous chapter, we examined the spatial aspect of the sea and found that God can release its waters, overwhelmingly abundant in the cosmos, to destroy earth or to nourish life on it. Thus, we characterized life on earth within Israelite cosmology as a double miracle, requiring the expulsion of the sea from the earth and the measured distribution of its waters. Behind these miracles, we posited a relationship between God and his creation, his people, and his temple, a relationship with a history. In chapter 3, we turn to the part of that history that Israel possessed as a common inheritance with her ancient Near Eastern neighbors, more specifically, the pattern of themes and motifs closely related to the deified sea, what I call the sea myth pattern, in the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle* and the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*. Then in chapter 4, we examine the reflections of the sea myth pattern in the Hebrew Bible.

Our analysis differentiates between the sea myth, which is a story, and the sea myth pattern. It does not, however, concern itself directly with narrative at this state of the study but rather with themes and motifs that make up the sea myth pattern. In both Ugarit and Babylon, we find myths in which a deified sea, Yamm or Tiamat, respectively, plays the role of antagonist in a narrative centered around the rise of a protagonist god, Baal or Marduk, to kingship.¹ Divine combat follows or precedes the exaltation of the

¹ Questions concerning the narrative unity of the *Baal Cycle* (KTU 1.1–1.6) persist. A typical view is that the six tablets are the “basic cycle” of the myth but are not a “redactional unity.” See Smith, *UBC I*, 4. In this vein, some scholars divide the *Cycle* into three discontinuous narratives, KTU 1.1–2, 3–4, and 5–6. Because of the many lacunae in the preserved narrative, not infrequently at key junctures, it is not possible to argue definitively for either unity or discontinuity. However, numerous thematic links between the three episodes speak in favor of unity. To start with, the drama across the

protagonist god to kingship and is followed by creative acts and the erection of the deity's temple.² The cluster of mythic themes: combat, kingship, creation, and temple, is presented in narrative form. In contrast, the Hebrew Bible does not contain a myth that narrates a continuous drama between a sea god and YHWH. Nevertheless, it does contain fragmentary reflections of all parts of the sea myth pattern.

Chapter 3. The Sea Myth in the Ancient Near East

In 1895, Gunkel published the first full comparative study of the sea imagery in the Hebrew Bible, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit*.³ During his days, it was only possible to look to the East Semitic world for parallels to the biblical accounts of God's battles with the sea monsters and his subjugations of the primeval sea. The literary treasures of Nineveh in Assyria, near modern Mosul, were rediscovered shortly after

six tablets progress in a logical manner: 1.1–2 recounts Baal's rise to kingship; 1.3–4 his attainment of its full privileges, i.e., a palace; and 1.5–6 his endurance as king in the face of strong opposition from Mot. Thematic repetitions across the three episodes, not directly related to Baal, also speak in favor of unity. One, Athtar complains that, though king, he does not have a palace and taunts Yamm that he does not have a wife (1.2 III 19–22). These themes anticipate Baal's pursuit of a palace of his own (1.3–4) and his concern for the safety of his daughters, possibly wives, Tallay, Didray, and Arsay (1.4 VI 7–13). Tallay, Didray, and Arsay are called Baal's daughters (*bnth*, "his daughters, 1.3 I 22–25) but Athirat calls them "brides" (*klt*, 1.4 IV 54). Two, Yamm's messengers, at his own command, demonstrate lack of proper etiquette in approaching El (1.2 I 14–19, 30–35) just like Anat (cf. 1.3 V 4–9 and 1.4 IV 20–30), which may be a hint that Yamm's kingdom is disorderly. I will return to this latter point below. For a review of various positions concerning the issue of unity, see Smith, *UBC I*, 4–15.

² Some scholars argue that no relationship exists between Baal's defeat of Yamm and creation. For a review of various positions regarding the relationship between Baal and creation, see Smith, *Baal Cycle*, 75–87.

³ Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos*.

1842, when Austen Henry Layard, an English adventurer, and others began digging there.⁴ Decipherment of Akkadian and a limited study of the literature followed. Then, George Smith's 1872 discovery of an Akkadian flood story, an apparent parallel to the Genesis flood story, energized the study of Akkadian literature, particularly for the light it might shed on the Bible. It was within this climate that Gunkel entered the world of Assyriology with the assistance of a colleague at Halle, where Gunkel taught 1889–94, the Assyriologist Heinrich Zimmern.⁵ Struck by the mythological imagery in Revelation 12, then in Genesis 1, Gunkel traced the history of the tradition back to what he believed was its ultimate source, the Babylonian creation epic, *Enuma Elish*. The result was *Schöpfung und Chaos* (English translation, *Creation and Chaos*), a classic demonstration of the traditio-historical method in which Gunkel defended a bold thesis: the roots of the biblical traditions about creation and the eschaton lay outside the Bible in ancient Mesopotamia.

Creation and Chaos “has not remained a definitive statement of the problem it studied.”⁶ However, its method of tracing the “tradition history” within and outside the boundaries of the Bible has continued to foster studies that lead to better understandings

⁴ Austen Henry Layard, *Discoveries at Nineveh* (Derby, NY: Assyrian International News Agency, 1854) 7; available on-line at www.aina.org/books/dan.html. For a brief account of when and how the tablets of the *Enuma Elish* were discovered, see Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of Creation* (2nd ed.; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951) 1–2.

⁵ Rudolf Smend, “Hermann Gunkel,” in his *From Astruc to Zimmerli: Old Testament Scholarship in Three Centuries* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007) 118–31, here 123.

⁶ Peter Machinist, foreword to *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton: A Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12*, by Hermann Gunkel (trans. K. William Whitney, Jr.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006) xv–xx, here xix.

of the Bible. This has been no more true than in the years following the discovery of the literary treasures of the ancient city of Ugarit in 1929 at modern Ras Shamra. Ugarit was a West Semitic port city, destroyed by the Sea Peoples at the end of the thirteenth century. It was geographically and culturally closer to Israel. Understandably, therefore, the mythological traditions preserved in its literary remains have in many cases supplemented and in others displaced Babylon as the more likely source for the biblical tradition of God's battle with the sea and sea monsters. In fact, Thorkild Jacobsen has argued, convincingly for many, that the depiction of Tiamat and Marduk in *Enuma Elish* as the deity of the sea and the deity of the thunderstorm, respectively, better fits a West Semitic background, where thunderstorms off the coast of the Mediterranean Sea would have been a frequent occurrence. He thus concluded that the origins of the underlying mythology of *Enuma Elish* are to be found in the West Semitic world and not in Mesopotamia.⁷ The Ugaritic *Baal Cycle*, therefore, may reflect both an older and a closer form of the mythological tradition that we find in the Hebrew Bible than the Mesopotamian *Enuma Elish*. Nevertheless, because the mythic theme of the battle between the god of order and the sea god, representing chaos, is so prevalent around the world, not just in the ancient Near East, it is not possible to ascribe priority definitively to either Canaan or Mesopotamia with any certainty.⁸ The issue of priority defies final arbitration and, fortunately for our study, is not critical. What is important is that both the West and East Semitic traditions of the sea myth, at different depths of the narrative

⁷ Thorkild Jacobsen, "The Battle Between Marduk and Tiamat," *JAOS* 88 (1968) 104–108. See also Day, *God's Conflict*, 1–7.

⁸ For a study of some of these cross-cultural exemplars, see Mary K. Wakeman, *God's Battle With the Monster: A Study in Biblical Imagery* (Leiden: Brill, 1973) 7–51.

structure, have left a mark on the Hebrew Bible. The fact and effect of this common heritage, which admit of both comparison and contrast, form the main literary concern of this chapter.

We turn, then, first to the putatively older tradition from Ugarit.

I. The Ugaritic *Baal Cycle*

In the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle*, beside Yamm (literally “sea”), there are two other deities directly related to the sea: Kothar-wa-Hasis (literally “Skilled and Wise”) and Athirat. Mark Smith reads “the young of Yamm” in *KTU* 1.6 V 4.⁹ We will first examine Kothar-wa-Hasis, Athirat, and “the young of Yamm” before we come to Yamm himself.

Kothar-wa-Hasis, or simply Kothar, is the Ugaritic craftsman god. He is the only figure among the third-tier gods whose function it was to serve the gods of the upper tiers, to appear in the *Baal Cycle*.¹⁰ His connections to the sea are several, though all of them are also tentative. First, Kothar is called “Son of Sea” (*bn ym*) and “Son of Confluence” (*bnm 'dt*) (*KTU* 1.4 VII 15–16). This reading is not certain. Some scholars have

⁹ Unless otherwise noted, English citations from *KTU* 1.1–2 are from Smith, *UBC I*; citations from 1.3–4 from Mark S. Smith and Wayne T. Pitard, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle, Volume II: Introduction with Text, Translation and Commentary of KTU/CAT 1.3–1.4* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), hence *UBC II*; and citations from 1.5–6 from Mark S. Smith, “The Baal Cycle,” in *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (SBLWAW 9; Place not given: Scholars, 1997) 81–180.

¹⁰ Smith and Pitard (*UBC II*, 46–51) categorize the gods of the *Baal Cycle* into four tiers; see also Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel’s Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 45–46, 54–58.

proposed a temporal reading of these terms, taking *ym* and *'dt* as “day” and “moment/hour,” respectively.¹¹ However, Smith and Pitard observe that only a spatial meaning of *'dt* is preserved in Ugarit, specifically related to the cosmic ocean: “the meeting point or confluence [*'dt*] of the ‘Double-Deeps,’ the cosmic oceans (*thmtm*).”¹² Thus, if *'dt* refers to the “confluence” of the cosmic oceans, then it would be “an appropriate parallel term to *ym*, ‘sea.’”¹³ In sum, “Son of Sea” and “Son of Confluence” are Kothar’s divine epithets that preserve the memory of his nautical origins. A few other observations support Kothar’s connection to the sea. Second, Kothar’s abode is identified as Kapthor, probably Crete, and Memphis, across the Mediterranean Sea in Egypt (1.1 III 18b–19).¹⁴ The location of Kothar’s home, particularly in the island of Crete bolsters Kothar’s watery heritage. Third, in an enigmatic passage, Kothar is mentioned with Tunnan, a sea monster, and may be imagined to be in the sea: “In the sea (*bym*) of Desire and Tunnan, Kothar-wa-Hasis banishes” (1.6 VI 51–52).¹⁵ Finally, Athtar complains to Shapsh,

Kothar will wash me	<i>trḥṣn.kṯrm[]</i>
In the h[ouse of Prince] Yamm,	<i>bb[ht] [zbl.]ym.</i>
In the palace of Judge Riv[er]. ¹⁶	<i>bhkl.tpt.nh[r].</i> (1.2 III 20–21)

¹¹ For a discussion and assessment of this and other proposed readings, see Smith and Pitard, *UBC II*, 666–68.

¹² *Ibid.*, 667.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ See Smith, *UBC I*, 167, for a discussion of the reasons for Kothar’s association with Crete and Memphis.

¹⁵ *bym* may be translated, “on the day”; see Smith, “Baal Cycle,” 164.

¹⁶ Smith, *UBC I*, 219.

Whether Kothar is mentioned here is a matter of some debate, and several readings have been proposed for the first line, ranging from “they will wash me skillfully,” taking *ktrm* adverbially, to “they will wash me like (*k*) bulls (*trm*).”¹⁷ Smith, defending the presence of Kothar in this passage and arguing for his nautical filiation, ventures an interpretation of Athtar’s complaint: “Athtar exclaims that he is like one going to the Netherworld, and like others on their way to this destination, he will be washed by Kothar; or, Athtar will be washed ‘in the house of Yamm’ (?) in lines 20b–21, located in the sea which contains the abode of Kothar.”¹⁸ Smith rightly hedges his comments as no more than “guesses.”¹⁹ Indeed, the interpretative uncertainties and the silence of the ancient witnesses that accompany the issue of Kothar’s relation to the sea make it impossible for us to propound an interpretation as to the significance of Kothar’s relation to the sea.²⁰ His watery past is likely but also murky.

Athirat’s connection to the sea is readily evident in her epithet, “Lady Athirat of the Sea” (*rbt ’atrt ym*). Her connection to the sea is reinforced by the fact that she has a fisher at her service, “the Fisher of Athirat” (*dgy ’atrt*, 1.3 VI 10, 1.4 II 31), and by the fact that her abode is near the sea. She can be seen performing some sort of chore by the sea (1.4 II 3–7), and Baal and Anat come to visit her there (1.4 II 12–38). Thus, Athirat’s

¹⁷ For a review of the various readings, see *ibid.*, 254–255.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 256.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ For a fuller treatment of Kothar in general and his relation to the sea in particular, see Mark S. Smith, *Kothar wa-Hasis, the Ugaritic Craftsman God* (Diss, Yale University, 1985), esp. 101–19.

several connections to the sea speak against speculations about reading *ym* (in *rbt 'atrt ym*) as “day.”²¹ Yet, while the fact of her connection to the sea is clear, the nature of her relation remains obscure.

In addition to “Lady Athirat of the Sea,” Athirat has another prominent title: “Creatress of the Gods” (*qnyt 'ilm*), a complement to the title of El, her husband, “the Creator of Creatures” (*bnw bnwt*). Athirat is the mother of “the seventy sons of Athirat” (1.4 VI 46) who, since they are legitimate to replace Baal as king (1.6 I 44–46), are Yamm’s and Baal’s equals. Athirat is portrayed as a caring and protective mother, and also as a brutally ambitious one. After Anat’s failed attempt to coerce El into allowing a temple to be built for Baal, Baal and Anat go to seek Athirat’s help, bearing a precious gift forged by Kothar. At their approach, Athirat’s thoughts turn to the safety of her children: “Are they my murderers, or the murderers of my children, or the destroyers of the band of my brood?” (1.4 II 24–26). She fears Baal for good reason. She thinks that, having killed Yamm, one of her children, he may wish to eliminate all her children who are potential rivals to the throne. Baal seems to anticipate this, hence the gift, which has an immediate effect on Athirat (1.4 II 26–31). Athirat’s fear at the approach of Baal (and Anat), then, tells us more about Athirat’s hidden aspiration for her children than about Baal’s hostile intentions. Indeed, Athirat’s hidden thoughts are laid bare at the death of Baal. She declares to El, “Now Athirat and her children may rejoice, the goddess and the band of her brood” (1.6 I 39–41). And El responds, “Listen, O Lady Athirat of the Sea: Select one of your children that I may make him king” (1.6 I 44–46). Athirat’s motherly ambitions for her children cause her to rejoice at Baal’s death, despite her having

²¹ See Smith and Pitard, *UBC II*, 406–407.

championed his cause for a temple earlier. Baal's death means kingship for one of her children! Baal's gift, it may be noted, is not a bribe for a favor but more the necessary expression of his peaceful intentions.

We may wonder, at this point, whether there is a connection between Athirat's two titles, "Lady Athirat of the Sea" and "Creatress of the Gods," which appear as parallel terms (1.4 I 21–22). How are they related? Unfortunately, we cannot answer this question directly. However, it is interesting to note that, in the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, Tiamat, the primeval sea, is also the mother of the gods. Her maternal identity is an important sub-theme in *Enuma Elish* as Athirat's is in the *Baal Cycle*. They function differently, however. In Ugarit, Athirat's excessive commitment to her own children, as opposed to Baal who is an outsider to the family, is a source of cruel joy at Baal's death; in Babylon, it is Tiamat's abandonment of her motherly ties that lead to cruel actions (*Enuma Elish* IV 80).

As mentioned above, Mark Smith reads "the young of Yamm" (*šgrym*) in *KTU* 1.6 V 4.²² His reading differs from that of others:

Smith:	<i>šgrym</i>
CTA:	<i>šhrmt</i> ²³
Albright:	<i>šhrm</i> (?) ²⁴
KTU/CAT:	<i>šgrm</i> ²⁵

²² Smith, "Baal Cycle," 160.

²³ Andrée Herdner, *Corpus des Tablettes en Cunéiformes Alphabétiques: Découvertes à Ras Shamra-Ugarit de 1929 à 1939 (Texte)* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1963) 41.

²⁴ Cited in Herdner, *CTA (Texte)*, 41 n. 8.

²⁵ Manfred Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Samartín, *Die Keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit: Einschließlich der keilalphabetischen Texte außerhalb Ugarits, Teil 1 Transkription* (Neukirchener: Butzon & Bercker, 1976) 27; Manfred Dietrich, Oswald

The second letter is damaged and cannot be reconstructed with confidence. *CTA* draws it with *h* in mind,²⁶ and *KTU/CAT* with *g* in mind.²⁷ What speaks against Smith's reading is that no one else reads a *y* between *r* and *m*.²⁸ In fact, there seems not to be enough room on the tablet between the *r* and the *m* for a *y*. Therefore, Smith's reading of *ym* (sea) is to be rejected as too conjectural.

We finally come to Yamm. Yamm is a complex character, in part because he operates within a web of familial, social, and political relationships we do not fully understand.²⁹ He is defined by those relationships and, just as importantly, defines others in relationship with him. In the first two tablets of the *Baal Cycle*, in which Yamm rises to prominence and falls to his demise, Yamm's most significant relationship is with Baal. Their fates are inextricably and tragically tied together. In the beginning of the *Baal Cycle*, Yamm has all that Baal wants and will, at the end of the *Cycle*, possess: El's support for his kingship and El's approval for the erection of his temple. In formulating the issue in this way, we see that El, as the head of the divine pantheon throughout the *Cycle*, somewhat mediates the relationship between Yamm and Baal. Neither Yamm nor

Loretz, and Joaquín Samartín, *Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts for Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places* (KTU: second, enlarged edition; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995) 27.

²⁶ For drawings and pictures, see Andrée Herdner, *Corpus des Tablettes en Cunéiformes Alphabétiques: Découvertes à Ras Shamra-Ugarit de 1929 à 1939 (Figures et Planches)* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1963).

²⁷ For drawings of the text, see Johannes C. de Moore and Klass Spronk, *A Cuneiform Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit: Autographed Texts and Glossaries* (Leiden: Brill, 1987) 41.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ See Smith, *Biblical Monotheism*, 45–46, 54–58; Smith and Pitard, *UBC II*, 46–55.

Baal can decide their course of action alone, even when they each become king. Their authority is qualified by the prior authority of El as the head of the pantheon.

The intertwined nature of the relationship between Yamm, El, and Baal is no clearer than in *KTU* 1.2 I, where El confirms Yamm's self proclamation as "lord" (*b'l*, 1.2 I 17, 33) and makes Baal Yamm's "slave" (*'bd*, ll. 36–37). The verbal polemic of naming is at the center of this scene. Yamm's message to El and the Divine Council begins, "Decree of Yamm, your Lord, your Master, Judge River" (1.2 I 33–34). The Ugaritic word translated "lord" is *b'l*, which is also the name of Baal (*b'l*). Yamm, through this declaration, claims his authority over the Divine Council as its lord and, more pointedly, proclaims that he displaces Baal. The polemical nature of Yamm's declaration becomes clear in the demand that follows:

Give up, O Gods, the One you obey,
The One you obey, O Multitude;
Give up Baal that I may humble him,
The Son of Dagan, that I may possess his gold. (ll. 34–35)

It is in response to this request that El declares Baal Yamm's slave. The drama of this pivotal scene revolves around acts of naming: Yamm names himself "lord," and El names Lord, that is Baal, "slave."

Naming is actually an important feature of the first cycle of events of the *Baal Cycle* (tablets 1 and 2) beginning to end and is an apt window on the relationship between Yamm and Baal. The conflict between Yamm and Baal, as the drama of the *Baal Cycle* itself, begins with El's act of naming Yamm:

And Lapitan El the Beneficent speaks:

“The name of my son is Yw,³⁰ O Goddess.”
And he pronounced the name Yamm. (1.1 IV 13–15)³¹

First, El calls Yamm “my son.” This indicates a familial relationship: Yamm is El’s son (see 1.2 I 16, 33, 36), and at the same time designates Yamm king. Second, the name change from *Yw* to Yamm indicates a change in status, coinciding with his elevation to kingship.³² Interestingly, however, El does not call Yamm “king.” Rather, he charges Yamm to drive Baal “from his throne, from the throne of his dominion” (1.1 IV 26–27). It seems Baal currently occupies the office of king, and Yamm must depose him in order to become king. The name change that takes place in this scene precipitates the dramatic development that takes place in 1.2 that we noted above. The tale of Yamm and Baal’s struggle, the negative correlation of their ascent and descent, are in part written in their names.

The titles and epithets of Baal tell his side of the story. First, Baal is the “son of Dagan” (*bn dgn*). This is the epithet Yamm repeats in 1.2 I, when he demands that the divine assembly hand over Baal to him, as if to emphasize that he is an outsider to El’s family. Whereas Yamm is the son of El, repeatedly called “the beloved of El” (*mdd ’il*), that favored status apparent in El’s support of his candidacy for kingship, Baal is an outsider, no son of El. His ties to the power structure at Ugarit, headed by El, is fragile.

³⁰ The significance of Yamm’s previous name *Yw* is a matter of debate. A connection to the biblical YHWH has been proposed but seems unlikely; see Smith, *UBC I*, 151–52.

³¹ Adopted from Smith, *UBC I*, 132. Smith (*UBC I*, 148) argues that *’ilt* is another name for Athirat. However, inasmuch as the word can also refer to Anat (1.3 II 18), it is better to understand it as the feminine form of *’il*, “god”: goddess. This seems to be the solution Smith and Pitard (*UBC II*, translation ad loc) adopt (1.3 V 37; 1.4 I 7, IV 49).

³² For a discussion of these issues involving the act of naming, see Smith, *UBC I*, 148–51.

Its fragility is poignantly portrayed in 1.2 I. Having been consigned to vassalage to Yamm by El (1.2 I 36–37) and abandoned by the Divine Council (ll. 18, 34–35), Baal strikes Yamm’s messengers, understandably irate. Only, Anat and Athtart seize his hands and rebuke him (ll. 40–41).³³ At El’s declaration of his new title, “slave of Yamm,” Baal is cut off and isolated. Commentators rightly mark this moment as the lowest point in Baal’s ascension to kingship: The Divine Council has betrayed him, and he has no ally in the pantheon.³⁴ Baal, Son of Dagan, is an outsider.

His other epithets and titles tell the rest of the story of his fall and eventual rise. One of Yamm’s common epithet is “Prince Yamm” (*zbl ym*). Baal is also called “prince” (1.2 I 38, 43; IV 8). Yamm and Baal are equals in rank, at least in the beginning before El promotes Yamm and demotes Baal. Prince Yamm is also called “Judge Nahar” (*tp̄t nhr*, literally “Judge River”).³⁵ Baal is not given the title “judge.” However, Anat does call him “judge” once. After Baal defeats Yamm, at Baal’s request, Anat visits El to supplicate on Baal’s behalf. In this context, she declares, “Mightiest Baal is our Judge (*tp̄t*)” (1.3 V 32). The word *tp̄t* may be translated “ruler.” However, it is not out of the question that Anat spins a pun here: Judge (*tp̄t*) Nahar is dead, and Baal has taken his place as ruler (*tp̄t*). This verbal polemic, if intended, would comport well with the portrayal of Anat in this scene as passionate and disrespectful, insensitive to El’s position as head of the pantheon and to his feelings as a father who has lost a beloved son. Anat

³³ Anat and Athtart’s behavior here may have as much to do with right conduct, how to treat messengers, as with Baal’s isolation

³⁴ Smith, *UBC I*, 312.

³⁵ Like the Hebrew שפּט, Ugaritic *tp̄t* does not necessarily imply a judicial function, and the title may simply be translated, “ruler”; see *ibid.*, 235–36.

not only threatens to do El bodily harm if he does not grant Baal's wish; she also calls Baal "king" (*mlk*, l. 32), a title Yamm never won (1.3 V 19–25).³⁶ By the end of the second tablet, Baal has acquired the title king. By slaying Yamm, with the critical assistance of Kothar, Baal frustrates Yamm's ambitions for kingship and rises above Yamm. He replaces Yamm as "judge" and even becomes king: "Yamm surely is dead! Baal reigns!" (1.2 IV 32, 34).³⁷

Thus far, I have portrayed the drama of the *Baal Cycle* as a limited conflict between Yamm and Baal. Indeed, compared to *Enuma Elish*, where Tiamat poses a threat to all the gods, Yamm's conflict with Baal does not threaten the cosmic order. In fact, El and the Divine Council willingly give up Baal to Yamm because Yamm's claim to the throne does not affect El's kingship and the overall power structure of the Divine Council. The kingship to which Yamm aspires and the kingship that Baal acquires in defeating Yamm is a qualified kingship, unlike the cosmic kingship granted Marduk in return for confronting a cosmic threat. Having said that, it should be noted that the conflict between Yamm and Baal is not purely a private matter. Baal's ascension to kingship has two important consequences for the cosmos, both positive. The first is that Baal is not Yamm, lord of the chaotic sea, who at best may be characterized as an unruly adolescent, doted on by an aging father, and, at worst, a terrible sea monster. The second consequence is the benefit of Baal's orderly rule and his fructifying rains.

³⁶ Arvid S. Kapelrud (*Baal in the Ras Shamra Texts* [Copenhagen: C. E. C. Gad, 1952] 103) finds an enthronement formula: "Judge River, thou art king!" (*[tp]t nhr mlkt*) in 129:22 (= *KTU* 1.2 III 22). The text is damaged here, and its context is unclear. Smith proposes that this is Athtar speaking about himself: "Am I king... or not king?" and not El about Yamm.

³⁷ In Baal's battle against Yamm, Kothar acts of naming the weapons plays a critical role.

Yamm is not a positive force in the *Baal Cycle*. With Mot, who is also called “beloved of El,” the *Baal Cycle* portrays Yamm as a potential source of tyranny and chaos. First, Yamm is portrayed as a disrespectful youth who brandishes his authority without regard for proper etiquette. We have already touched on a few aspects of this issue in dealing with 1.2 I, but an account of the larger context will make this clearer. Victor A. Hurowitz identifies six major elements found in building narratives from the ancient Near East: 1. The divine decision to build; 2. The announcement relayed to the builder; 3. The acquisition of construction materials; 4. The commissioning of a chief artisan; 5. The building of the palace/temple; and 6. The dedication/inauguration of the palace/temple.³⁸ The building narrative of the *Baal Cycle* (1.3–4) follows this pattern with two significant aberrations: a. A large amount of narrative space and dramatic energy are devoted to recounting how Baal acquires El’s permission to build a temple, leading up to step 1, and b. Baal and Kothar debate about whether or not to install a window in the temple.³⁹ We will return to the second aberration below.

The long and involved narrative about how Baal goes about acquiring El’s permission to build his temple, as Smith and Pitard argue, dramatizes the importance of etiquette, proper conduct, and diplomacy, qualities that Yamm fragrantly flouts.⁴⁰ The difference in the way Anat and Athirat approach El illustrates this point well. This is how Anat comes to El:

So she headed out

³⁸ Smith and Pitard, *UBC II*, 36.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 36, 39.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 36–39.

For El at the springs of the Rivers,
Amid the streams of the Deeps,
She came to the mountain of El
And entered the tent of the King, the Father of Years.
She shouted angrily as she entered the mountain... (1.3 V 5–9)

Consider the parallel description of Athirat's approach:

So she headed out
For El at the springs of the Rivers,
Amid the streams of the Deeps.
She came to the mountain of El
And entered the tent of the King, the Father of Years.
At the feet of El she bowed down and fell,
Prostrated herself and honored him... (1.4 IV 20–26)

We have already dealt with Anat's abrasive conduct at her meeting with El. On the other hand, Athirat's relationship to El, her husband, must account for some of the warmth with which El receives Athirat and for the fact that he ultimately grants her request on behalf of Baal. The ways in which Anat and Athirat approach El, then, must be analyzed as an indicator of the character of their entire visit and interaction with El. Furthermore, the analysis should take the larger context into account. Throughout the *Baal Cycle*, each time an inferior party approaches the dwelling of a superior (in fact, the opposite situation never happens), the approaching party bows and prostrates himself.⁴¹ In this light, it is clear that Anat's conduct is exceptional and offensive. Her lack of etiquette, which characterizes her conduct throughout the scene, must be one reason that El refuses her

⁴¹ El's messengers bow and prostrate themselves before Kothar (1.1 III 2–3); Kothar before El (1.1 III 24–25; 1.2 III 5–6); El's messengers before Anat (1.1 II 14–17); Baal's messengers before Anat (1.3 III 8–10); Baal's messenger before Kothar (1.3 VI 17–20); and even Baal's messengers before Mot (1.4 VIII 24–29). It is not said that Baal and Anat bow and prostrate themselves when approaching Athirat (1.4 II). However, there are large portions of the narrative that are missing, and the gift, forged by Kothar, they bring implies an attitude of obeisance.

championship of Baal's cause. On the other hand, Athirat's proper conduct, even though she is closer in rank to El, is why her intercession succeeds.

If we are correct that one of the themes the narrator emphasizes in the middle two tablets of the *Cycle* is the importance of proper behavior, the irreverent behavior of Yamm's messengers in approaching the divine council takes on larger significance. At Yamm's explicit command (1.2 I 15), his messengers do not bow to El and do not prostrate before the Divine Council (l. 31). Anat, it may be proposed, behaved badly out of passionate anger. But no such excuse can be proffered in defense of Yamm. The explicit and unprecedented command to forego paying respects and the bombastic introduction to the message: "Decree of Yamm, your Lord, your Master, Judge River," characterize Yamm as a hot-headed adolescent, who knowingly flouts proper behavior. One senses that power in such hands may be tyrannical, that Yamm would be a tyrant.

Yet, this is far from the worst depiction of Yamm. In the *Baal Cycle*, Yamm is associated with, if not identified with, sea monsters. At the beginning of the conflict between Mot and Baal, Mot says to Baal,

When you struck down Litan, the fleeing snake,
Annihilated the twisting snake,
The powerful one with seven heads. (1.5 I 1–3)

Litan, sometimes vocalized Lotan,⁴² is the Ugaritic cognate for Hebrew לוֹיִתָּן, "Leviathan."

And the epithets, "fleeing snake," "twisting snake," and "the powerful one with seven heads," describe the one Litan and are not to be understood as independent monsters.

⁴² See John A. Emerton, "Leviathan and *LTN*: The Vocalization of the Ugaritic Word for the Dragon," *VT* 32 (1982) 327–31, for a convincing argument that *LTN* should be vocalized *lītānu* and not *lōtānu*.

The narrative context of the *Baal Cycle* suggests that Litan here is another name for Yamm, whom Baal indeed struck down. There are further textual evidence of the equation of Litan and Yamm. In 1.3 III 38–42, Anat lists the enemies of Yamm:⁴³

Surely I struck down Yamm, the Beloved of El,	<i>lmḥšt.mdd. 'ilym</i>
Surely I finished off River, the Great God,	<i>lkl.t.nhr. 'il.rbm</i>
Surely I bound Tunnan and destroyed him.	<i>l'stbn.tnn. 'ištmxh</i>
I struck down the Twisty Serpent	<i>mḥšt.bṭn. 'qltn</i>
The Powerful One with Seven Heads.	<i>šlyṭ.d.šb 't.r'ašm</i>

Mark Smith and Wayne Pitard note that epithets like “Twisty Serpent” and “the Powerful One with Seven Heads” seldom appear independent of a proper name.⁴⁴ Thus, they argue that it is unlikely that the epithets in lines 41–42 introduce a new character. In their opinion, the epithets describe Tunnan, the Ugaritic cognate for the Hebrew תנין (“dragon/sea monster”), mentioned just above in line 40. Then, since the same epithets can be ascribed to Tunnan and Litan, it follows that Tunnan and Litan are to be equated. Finally, Smith and Pitard argue that the “trice-repeated *l* [*la*, translated asseveratively as “surely”] in lines 38–40 argues for an intimate relationship” among the three lines and so also among the monsters mentioned therein: Yamm, River, and Tunnan.⁴⁵ Without pressing for absolute identity between Yamm, Nahar, Tunnan, and Litan, we can

⁴³ The thorny issue of whether Anat claims to have fought and defeated Yamm need not detain us here. See the discussion of this issue in Smith, *UBC I*, 100–101 and n. 197 and Smith and Pitard, *UBC II*, 244–45.

⁴⁴ Smith & Pitard, *UBC II*, 251–52.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 252–53. For an opposing view, see Brendon C. Benz, “Yamm as the Personification of Chaos? A Linguistic and Literary Argument for a Case of Mistaken Identity,” in *Creation and Chaos: A Reconsideration of Hermann Gunkel’s Chaaskampf Hypothesis* (Eds. JoAnn Scurlock and Richard H. Beal; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013) 127–45.

recognize a fluidity in the identity of Yamm and the sea monster Litan.⁴⁶ Yamm and Litan could be and, it seems, were in fact thought to be the same in Ugarit. More terrible than an adolescent without the wisdom or the patience to wield power properly, Yamm as a sea monster, by nature chaotic, poses a great threat to order and to creation. On such shoulders, government cannot long rest.

The first benefit of Baal's kingship, then, is negative: Yamm is not king. But just as important are the positive attributes of Baal's rule: order and fertility. The first beneficent consequence of Baal's kingdom is its orderliness. In the analysis above, we emphasized the role proper behavior played in Baal's finally winning El's approval for his temple. In stark contrast to Yamm, Baal does not impose his will on El and the Divine Council. Rather, he uses diplomacy to achieve his end, in the eyes of some commentators, to a fault. Is he too much of a coward to face El himself? If this is cowardice, it is a well-mannered cowardice, in my opinion. Baal recently has done much to irk El: he defied El's decree that he be Yamm's slave; he killed Yamm, El's beloved; and he has become king instead of Yamm. Under such circumstances, avoiding a confrontation may not only be tactful but also respectful. In fact, El's retort to Athirat during their meeting show that he is angry at Baal. In contrast to his kind and sexually charged initial reception (1.4 IV 30–39), when Athirat broaches the topic of Baal's temple, El retorts sharply, "So am I a slave ('*bd*)?" (1.4 IV 59). It is difficult to miss an allusion to El's naming Baal Yamm's "slave" ('*bd*') in the background. El feels that his concession to Baal's demand might be seen as his inferiority to Baal, a sensitivity that

⁴⁶ On the topic of the fluidity of the identity of deities in the ancient Near East, see Benjamin Sommer, *Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

was likely heightened and aggravated by Anat's disrespectful conduct. In this context, Baal's active pursuit of a temple, even through the aid of intermediaries, itself may be a form of daring – in contrast to Athtar who can only manage a complaint to Shapsh about his desire for a temple of his own. The use of intermediaries is a recognition of El's office of relative authority and, perhaps, an effort to soften the blow to his pride. At the end, what is important, in my mind, is the diplomatic and orderly way in which Baal goes about pursuing his goals, in stark contrast to Yamm who bullies others into submission.

Another indication of the orderliness that characterizes Baal's rule are the feasts he holds, one after he wins kingship by defeating Yamm (1.3 I) and a second after he solidifies his kingship by building a temple (1.4 VI). A feast, to be distinguished from a general exchange of food and drink and from the daily family meal, is a socially, politically, and also religiously charged event. It can be used to advertise military success, create and maintain political bonds, and to organize and publicize structures of power.⁴⁷ Feasting is a peaceful way of waging political war. The host, in lavishly providing food and drink, displays his power and wealth and makes a demand of political recognition and loyalty in return. Then, feasts are scenes fraught with danger and promise of great reward. You invite potential enemies, in the case of Baal "the seventy sons of Athirat" (1.4 VI 46), and hope for their consent and submission as guest and as subject. Feasts are also scenes where hierarchies of power are reaffirmed, sometimes changed, and maintained. Thus we see Baal providing bulls and cows to the gods and

⁴⁷ For a discussion of feasting in the context of kingship, see Nathan MacDonald, *Not Bread Alone: The Uses of Food in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 134–65, esp. 142–49.

goddesses and thrones and chairs befitting their station (ll. 49–52). Feasting characterizes Baal’s kingship not so much as a joyous one but more as a peaceful and orderly one.

The second beneficent consequence of Baal’s kingship is his rains, which the phantom of Yamm threatens. After Baal’s death and under Mot’s dominion, life on earth withers for lack of rain. Thus El laments to Shapsh:

Parched are the furrows of the fields, O Shapsh,
Parched are the furrows of the grand fields,
May Baal restore the furrows of the ploughed land.
Where is Mightiest Baal?
Where is the Prince, Lord of the Earth? (1.6 IV 1–5)

Apparently, Baal is the only one who is able to fructify the earth with his rains. This agrees with El’s dream of Baal’s return:

Let the heavens rain oil,
The wadis run with honey,
Then I will know that Mightiest Baal lives,
The Prince, Lord of the Earth, is alive. (1.6 III 6–9)

El, whatever his antagonism toward Baal, recognizes that Baal is the source of life-giving rains from above and living waters from below. Only Baal can make the earth a land flowing with oil and honey! Without Baal, even El, the Creator of Creatures, cannot sustain life on earth.

Baal’s function as the sender of rain and running water is intimately related to his temple. We know this from Athirat’s reaction when El grants permission for the construction of Baal’s temple, “Let a house be built for Baal like the gods’, a court, like Athirat’s children’s” (1.4 IV 62–V 1). Athirat breaks out into song:

So now may Baal make his rain abundant,
May he make the water greatly abundant in a downpour,
And may he give his voice in the clouds,
May he flash to the earth lightning. (1.4 V 6–9)

Athirat does not make an explicit connection between Baal's ability to send rain and his temple. She may simply mean that, with the business of building a temple now behind him, Baal can now tend to his divine duty as the earth's rain maker. However, it is likely that these words recognize an intimate relationship between the temple and Baal's ability to send rain: The temple is a sign of Baal's kingship and also the necessary seat from which he exercises his beneficent, indeed, creative power. This connection is made apparent in the issue of installing windows in the temple. In defense of his wish for windows not to be installed in his temple, in a broken passage, Baal mentions Pidray and Tallay in the same breathe as Yamm (1.4 VI 8–13). The exact nature of Baal's reasoning is uncertain. Here, Smith and Pitard conjecture that Baal fears that Yamm may enter the temple through the window and harm his daughters, Pidray and Tallay.⁴⁸ Even in death, Yamm may ultimately prevent Baal from exercising his kingship. For uncertain reasons, however, after his victory tour and after another feast, Baal reverses his prior decision and commands that Kothar install windows in the temple. Here, the relationship between the temple, its window, and rain becomes clear:

An aperture was opened in the house,
A window inside the palace.
Baal opened a break in the clouds,
Baal gave forth his holy voice... (1.4 VII 25–29)

⁴⁸ Smith and Pitard, *UBC II*, 602–10, esp. 604–606.

The window in the temple is equated to a break in the clouds. It is the venue for Baal's theophany. Baal's voice, that is thunder, issues from the window and announces the coming rains. Without the window, ultimately without the temple, Baal would not be able to exercise his divine power to send rain. The temple is the necessary seat from which Baal fulfills his duty as the giver of rains.

Debate concerning Baal's exact relationship to creation continues.⁴⁹ Our analysis, however, shows that his kingship, which he wins by defeating Yamm and firmly establishes in his temple, both creates the necessary condition for life, order, and provides the means for life's flourishing, rain. If we distinguish two dimensions of creation: *creatio prima* and *creatio continua*, we see that, on the one hand, El is responsible for *creation prima* and is the progenitor of life in Ugaritic mythology. On the other, Baal complements El as the one responsible for *creatio continua*. He is the one who nurtures and governs life as king.⁵⁰ In sum, Baal, kingship, temple, and creation (in some sense) form an interrelated pattern opposed to Yamm, threat to kingship, chaos, and destruction.

II. The Babylonian *Enuma Elish*

We limit our treatment of Sea in *Enuma Elish*, noting the orderly nature of its presentation and our dependence on excellent prior work.⁵¹ Thorkild Jacobsen in his

⁴⁹ See page 7, note 11, above.

⁵⁰ For a discussion of this, see Fisher, "Creation at Ugarit."

⁵¹ As to its orderly presentation, Herman Vanstiphout ("*Enuma Elish* as a Systematic Creed: An Essay," *OLP* 23 [1992] 37–61) argues that *Enuma Elish* is a new theology, conscientiously created out of older and foreign material. He characterizes the epic as a

insightful reading of the *Enuma Elish* characterized the Babylonian creation epic as “a story of world origins and world ordering.”⁵² The creation and ordering of the world takes place in two analogous but unequal stages. The first, shorter stage establishes a pattern of creation and ordering, and that pattern is repeated on a cosmic scale in the second stage.⁵³ The major conflict in both stages is between the primeval chaos waters, Apsu and Tiamat, and the champions of the gods, Ea and Marduk. The gods, whom Apsu and Tiamat created, prove a nuisance to Apsu and Tiamat, and the primeval beings, incited in turn by a vizier, Mummu and Qingu, devise to annihilate the gods. The champion gods fight and defeat the primeval beings and, out of their bodies, now inanimate physical realities, create the world. They also establish order in the newly founded world. As already noted, Marduk, the protagonist of the second stage, far surpasses Ea in every respect. The very structure of the poem, then, at once acknowledges and pays tributes to the past (Ea) and exults and glorifies the present, new state of affairs (Marduk) over the old.

“theological didactic poem” (ibid., 56). In terms of prior analysis, I have in mind the excellent and concise discussion by Thorkild Jacobsen in *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976) 165–91. As I do not have reading knowledge of Akkadian, I am dependent on translations and transcriptions. Unless otherwise noted, I cite from Benjamin Foster’s translation in *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (3rd ed.; Bethesda, MD: CDL, 2005) 436–86.

⁵² Jacobsen, *Treasures*, 191.

⁵³ Philippe Talon (*The Standard Babylonian Creation Epic Enūma Eliš: Introduction, Cuneiform Text, Transliteration, and Sign List with a Translation and Glossary in French* [SAACT IV; Finland: Vammalan Kirjapaino Oy, 2005] x) notes that “Tablet I 1–108... is clearly a rehearsal of the main plot” that will be repeated later “on a much more cosmic level.” I agree, except I would say that Tablet I 1–78 constitute the first episode. Tablet I 79ff. already repeat the opening scene of the poem, the birth of the gods who will irritate the primeval being toward martial action.

Tiamat (literally “sea”) is Marduk’s primeval foe in the second stage of “world origins and world ordering” and, by the dictate of narrative structure, is the more formidable foe than Apsu. Ea, without a hint of struggle, binds and kills Apsu. However, he and even his father Anu, we are told, are no match for Tiamat: “He stopped, horror-stricken, then turned back” (II 82, 106). The source of Tiamat’s fearsome strength comes, in part, from her creative power. She is “matrix-Tiamat” (I 4)⁵⁴ and “Mother Hubur, who can form anything” (I 133).⁵⁵ In contrast to Apsu and his vizier Mummu who are caught unprepared for battle and unawares, Tiamat creates a host of fearsome monsters and some gods and sets her son-husband Qingu as its leader. We are told that Tiamat “gives birth” to “monster serpents,” “fierce dragons,” “serpents, dragons, and hairy-men, lion monsters, lion men, scorpion men, mighty demons, fish men, bull men” (I 133–46). More fearsome than Yamm, who we argued can be identified with the sea monster Litan, Tiamat is able to create sea monsters among a variety of other chaos monsters. Tiamat’s generative power, however, is not only destructive. She is, after all, the mother of the gods. It is true, the gods themselves prove to be the cause of distressing uproar, from the perspective of the primeval beings, that might be described as chaotic (I 24). However, the gods prove capable of organizing themselves and the cosmos, which is where the entire epic is headed. Thus, Tiamat’s otherwise destructive power can have constructive consequences. There is a constructive potential hidden in her destructive productivity.

Tiamat’s effervescent positive side is most evident in the opening scenes of *Enuma Elish*. Like Apsu, she too is irritated by the ruckus her children, the gods, make,

⁵⁴ Talon (*Creation Epic*, 33, 79) translates *mu-um-mu* (“wisdom” or “skill”) as “créatrice.”

⁵⁵ Hubur (*hu-bur*) is also a name of the underworld river, known from Sumerian cosmology as the river one crosses to reach the underworld.

but we are told that “she was indulgent” (I 28). In fact, when Apsu and Mummu propose that they put an end to the gods so that they can sleep in peace, Tiamat retorts:

What? Shall we put an end to what we created?
Their behavior may be most noisome, but we should bear it in good part.
(I 45–46)

Her motherhood comes into view again during her battle with Marduk. When Marduk and Tiamat first meet, Tiamat seems to have the upper hand. She is first to speak:

... the gods rise against you,
They assembled [where] they are, (but) are they on your side? (IV 73–74)

Talk of sides seems to break whatever spell Tiamat had cast on Marduk, for Marduk realizes that Tiamat has rejected the most natural of all alliances as a mother who has set herself against her own children:

Children cried out, they oppress their parents,
But you, their own mother, spurned all natural feeling. (IV 79–80)

As if to show that hell has no fury like a mother who has spurned all natural feeling, Tiamat expands into utter chaos:

She was beside herself, she turned into a maniac.
Tiamat shrieked loud, in a passion,
Her frame shook all over, down to the ground. (IV 88–90).

Combat ensues. Marduk prevails. Then, he begins to exercise the kingship he had negotiated in return for confronting Tiamat on behalf of the gods.⁵⁶

Jacobsen characterizes what follows after Marduk's victory over Tiamat as an interrupted movement toward permanent kingship, punctuated by Marduk's two creative acts, the creation of the cosmos and of humankind.⁵⁷ Marduk's first creative act is to organize the physical world. He finishes what his father Ea began. Once slain, Apsu becomes the fresh water underground ocean. Ea establishes his abode there, and Apsu becomes the residence of Ea, his wife Damkina, and their son Marduk. Ea's creative act is decidedly domestic. In contrast, Marduk's is cosmic.⁵⁸ After killing Tiamat, Marduk first "split [Tiamat] in two, like a fish for drying" (IV 137). He makes one half heaven, and, to keep the waters from escaping, he "stretched out the hide and assigned watchmen" (IV 139). With the other half, he makes "the earth" upon Apsu (V 60–62). Thus, he creates a three tiered cosmos: heaven above (*šamamu* or *ašrata*), the underworld (*apsu* or *ešgalla*), and the space between heaven and the underworld (*ešarra*).⁵⁹ The upper and lower realms are characterized by water: Tiamat above and Apsu below. And the middle realm is characterized by dry land, earth, and the winds. Jacobsen identifies Esharra as

⁵⁶ For an interpretation of Tiamat's complex character and a reason for her sympathetic portrayal in *Enuma Elish*, see Jacobsen, *Treasures*, 186–90.

⁵⁷ See his helpful graph; Jacobsen, *Treasures*, 184.

⁵⁸ For a detailed analysis of the cosmography implied in *Enuma Elish*, see Horowitz, *Cosmic Geography*, 107–150.

⁵⁹ For a discussion of these terms and their locations, see *ibid.*, 113–14.

Marduk's dwelling, modeled after Ea's dwelling, Apsu.⁶⁰ Apsu, of course, belongs to Ea, and heaven belongs to Anu. What is important is that Marduk organizes the cosmos, out of the raw material that is the corpse of Tiamat, for the benefit of all the gods and not only for his family.⁶¹

Marduk's second act of creation, the creation of humankind, finalizes the ordering of the political realm. Jacobsen charts the development of the political institution in *Enuma Elish* from anarchy to monarchy. At the time Ea rises to action to defend the gods against Apsu, there was no political machinery in place. It was a time marked by anarchy. By Marduk's time, a primitive democracy seems to have been in place, organized under the leadership of family heads. One such group had Anshar at the helm. With the advent of Tiamat's hostilities, Qingu becomes leader of Tiamat's host, and the assembly of gods confers kingship to Marduk in exchange of safety. Thus, a provisional monarchy is created in the interest of group safety. Jacobsen observes that Tiamat's defeat and the capture of her host, which reestablish safety, negate the need for a king and thus threaten Marduk's kingship. It is at this point in the ascent toward permanent kingship that Marduk performs his second creative act.

The creation of humankind go hand in hand with Marduk's ingenious solution to establish a permanent and sustainable political structure. Even after Tiamat's defeat and the creation of the cosmos, a political threat persisted in the existence of Qingu and the Anunna gods. The monsters, Marduk "bound... and trampled them under" (IV 116–17).

⁶⁰ Jacobsen, *Treasures*, 179. Horowitz (*Cosmic Geography*, 113) assigns Esharra to Enlil. Horowitz (*ibid.*, 113 n. 7) notes that, in V 119–22, Marduk claims Esharra for his dwelling.

⁶¹ Marduk also organizes time by creating stars and other heavenly bodies (V 1–46?).

But the gods, though imprisoned, required a different solution. Marduk's solution was threefold: 1. kill Qingu, 2. free the captive gods and integrate them into the political structure, and 3. create humankind out of Qingu's blood. The narrative justifies Qingu's execution as punishment for suborning Tiamat against her children, and the captive gods participate in the judicial process by denouncing Qingu. Humankind, which is created from the material stuff of Qingu's blood, are to relieve all the gods from menial labor and be burdened with serving the gods. This final act buys the loyalty of all the gods, of both those who have been just freed and those who conferred him kingship. The benefit of humankind replace safety as the reason for kingship and thus becomes the basis for Marduk's permanent kingship:

Let the people of this land be divided as to gods,
(But) by whatever name we call him, let him be our god. (VI 119–20)

The god of gods, of course, is Marduk, and the recitation of his fifty names occupies the remainder of the tablets.

It is important to note, before coming to the conclusion, that the Anunna gods, whom Marduk sets free, offer a gift to Marduk as an expression of gratitude for his clemency. Marduk asks that they build Babylon, that is Esagila, his temple. Thus, the temple, here as in the *Baal Cycle*, is an integral part of what it means to be king. In sum, Marduk, kingship, temple, and creation form an interrelated pattern opposed to Tiamat, threat to kingship, chaos, and destruction.

III. The Sea Myth Pattern in Ugarit and in Babylon

At this point, in view of the analysis of the reflexes of the sea myth pattern in the Hebrew Bible, it will be beneficial briefly to summarize and organize the result of our study of the *Baal Cycle* and *Enuma Elish* into a pattern of themes related to the sea. That is to say, I would like to outline what I call the sea myth pattern.

The attributes of Sea are altogether negative, related as Sea is to chaos. Yamm is a power hungry adolescent, who exercises his power without tact and with authoritarian sensibilities. He is closely related to, if not identified with, the chaos monster, Litan, also know as Tunnan. Tiamat is also closely related to chaos monsters, serpents, dragons, etc. She is their progenitor. We also saw that Tiamat can devolve into a chaotic frenzy, and the threat she represents to the gods is equal to her considerable generative power as the mother of the gods.

One possible exception to the negativity of Sea, as noted above, is Sea's motherhood. Tiamat, for example, is a motherly figure, who is able, if briefly, to forbear in the face of the irritating behavior of her children. Yamm does not possess paternal characteristics. In fact, he may not have a wife and may be too young to have children. However, in the *Baal Cycle*, Lady Athirat of the Sea is the mother of the gods and demonstrates maternal care for her children.

Corresponding, in an antithetical way, to the negative attributes of Sea are the positive themes of creation, kingship, and temple. A champion god, Baal or Marduk, opposes and stops Sea's chaotic onslaught. This implies, of course, combat. The results of the champion's victory over Sea in both the *Baal Cycle* and *Enuma Elish* are three goodly consequences: kingship, creation, and temple building. To summarize, combat

against and victory over the sea leads to creation, kingship, and temple. This is what I call the sea myth pattern.

We find numerous reflections of the sea myth pattern in the Hebrew Bible, and they testify to a shared background and heritage among Israel and her neighboring cultures. The Hebrew Bible, however, does not contain a continuous myth that contains all these themes and motifs. It does, however, have narrative frameworks that make metaphoric use of the sea myth pattern. Though the entire, continuous myth is not preserved in the Hebrew Bible, it nevertheless creates a different sort of narrative framework within which the sea myth pattern finds new uses and new significances. In the following chapters, we shall attempt to set forth that new framework.

Chapter 4. The Sea Myth Pattern in the Hebrew Bible

The Ugaritic *Baal Cycle* and the Babylonian *Enuma Elish* are sea myths. They are stories involving the interaction of divine personalities and concern the weighty matters of creation, kingship, and the temple. In the *Baal Cycle*, Yamm threatens Baal's kingship; Baal defeats Yamm and regains his kingship; and Baal builds his temple and exercises his creative kingship therefrom. In *Enuma Elish*, Tiamat threatens the survival of the gods; Marduk confronts and defeats Tiamat in exchange for kingship; Marduk creates the cosmos and humankind; and Marduk builds his temple and exercises his permanent kingship therefrom. In contrast, the Hebrew Bible, in its variegated diversity, does not contain a sea myth. The sea in various forms mediates the relationship between YHWH and creation, kingship, and the temple. However, these relationships are not presented in the form of a story, a myth, but rather in fragments throughout the biblical canon.

We might attempt to reconstruct a continuous narrative out of these fragments, but the multiplicity and the degree of refractions of the sea in the Hebrew Bible disallow a coherent reconstruction. As noted, the sea in both Ugarit and Babylon has a fluid identity: Yamm, in the *Baal Cycle*, can and does appear as a geographical space (*KTU* 1.4 II 34–36); and Tiamat, the primeval being, becomes the spatial sea, just as Apsu becomes the subterranean freshwater, in *Enuma Elish*. However, both Yamm and Tiamat are, at core, personalities who manifest a coherence between their personal back stories, interpersonal relationships, and their circumstantial actions. In contrast, the sea in the Hebrew Bible is not a character, a personality, but rather fragmentations of the mythic sea

and reflections and refractions of those fragments. For example, the sea in relation to God's act of creation alone appears in the Hebrew Bible as a cosmic enemy (Psalm 74), aquatic chaos (Genesis 1), and as a created entity (Psalm 95). The multiple fragmentations and the insistent refractions make it impossible to find one or more coherent sea myths in the Hebrew Bible. In sum, in the Hebrew Bible, there is a pattern of positive and negative relationships associated with the sea figure, a "sea myth pattern," but not a sea myth.

The existence of an identifiable mythic pattern, which presents the content of the sea myth in a non-narrative form, speaks against arguments that the Hebrew Bible is not mythic or that it is totally demythologized. The very fact that creation, kingship, and the temple are repeatedly defined in relation to the sea figure in the Hebrew Bible, even if the sea figure does not always appear in full mythic garb, is explainable only if we take the vitality of myth in the thought-world of the biblical writers seriously. The transformation of the sea myth into a pattern and its subsequent fracturing should not blind us to the significance of the common mythic inheritance Israel shared with Ugarit, Babylon, Egypt, and other ancient Near Eastern cultures.

That said, the fragmentation of the sea myth into smaller units and the transformation of these units, the total phenomenon I call refraction, are important data to interpret. The fragmentation of the sea myth into its component units (the sea and creation, the sea and kingship, and the sea and the temple) is not unique to Israel. Neither are the transformations of the sea figure into something other than the mythic personality or the cosmic space. Nevertheless, there remains a significant difference between the Hebrew Bible and other ancient Near Eastern literatures in that the Hebrew Bible

nowhere preserves the sea myth *in toto*. We can explain this away as an accident of history, since more was recorded and written in ancient Israel than what has survived. Nevertheless, save an extraordinary discovery, this situation is not likely to change. And for now the distinction remains and requires interpretation.

In addition to the fact of refraction, there is the reverse phenomenon in which mythic fragments are reconstituted to form a new pattern. Were the sea myth fragments haphazardly scattered throughout the Hebrew Bible to adorn insignificant ideas and events, the study of the sea figure in the Hebrew Bible would be akin to a scavenger or a treasure hunt, depending on one's perspective on such matters. But, not only are the ideas related to the sea figure weighty (creation, kingship, and the temple), the sea myth fragments punctuate significant junctures of the Hebrew Bible and unveil a story of its own, a sea *muthos*. The fragments of the sea myth were not scattered hither and thither at random but rather thoughtfully set to stud the Hebrew Bible, as I will argue throughout. Thus, for me, more than simply a treasure hunt, the study of the sea figure is more a hunt for a map of the Hebrew Bible.

We need to wait until Chapter 8 before we have the necessary pieces to define, demonstrate, and defend the sea *muthos*. In this chapter, we take three decisive steps toward building the case for the sea *muthos* at the same time as we examine the fragments of the sea myth. First, we analyze the canonical placement of the creation account, in which the sea makes its biblical debut, as the first indication for the existence and significance of the sea *muthos*. It will be argued that, in contrast to the sea myth where creation is one of the goodly consequences of the *Chaoskampf* that comes at the conclusion of the narrative, creation is an uncontested divine accomplishment in the

Hebrew Bible that precedes, narratively and theologically, the historical struggles to follow. Within the context of creation, we will also analyze the various refractions of the sea figure in the Hebrew Bible, focusing on the Psalter. Second, in studying the relationship between the sea and (divine and human) kingship as conceived in the Psalter, we will demonstrate in miniature how the focused study of the sea figure reveals a divine-human drama of kingship, a meta-narrative scholars have defended on other grounds in recent psalm studies. Third, we will conclude the section with a discussion about the multidimensional relationship between the sea and the temple. We will place emphasis on the conceptualization of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, which coincided with the dismantling of the Davidic monarchy and the beginning of the Babylonian exile, as a return of the chaos waters. Significantly, this marks the nadir of the narrative structure of the Hebrew Bible. In brief, we examine the three fragmentary units of the sea myth pattern: the sea and creation, the sea and kingship, and the sea and the temple.

I. The Sea and Creation

The battle between the storm deity and the sea deity, that is, *Chaoskampf*, marks the structural nadir of the sea myth: tyranny and chaos threaten the divine world. Thus, the defeat of the sea deity, who had threatened death and destruction, is the decisive moment in the sea myth when the downward narrative trajectory suddenly takes an upward turn, culminating in the triad of goodly consequences: creation, kingship, and the

temple. The triad often appears as a cluster in the Hebrew Bible. So our discussion of each will touch on the others. With this in mind, we turn first to creation.

We are not able, within the available space, to provide an exhaustive discussion of creation in the Hebrew Bible – nor of kingship or the temple, for that matter. Instead, we will limit our discussion to three related points. First, we will argue that the canonical location of the creation account at the beginning of the Hebrew Bible, with the acknowledgment that references to creation occur throughout the Bible, reverses the expected placement of creation at the end of a combat myth and signals the existence of a sea *muthos* distinct to the Hebrew Bible. Second, we will sharpen our understanding of תהום (“the deep,” Gen 1:2), the first appearance of the sea figure in the Hebrew Bible, in defending its mythological, Babylonian background. Third, we will analyze the process of demythologization of the sea.

A. In the Beginning... the deep...

We encounter creation at the beginning of the Bible: ...בראשית ברא אלהים (Gen 1:1a). In fact, as if to emphasize the placement of creation, there are two dissimilar accounts of creation in the first three chapters of Genesis: the Priestly (P) account in Gen 1:1–2:4a and the Yahwistic (J) account in Gen 2:4b–3:24.¹ Neither J’s nor P’s account

¹ In recent Pentateuchal studies, some scholars, notably from continental Europe, have abandoned the Yahwist and the Elohist (E), no longer certain about the source critical results of the Graf-Kuenen-Wellhausen hypothesis, in particular concerning the early, pre-exilic J and E source documents. Instead, these scholars prefer to speak of what were traditionally called J and E as non-P. This non-descriptive nomenclature places the Priestly writings at the center of the source-critical inquiry of the Pentateuch for its clearly identifiable style and theology. For a brief review of these issues, see Jean-Louis

was the first or the final word on creation in the Hebrew Bible. However, the ordinal priority of creation, where the sea figure makes its biblical debut (as תהום, Gen 1:2), is significant theologically and structurally to the Hebrew Bible. Between J and P, of greater import in this regard is P's account, which took the place of the older J account at the head of Genesis. The J creation account naturally continues into the subsequent narrative and belongs organically at the beginning. The P account, on the other, is narratively supplementary, as opposed to essential, and for that reason all the more significant for determining the character of the structure of Genesis. This observation is underlined by the fact that, in contrast to the Mesopotamian traditions concerning creation, which the P account mimics and transforms, the Priestly writers make creation God's first self-determinative act *ad extra* and thereby confirm creation as the theological and structural horizon of the Hebrew Bible.

The mythical and Babylonian background of the P creation account is a matter of some debate, as we will discuss. But if we miss the Babylonian connection, we cannot fully appreciate the theological claim of the P account and its structural effect on Genesis. We can enter this discussion through the key word תהום ("the deep," Gen 1:2).

Gerhard von Rad assumed that myth lay in the background of P's creation account but judged that the "process of transmission went hand in hand with a more and

Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch* (trans. Pascale Dominique; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006) 127–164; and David M. Carr, "Changes in Pentateuchal Scholarship," in *The History of Old Testament Interpretation*, volume 3.1, *The Twentieth Century* (ed. Magne Saebo; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, projected publication in 2011). Here, I retain the classic nomenclature in line with many who remain unconvinced of the new hypotheses concerning the Yahwist. For a review of the history of scholarship concerning the Yahwist, see Thomas Christian Römer, "The Elusive Yahwist: A Short History of Research," in *A Farewell to the Yahwist?* (eds. Thomas B. Dozeman and Konrad Schmid; Leiden: Brill, 2006) 9–27.

more radical purification and distillation of all mythical and speculative elements” with the result that P’s language testifies to the “process of inner purification.”² He described P’s language as “concentrated to the utmost on the purely theological” and added that “not a word is poetic flourish.”³ If the language P used to describe creation is so free of flourish, poetic and mythological, on what basis can we posit a mythological background? David T. Tsumura takes up this question and argues, based on a careful study of key words from Genesis 1–2, that P’s creation account cannot be the end product of demythologization because the words and concepts P uses were never mythological to begin with.⁴ This includes, among others, the key word תהוֹם.

It was Hermann Gunkel who famously proposed that the Hebrew תהוֹם (*těhôm*) in Gen 1:2 is etymologically derived from the Babylonian *ti’āmat*.⁵ However, Tsumura argues that this is highly unlikely philologically. Decisive in this regard is the observation that there is no instance of West Semitic borrowing of Akkadian ’ (as in *ti’āmat*) as *h* (as in *těhôm*).⁶ *Ti’āmat*, had it come into Hebrew from Akkadian, would have become *tě’omā[h]* or *tě’ōmat*.⁷ Tsumura builds on this linguistic argument to argue that the Babylonian *ti’āmat* and the Hebrew תהוֹם are conceptually unrelated as well, that

² Von Rad, *Genesis*, 64.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction*.

⁵ Gunkel, *Creation*, 78.

⁶ Tsumura, *Creation*, 37.

⁷ The expected Hebrew form from the Akkadian *ti’āmat* is *tě’omā[h]* or *tě’ōmat* (< *ti’ōmat* < **ti’āmat*), not *těhôm*. See *ibid.*

the Hebrew *těhôm* is not “the depersonification of an original divine name.”⁸ Briefly, he argues that the Hebrew *těhôm* semantically mirrors the Akkadian Apsu, the underground fresh water, more than Tiamat and concludes that *těhôm* in Gen 1:2 is not the depersonalized Babylonian Tiamat – nor the depersonalized Ugaritic Yamm, since P does not use םי.⁹

Tsumura is to be commended for his rigorous philological and semantic study of key words in Genesis 1–2, including תהום. However, the conclusion of his study is a case of missing the forest for the trees. First, his argument denying a linguistic relation between the Babylonian *ti’āmat* and the Hebrew תהום is weak. He mistakes the fact that תהום may not be a direct loanword into Hebrew from the Babylonian *ti’āmat* for the absence of any linguistic relationship. Decisively, Proto-Semitic (PS) **h* becomes *h* in Hebrew and ’ in Akkadian.¹⁰ Thus, the Akkadian *ti’āmat* and the Hebrew *těhôm* could have and likely derive from the common PS root **thm*.¹¹ This would explain their resemblance and divergence. The two words may not be directly dependent etymologically, but they are cognates nonetheless of a common PS word. Therefore, we can agree with Tsumura’s narrow argument that the Hebrew *těhôm* is not a loanword from the Babylonian divine name Tiamat, but we cannot follow Tsumura when he denies any linguistic relationship between the Babylonian *ti’āmat* and the Hebrew תהום.

⁸ Tsumura, *Creation*, 43.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 44–53.

¹⁰ Thomas O. Lamdbin and John Huehnergard, “The Historical Grammar of Classical Hebrew: An Outline” (Cambridge: unpublished, 2000) 5.

¹¹ This root is reflected in Ugaritic *thmt* (*tahāmatu*, “the deep”). See John Huehnergard, *Ugaritic Vocabulary in Syllabic Transcription* (HSS 32; Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1987) 184–85.

Second, in my judgment, the similarities and meaningful differences between P's creation account and *Enuma Elish* are too numerous to deny a conceptual relationship between Tiamat and תהוֹם. For example, it is difficult to deny that an echo of Marduk splitting Tiamat into two and creating a "firmament" (*ašrātu*)¹² with one half can and was meant to be heard in Gen 1:6–7:

⁶ And God said, "Let there be a firmament (רָקִיעַ) in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." ⁷ So God made the firmament and separated the waters that were under the firmament from the waters that were above the firmament. And it was so.

The similarity of a single mytheme, admittedly, may be dismissed as coincidence or explained away as reflecting a common cultural heritage. But there are other parallels between Genesis 1 and *Enuma Elish* that concretize their relationship. Heidel identifies correspondences in numerous details and, to boot, in the order of events between *Enuma Elish* and Genesis 1:

<i>Enuma Elish</i>	<i>Genesis 1</i>
Divine spirit and cosmic matter are coexistent and coeternal.	Divine spirit creates cosmic matter and exists independently of it.
Primeval chaos; Ti'amat enveloped in darkness.	The earth a desolate waste, with darkness covering the deep (<i>tēhōm</i>).
Light emanating from the gods.	Light created.
The creation of the firmament.	The creation of the firmament.
The creation of dry land.	The creation of dry land.
The creation of luminaries.	The creation of luminaries.
The creation of man.	The creation of man.
The gods rest and celebrate.	God rests and sanctifies the seventh day. ¹³

¹² IV 141. See also Foster, *Muses*, 462, n. 2.

¹³ Cited in Speiser, *Genesis*, 10. In addition to the analogy to *Enuma Elish*, Genesis 1 is analogous to Psalm 104 in a number of thematic and structural ways. For a discussion of this issue, see Levenson, *Creation*, 54–59.

In light of this structural analogy, it is difficult to agree with Tsumura that תהום is not a depersonified Tiamat therefore neither a significant allusion to nor a polemic against the Babylonian myth. It is granted that the Hebrew *tēhôm* is not a direct Akkadian loanword. But this observation does not preclude the likely scenario in which an ancient Israelite writer, finding a cognate Hebrew word to the Akkadian Tiamat, תהום, uses that word as a cipher for a mythic concept he wants to echo but at the same time discredit. Thus, whatever תהום means elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, it functions in Genesis 1 as a transcultural conduit between Babylonian and Israelite depictions of creation, the latter entailing elements of resistance against empire and a reaffirmation of native identity. Tsumura is correct in noting that תהום is a perfectly legitimate West Semitic word that need not have been demythologized, but to insist that this indicates an absence of any echo of the Babylonian myth of creation is to miss a subtle and thoughtful trope. It must be allowed, in my judgment, that P's use of תהום alludes to, by the suggestive power of near homophony (between Tiamat and תהו) and analogy (between *Enuma Elish* and Genesis 1), the Babylonian primordial being Tiamat *at the same time* it articulates and asserts a native non-belief in the deified sea. That is to say, the Babylonian primordial being Tiamat lurks in the background of תהום – but as a rejected and scorned identity.

If I am correct that the Priestly writers simultaneously mimicked the Babylonian creation myth and transformed it so as to deny its veracity, their decision to cut off the beginning of *Enuma Elish* (conflict and battle) and make its conclusion (creation) the beginning of Genesis becomes all the more significant. The implications are two. First, *Chaoskampf* is really missing; even if the idea of divine combat haunts the fraught background of Genesis 1, the fact remains that God does not do battle with the sea. The

result is a thoroughly demythologized cosmos. The cosmos is the result of divine fiat, God's first self-determined act *ad extra*. Now, the Priestly writers, as evident by their choice of תהום to refer to the primordial waters and the analogy of their creation account to *Enuma Elish*, were engaged in a cultural and religious polemic primarily against Babylon. They were mocking the notion that Marduk is the god of gods (*Enuma Elish* VI 120) by denying that he created the cosmos and that there are other gods beside God. However, while their focus is clearly on Babylon, the Canaanite mythic tradition did not escape their purview. Leviathan, who we saw can appear in Ugaritic myth as the personification of Yamm and under the common name Tunnan ("sea monster"), makes an appearance in Genesis. But he appears by ellipses as one of the many sea monsters (תנינים) God creates to populate the sea (Gen 1:21). In their demythologizing program, the Priestly writers take a fearsome, mythic monster and place him squarely under God's authority and, what more, his blessing: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas" (Gen 1:22). The Priestly writers write away, as a polemic against non-Israelite myths, the history of God's combat against chaos and defang the sea monster, the sea, and the cosmos of their mythic antagonism against God.

The second implication of P's truncated account of creation is that it reverses the expected placement of creation at the conclusion of a combat narrative. Creation is no longer a goodly consequence of divine victory but a foundational fact of the cosmos and of history. We can speculate at length on the theological and narrative implication of this structural remapping. And we will have occasion to do so in a later chapter. What I would like to emphasize at this point is that placing creation at the beginning amplifies

the effect of the P creation account on the narrative structure of Genesis and the Hebrew Bible as a whole. It reinforces the priority of creation to the story that is about to unfold.

B. In the beginning... In the day...¹⁴

P's creation account supplements the structure of the older J narrative, which begins with its own account of creation and continues into the rest of Genesis. That is to say, it was J who first placed creation at the head of his largely narrative work, and the Priestly writers who, coming belatedly, nevertheless gave their own composition the honor of ordinal priority. The proof of P's belatedness is in the genealogical formula that now introduces J's creation account: "These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created" (Gen 2:4a). Genealogical formulae such as this one dot

¹⁴ Echoing and transforming the beginning of J, "In the day YHWH God made..." (ביום... עשות יהוה אלהים, Gen 2:4b), P covets and claims a greater priority, "In the beginning God created..." (בראשית ברא אלהים, Gen 1:1a). Concerning the translation options, see Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 78, 183. For further similarities among the beginning of P, J, and other transcultural creation accounts, see *ibid.*, 43–46. In regard to P's belatedness to J, I am reminded of John Milton's "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* [ed. Merritt Y. Hughes; Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1957] 42–50) where the poet exhorts the Heavenly Muse to run and to lay her verse at Jesus' feet before the Wise Men (Wisards) arrive with their gifts:

See how from far upon the Eastern rode
The Star-led Wisards haste with odours sweet:
O run, prevent them with thy humble ode,
And lay it lowly at his blessed feet.
Have thy the honour first, the Lord to greet... (ll 22–26)

The Muse's ode, of course, is the "Hymn" that follows – which Milton wrote himself!

the book of Genesis.¹⁵ Of Priestly origin, they are later than J and serve two functions. First, they permit the integration of P material into the primarily J base. The second function of the genealogical formulae generally is to “structure the book of Genesis into a unified composition and... make clear the nature of the unity which is intended.”¹⁶ The genealogical formula of Gen 2:4a functions in both these ways. Taken as a part of a larger literary phenomenon, the formula structures the book of Genesis and makes its structurality evident. Taken individually, “[t]he role of the *toledot* formula in Gen 2:4, which introduces the story of mankind, is to connect the creation of the world with the history which follows,” that is, to prepend P’s later creation account to J’s older narrative.¹⁷ The effect is that P’s creation account now supplements J’s story of creation: P’s creation account supplements what was missing but, it is important to note, something that is in harmony with J. In other words, P’s creation account does not radically change the shape and nature of the book of Genesis, which was already defined by J, but works subtly to shift the forward momentum of J’s narrative backward toward creation, to affirm creation as the theological horizon in which the story of Genesis takes place.

Gerhard von Rad, having a low view of the supplemental status of P, separates and subordinates P and P’s creation account to J. In fact, throughout his commentary on Genesis, von Rad treats P independently of J and is careful to distinguish between J(E)

¹⁵ 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1 (9); 37:2. For a good summary discussion of the genealogical formula, see Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 145–50.

¹⁶ Childs, *Introduction*, 146.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

and P. We can identify two reasons that von Rad separates P from J and P's creation account from J's creation account. The first reason is von Rad's high regard for the theological and creative genius of the Yahwist and, therefore, his desire to defend and showcase J's integrity over against P's supplementarity. He writes of the Yahwist, "As regards the creative genius of the *Yahwist's narrative* there is only admiration. Someone has justly called the artistic mastery in this narrative one of the greatest accomplishments of all times in the history of thought."¹⁸ In contrast, von Rad's appreciation of P is colder and measured: "The *Priestly narrative* is quite different from the sources [J and E]... It is really a Priestly document, i.e., it contains *doctrines* throughout. It is the result of intensive, theologically ordering thought."¹⁹ The Yahwist is the true artist and theologian, the architect of the Hexateuch, and P, though theologically profound in its own right, in comparison is supplementary, adding fragmentary reflections at opportune points within J's salvation history that are more informative than transformative.²⁰ Thus, von Rad talks about the "Priestly doctrine" of creation versus J's "story of man with God" that begins in Genesis 2 and carries on till the end of Joshua.²¹ And it is the story, the history, that is of greater importance for von Rad.

¹⁸ *Genesis*, 25. For a ground-breaking and also problematic defense of this judgment, see Gerhard von Rad, "The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch," in *From Genesis to Chronicles: Explorations in Old Testament Theology* (ed. K. C. Hanson; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005) 1–58.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁰ It is a sign of the wide pendulum swing of Pentateuchal scholarship that scholars now no longer speak of J, let alone of von Rad's Yahwist, and credit P for the creation of the Tetrach. One wonders if the pendulum has not swung too far to the other side.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 63, 75.

This brings us to the second, more specific reason that von Rad separates and subordinates P's creation account to J. Von Rad, in another study, defends redemption as the primary concern of biblical religion and judges that belief in creation was secondary, late, and problematic to Israelite religion.²² Redemption for von Rad, one may recall, primarily takes place in history, hence the characterization of biblical history as salvation history. The exilic Deutero-Isaiah epitomized how biblical writers ultimately came to integrate the doctrine of creation into salvation history and resolve the "theological problem" creation posed to a fundamentally historical religion: "the doctrine of creation has been fully incorporated into the dynamic of the prophet's doctrine of redemption."²³ Carroll Stuhlmueller, in a careful and thoughtful study of the relationship between creation and redemption in Deutero-Isaiah, demonstrates the rightness of von Rad's judgment and memorably labels the theological relationship between creation and redemption in Deutero-Isaiah as "creative redemption."²⁴ Creation is an adjective to the subject, salvation (history). Returning to Genesis, the central concern of Genesis 1–11, for von Rad, is the story about the "incursion and spread of sin" that precedes and continues with the election of Abram, and in him Israel – the beginning of "salvation history" proper (Gen 12:1–3).²⁵ P's independent and supplementary doctrine of creation contributed little to this. For him, creation was a "preface" that "has only an ancillary

²² Von Rad, "Theological Problem."

²³ *Ibid.*, 57.

²⁴ Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1970).

²⁵ Von Rad, *OT Theology*, I:154.

function.”²⁶ It is not that von Rad scorned the theological significance of P’s creation account. In fact, he writes in regard to Gen 1:1–2:4a, “These sentences cannot be easily overinterpreted theologically! Indeed, to us the danger appears greater that the expositor will fall short of discovering the concentrated doctrinal content.”²⁷ Nevertheless, the doctrine of creation, while itself important, is ultimately subordinate, even unnecessary, to the history of God’s salvific dealings with his people and exists to clarify the extent of God’s redemptive work but not to inform its nature.

Von Rad, in separating and subordinating P to J, mischaracterizes the canonical shape of Genesis and fails to accord to P’s creation account the priority its ordinal position demands. The structural dynamics of J and P in Genesis do not replicate the theological dynamic between salvation and creation in Deutero-Isaiah, and P’s doctrine of creation cannot be reduced to an adjectival status in relation to J’s story of God and his people. For Genesis and for the first half of the Hebrew Bible (Genesis–2 Kings), history is rightly regarded as an important, even central, characteristic.²⁸ Through a complex history of growth, one that has been shown to demonstrate a high degree of design, Genesis–2 Kings recounts a continuous history of the rise and fall of a people.²⁹ However, non-narrative passages cannot be excised and set aside, however late or alien

²⁶ Von Rad, *Genesis*, 46.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 48.

²⁸ I am here thinking about David Noel Freedman’s (*The Unity of the Hebrew Bible* [Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1991]) provocative concept of “Primary History.”

²⁹ Von Rad’s Yahwist is responsible for the Hexateuch, Martin Noth’s Deuteronomist for the Deuteronomistic History (Deuteronomy–2 Kings), and Freedman’s editors for the “Primary History.”

one judges the material to be to the “central” concern of history.³⁰ David Noel Freedman has argued, for example, that the decalogue may have been used by an anonymous individual or a group of editors to organize and bind the nine books of the Primary History (Genesis–2 Kings).³¹ Non-narrative elements, such as P’s “doctrine” of creation may reveal a hidden structure of the underlying narrative of the Hebrew Bible.

We can better interpret the supplementarity of P’s creation account to the narrative structure when we consider not its non-narrativity but its contribution to and integration into the overall narrative structure. We have seen that the Priestly writers recognized the narrative integrity of Genesis, in whatever form they found it, and used the genealogical formulae to integrate their own compositions and to make explicit the unity of the received material. The P passages were not haphazardly grafted onto J, and the resulting narrative structure is significantly different, perhaps not in shape, but in character from the narrative structure prior to the addition of P. More specifically, P’s creation account (Gen 1:1–2:3), appropriately prepended to J’s narrative at the beginning, is not an inessential supplement but provides what is missing and transforms the character of the narrative. It frames history with a cosmic account of creation and anchors the narrative in creation, not in contrast to J but together with J. P’s creation account at the beginning of the Hebrew Bible underlines the priority of creation to history, the priority of the universal framework within which the particular history of a people takes place. As Brevard S. Childs notes, “The canonical role of Gen. 1–11

³⁰ Freedman has put forth an interesting argument that the decalogue functions to shape and hold together the narrative of the Primary History. This would be an example of non-narrative features working narratively.

³¹ Counting 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings as one book each.

testifies to the priority of creation [to history]. The divine relation to the world stems from God's initial creative purpose for the universe, not for Israel alone."³² He adds, not to make the opposite mistake to von Rad's under-appreciation of P's secondary status, "Yet Israel's redemptive role in the reconciliation of the nations was purposed from the beginning and subsumed within the eschatological framework of the book."³³ The P creation account is a non-narrative element within a narrative structure that gives emphasis to a critical moment within the narrative. That is to say, it participates in defining the character of a narrative structure while it itself is not a narrative.

The total effect of the P creation account to the structure of the book of Genesis is as a double affirmation of creation. The account itself, on analogy and in contrast to the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, is a strong statement about creation as God's self-determinative act and foundational fact for the cosmos. And as an introduction to the narrative that follows, it establishes creation as the theological framework for history. This effect is felt more powerfully because the P account is not itself narrative, though the creation account is clearly related to its position in the narrative. It does not flow into the narrative but anchors it in creation, the definitive demonstration of God's majesty and mastery over all.

To look ahead, the P creation account is not the only instance where a story, a doctrine, or a prophetic oracle in which the sea figure plays a significant role punctuates and thereby highlights an idea or an event in the Hebrew Bible. It is simply the first. In

³² Childs, *Introduction*, 155. This is what Jon D. Levenson ("The Universal Horizon of Biblical Particularism," in *Ethnicity and the Bible* [ed. Mark G. Brett; Leiden: Brill, 1996] 143–69) calls the "universal horizon of biblical particularism." He also notes that "it is humanity in general and not any people in particular that is created" in both P and J's account of creation (*ibid.*, 147).

³³ *Ibid.*

fact, we will identify major instances of this phenomenon in this and the following chapters and analyze the total phenomenon in Chapter 8. For example, later in this chapter, we will introduce the idea that the Babylonian exile was conceived as the return of the chaos waters, a discussion we will conclude in Chapter 6. We will also discuss later the apocalyptic sea in Isaiah 27 and Daniel 7 as instances when *Endzeit gleich Urzeit*.³⁴ With just these three occurrences of the sea figure, we can begin to see the overall U-shape of the Hebrew Bible: the triumphal defeat of the sea in creation, the lamentable return of the sea in exile, and the final and lasting defeat of the sea in the end times. The sea that appears in Genesis 1 is the first among an entire network of sea figures, mythic and metaphorical, that together constitute an unrecognized organizing structure within the Hebrew Bible – the sea *muthos*.

C. Refractions of the Sea in Creation

Von Rad, as we noted above, opined that the language of Genesis 1 had undergone a long and arduous process of “purification” of all mythological elements. The fact that Genesis 1 reflects with such fidelity and yet with extreme subtlety the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, characteristics that would have been muddled and expunged in a long process of transmission, makes it more likely, in my opinion, that Genesis 1 was

³⁴ Von Rad (*OT Theology*, I:161) notes concerning Genesis 1–11, “Not until the almost mythic schematization of apocalyptic (Dan. II, VII) does something of this theoretical temper appear.” He was talking about the international interest of the primeval history, especially the Priestly chapters 1 and 10. In any case, we can supplement the connection that von Rad makes between Genesis 1–11 and Daniel 2 and 7 on the basis of intellectual temperament with the observation that the sea figure appears in both Genesis 1 and Daniel 7; the sea appears in *Endzeit* as in *Urzeit*.

the work of one person or group within a relatively short amount of time.³⁵

Demythologization of the sea within narrative about creation was an arduous and long process. But we have to look elsewhere to find evidence of the various stages. We conclude this section with a consideration of a few illustrative examples of demythologization from the Psalter, ranging from the most mythical to the least.

Psalm 29

The Canaanite and mythological background of Psalm 29 hardly requires discussion. Since Harold L. Ginsberg's suggestion in 1935 that the psalm is based on a Canaanite hymn as represented by Ugaritic texts, a number of studies have confirmed and strengthened the case for its Canaanite provenance.³⁶ The principal conclusion is that the psalm describes YHWH's enthronement after his triumph over his watery foe in language reminiscent of hymns to Baal. In fact, some scholars have argued that the psalm was originally a hymn dedicated to Baal, only slightly modified for its use in the YHWH

³⁵ See Levenson, *Creation*, 66–68, on Umberto Cassuto's discussion of the heptad in Genesis 1:1–2:4a and its implication for the unity of authorship.

³⁶ Harold L. Ginsberg, "A Phoenician Hymn in the Psalter," in *Atti del XIX Congresso Internazionale degli Orientalisti, Roma 23–29 Settembre 1935-XIII* (Roma: Tipografia del Senato, 1938-XVI) 472–76; see Hans-Joachim Krauss, *Psalms 1–59* (trans. Hilton C. Oswald; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 346; Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 147–61, esp. 152 n. 22, 23; Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I, 1–50* (AB 16; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965) 175.

cultus.³⁷ Rejecting this line of argument, however, there is a minority of scholars who continue to deny that the psalm presumes a divine combat against the chaos sea.

One of these is Rebecca Watson who, in her recent study of the theme of chaos in the book of Psalms, rigorously distinguishes aquatic references in Psalm 29 (e.g., רבים מים, v 3; מבורל, v 10) from any notion of a divine conflict with the sea.³⁸ Needless to say, she sees no connection between *Chaoskampf* and creation in Psalm 29 or, for that matter, in the entire Psalter! She states that “nowhere in the Old Testament, still less in the Psalter, is the sea manifested as a personal being, and nowhere does Yahweh engage in conflict with it. So great is his sovereign mastery over his creation that sometimes he stirs up the sea so that its waves roars, but elsewhere stills it.”³⁹ She stringently insists that we not assume that God battles the sea unless this is explicitly stated – and that it never is! This, in my judgment, is methodologically unsound. In response, I echo von Rad’s response to Schmidt’s similar proposal:

[T]hat the struggle with the Chaos dragon is only to be related to Jahweh’s work in Creation in passages where this is explicitly stated is, it seems to me, methodologically not completely convincing. Sometimes the relationship is made (Pss. LXXIV, LXXXIX), while in other cases it is lacking (Pss. XCIII, LXXVII). But should these two kinds of texts in fact be treated on a different footing, especially when, as Schmidt himself emphasises, the functions of Baal and of the creator god El were united [in YHWH]?⁴⁰

³⁷ Fitzgerald, “Note on Psalm 29.” He notes that changing YHWH to Baal unveils phonetic resonances throughout the hymn. See also Frank Moore Cross, “Notes on a Canaanite Psalm in the Old Testament,” *BASOR* 117 (1950) 19–21, here 19.

³⁸ Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 49–57. See also Tsumura, *Creation*, 152–55.

³⁹ Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 4.

⁴⁰ Von Rad, *OT Theology*, I:150–51 n. 24.

Watson is correct that Psalm 29 does not explicitly state that YHWH battled the sea. The psalm refers to YHWH going forth to battle and then, having defeated his enemy, ascending the “flood”-throne (מבול, v 10). In effect, it elides the battle scene. However, as we will now see, the parallels between the psalm and the *Baal Cycle* place beyond doubt that what is assumed as background is YHWH’s battle and victory over the sea.

YHWH’s voice occupies the center of the panegyric hymn and is praised for its power and its effects. This fact alone makes the connection of the psalm to Baal likely, because the thunderous voice was primarily associated with Baal in the ancient Near East. For example, one Abimilki of Tyre fawningly likens the voice of Pharaoh to that of Baal: Pharaoh “who utters (lit. ‘gives’) his voice in the heavens like Baal.”⁴¹ Baal’s voice was preeminently the praiseworthy voice. Therefore, even if Psalm 29 was composed to praise YHWH, it is no wonder that his voice is described in terms used to describe Baal’s voice. Just as creation responds with awe and consternation at Baal’s voice (*KTU* 1.4 VII 25–35), so too at YHWH’s (v 9).⁴² And just as Baal’s voice is the thunder that announces the longed for rains, so too does YHWH’s voice thunder (v 3). It can hardly be denied that YHWH replaces Baal in Psalm 29, textually and/or theologically, and claims Baal’s most prized attribute, his thunderous voice.

⁴¹ Cited in Ginsberg, “Phoenician Hymn,” 473. See, *ibid.*, for other examples.

⁴² On the issue of YHWH’s voice, see Jeffrey H. Tigay, “‘The Voice of YHWH Causes Hinds to Calve’ (Psalm 29:9),” in *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism Presented to Shalom M. Paul on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*. Vol. 1 (eds. Chaim Cohen et al.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008) 399–411. קול may be understood to mean, “Hark!” as elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Gen 4:10; Isa 52:8; Jer 10:22; Cant 2:8). For a consideration and rebuttal of this reading in Psalm 29, see Tigay, “‘Voice of YHWH,” 406–11.

The narrative and cultic setting of Psalm 29 at the temple also mirrors the setting closely related to Baal's voice. After defeating Yamm, Baal campaigns to have a temple built for him to ensure the stability of his kingship. And it is only after the temple is built and a window installed that he thunders from his temple (1.4 VII 25–42). Baal's voice is intimately related to the temple. The cultic and the literary context of Psalm 29 matches this. Scholars have defended the celebration of YHWH's enthronement in the Jerusalem Temple as the likely cultic *Sitz im Leben* of Psalm 29.⁴³ As for the literary context, the temple is clearly in view in verse 9: "And in his temple, all are shouting: Glory!"⁴⁴ Just as Baal issues his voice from his temple, it may be surmised that YHWH thunders from his temple as well. The character of YHWH's voice and the context in which it is celebrated match what we find in the *Baal Cycle*.

Given this close analogy between YHWH and Baal, we cannot agree with Watson that "nowhere in the Old Testament, still less in the Psalter, is the sea manifested as a personal being, and nowhere does Yahweh engage in conflict with it."⁴⁵ Rather, we must conclude that the "many waters" (מים רבים, v 3)⁴⁶ and the "flood" (מבול, v 10) refer to the aquatic foe whom YHWH defeated in creation and now governs as king. It is not for

⁴³ Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 346–47; Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 2 vols. (trans. D.R. Ap-Thomas; New York: Abingdon, 1962) I:106–30.

⁴⁴ The final *waw* of כלו is probably a dittography of the final letter of היכלו. However, if it is original, it may be understood as emphasizing the difference between what belongs to YHWH, which responds in praise, and what does not, which responds in fear. It is also possible to take אמר as related to Akkadian *amāru*, "to see": "Throughout his entire temple, his glory appears" (Jon D. Levenson, personal communication).

⁴⁵ Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 4.

⁴⁶ Herbert G. May, "Some Cosmic Connotations of *Mayim Rabbim*, 'Many Waters,'" *JBL* 74 (1955) 9–21.

chance that the psalm says first that “the voice of YHWH is over the waters... the mighty waters” (v 3). The chaos waters needed to be subjugated as the first of YHWH’s royal acts. And the flood-throne which YHWH ultimately mounts as king in his temple is the sign and enactment of his enduring reign over the sea – likely represented in the Jerusalem Temple as the Molten Sea.⁴⁷ The thematic and contextual similarities, in addition to the linguistic affinities pointed out by others, of Psalm 29 to the *Baal Cycle* impose this conclusion, that the sea is YHWH’s mythical and personified foe.

A note of clarification concerning YHWH’s connection to creation in Psalm 29 is necessary. We argued above that Baal’s kingship is related to creation because his reign is orderly and fructifying. It is true that El is the Creator of Creatures, not Baal. However, El alone is not responsible for all aspects of creation. Creation may be described, if inadequately, as having two dimensions: *creatio prima* and *creatio continua*.⁴⁸ El as the progenitor of life may be understood as responsible primarily for *creatio prima* whereas Baal is responsible primarily for *creatio continua*, the task of nurturing and governing life. Now, YHWH’s absorption of El and Baal’s characteristics makes his identity as creator undeniable in the Hebrew Bible.⁴⁹ However, we do not

⁴⁷ See below for a fuller discussion of the Molten Sea.

⁴⁸ For a discussion of this issue in relation to the *Baal Cycle*, see Fisher, “Creation at Ugarit.” Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger (*Psalms 3, A Commentary on Psalms 101–150* [Hermeneia; ed. Klaus Baltzer; trans. Linda M. Maloney; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011] 45, 75) talk about the difference between *creatio prima*, on the one hand, and *conservatio* and *gubernatio* of creation, on the other. For arguments for the non-existence of a connection between *Chaoskampf* and creation, see McCarthy, “‘Creation’ Motifs”; Saggs, *Encounter with the Divine*; Tsumura, *Creation*; and Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*. For the opposing view, see Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos*; Day, *God’s Conflict*; Levenson, *Creation*.

⁴⁹ Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 44–75, 147–94.

need to turn to this complex phenomenon in order to defend YHWH's relation to creation in Psalm 29. First, YHWH's flood-throne is proof that YHWH's kingship is not the chaotic kingship of the sea (Yamm). Second, the depiction of the divine beings (בני אלים) of the heavenly council (v 1) and all his people in the temple (v 9) ascribing him glory and power is evidence of an orderly government. Third, YHWH's thunderous voice announces rain and enacts his fructifying reign without which the whole earth would languish and wither. YHWH's journey across the water, through Qadesh, finally to the temple throne may be understood as a review of creation – an exercise of his role as governor of creation.⁵⁰ In sum, YHWH's kingship is very much like the kingship of Baal, which is why they could be confused or conflated (e.g, 1 Kings 18),⁵¹ and is intimately related to the maintenance and governing of creation. In other words, YHWH exercises creative reign.

Psalm 74

We find a conception of the sea that is arguably more mythical but, in my opinion, less so in Psalm 74 (vv 12–17).

¹² But God my King is from old,
working salvation in the midst of the earth.

¹³ You split Sea with your might;
you shattered the heads of Dragon⁵² upon the waters.

¹⁴ You crushed the heads of Leviathan;

⁵⁰ Peter Manchinist, personal communication.

⁵¹ Jon D. Levenson, personal communication.

⁵² Reading תנין for MT תנינים.

you gave him as food to the people of the wilderness.

¹⁵ You clove the spring and the torrent;
you dried up the eternal floods.

¹⁶ Yours is the day, yours also the night;
you established the light and the sun.

¹⁷ You fixed all the boundaries of the earth;
summer and winter, you made them.

We can start with Watson's treatment with benefit. Watson initially mentions three interpretative options. These verses allude to God's "slaying of a 'chaotic' dragon in order to bring creation into being, or to his salvific action during the events of the Exodus and wilderness wanderings, or perhaps to both."⁵³ Basically, the dramatic image of God the King dividing the sea and crushing the heads of Leviathan refers to Israel's salvation history and/or a creation myth. Both the mythical and historical interpretative options have their supporters.⁵⁴ In defense of the mythical interpretation, it may be argued that, in recalling the creator's cosmic activities against chaos in a lament about the destruction of the Temple, the psalmist is linking the Temple to creation and thereby pleading that God repeat his creative act to restore the Temple, God's abode and the center of the world (v 2). This interpretation is based on the close relationship between creation and temple theology. A historical interpretation of verses 12–17 is also attractive. Verse 12 mentions "salvation in the earth," and verses 13–15, it may be argued, correspondingly refer to the exodus, in particular to God's victory at the Red Sea over Egypt, elsewhere called Rahab (רַהַב, Isa 30:7; Ps 87:4) and related to the sea monster (תַּנִּינִי, Eze 29:3).

⁵³ Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 156.

⁵⁴ See Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 156–57, ns. 77 and 78. See also Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100* (Hermeneia; ed. Klaus Baltzer; trans. Linda M. Maloney; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005) 248–49.

Ultimately, this makes the third option, “perhaps to both,” the most attractive interpretation.

Watson, however, takes away the third interpretative option by repressing myth and emphasizing history: “Thus the results of the foregoing analysis indicate that the events of the *Heilsgeschichte* are clearly invoked in v. 12, and further alluded to in the succeeding verses. By contrast, in the context of the present psalm, it is particularly doubtful whether creation is to be regarded as among these saving deeds.”⁵⁵ She denies that God dividing the sea and shattering the heads of the dragon refer to creation; then, she undermines the value of the mythic imagery as simply “a rich source of poetic imagery” and asks “whether its significance transcended this.”⁵⁶ For her, myth is nothing but a figure of speech, an ornamental metaphor employed to enhance one’s appreciation of history. For Watson, what we have in verses 13–15 is allegory, a symbolic fiction that points to but does not participate in reality.

This conclusion demonstrates, in my opinion, an unfortunate failure to understand how metaphors work and, perhaps more seriously, the pedantic and prejudicial way in which the thesis of the nonexistence of a *Chaoskampf* is being forced on the text. History is an important lens through which to interpret Psalm 74. The destruction of the Temple in 587 B.C.E., lamented in the first half of the psalm (vv 1–11), is a matter of historical fact. And it is apt to recall a historical event, Israel’s exodus from Egypt, as a paradigm of distress and redemption to reflect theologically on the destruction of the Temple and the accompanying experience of exile (vv 12–17). However, the mythic imagery of

⁵⁵ Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 163.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 167.

verses 12–17, the core of the petition, loses its force as a description of the exodus and thus as a basis for a plea for a like act of deliverance in the present crisis if it is reduced to mere “imagery” and “poetic ornament.” If the *Chaoskampf* and God’s cosmic victory over the chaos monster were not a reality to the psalmist and his audience, as Watson claims, the psalmist would have done better to refer to the historical event itself and not talk by indirection. For in this case success does not lie in circuits. To talk about what, for the psalmist, was an important and a real historical event in terms of an abandoned myth of creation would be to satirize and to mute historical memory rather than to eulogize and to activate it.

Myth is being used to describe the exodus because the exodus itself was mythic in significance, homologizable to the creation of the cosmos. And the exodus event *as* an event of creation is being recalled in pleading for a like redemption in the aftermath of 587 B.C.E. because the destruction of the Temple and the Babylonian exile are homologizable to the destruction of the cosmos. The destruction of the Temple, the center of the world, had cosmic implications: the return of the chaos waters upon the earth. Thus the exile could be imagined as the return of a state of anti-creation. The historical and cosmic nature of the destruction of the Temple and the exile required that the redemptive power recalled, celebrated, and pleaded for to rectify the situation too be historical *and* cosmic. We risk misreading the significance of Psalm 74 if we lay too heavy an emphasis on either the historical or the cosmic. And we miss the mark altogether if we deny one or the other. In Psalm 74, creation should not be reduced to an adjective to the subject, salvation history, their dynamic relationship to one of either/or. Rather, both creation and history are important.

In conclusion, while the sea and Leviathan no doubt refer to historical foes and events in the psalm, they remain, at core, mythic. The reference to the multiple heads of Leviathan strengthens the concreteness of the mythical nature of Leviathan. In the *Baal Cycle*, one of Leviathan's several epithets is "the powerful one with seven heads" (*KTU* 1.5 I 1–3; cf. 1.3 III 38–42). Psalm 74 does not mention the exact number of Leviathan's heads but does mention his multiple "heads" (v 14; cf. v 13). This is a superfluous detail, historically speaking, but concretizes Leviathan, the mythic monster. The psalmist has the mythical creature in mind and not only the historical event at the Sea. The psalmist recalls God's primeval act of creation, dividing the sea and crushing the heads of Leviathan, as a praise of his ageless kingship and as a prayer for present action. In this exilic psalm,⁵⁷ the sea myth persists as a relevant and powerful theologoumenon, though it has been refracted through Israel's own historical prism.

Psalm 104: 5–18, 25–26

Psalm 104 contains two different but related depictions of the sea: the mythic sea of chaos in the process of being subdued (vv 5–18) and the sea and the sea monster after their subjugation (vv 25–26). In verses 5–18, the psalmist describes creation as the familiar double miracle of expelling the sea and distributing its waters. First, verses 5–9 describe the first miracle that makes life on earth possible. Verse 7 says that the waters "fled at your rebuke" and "urgently ran away (יִחַפְּזוּן) at the sound of your thunder."

⁵⁷ For a summary of reasons for dating the Psalm in the time of the Maccabees, see Hans-Joachim Krauss, *Psalms 60–150 (A Continental Commentary)*; trans. Hilton C. Oswald; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 97. However, an exilic date, soon after the First Temple was destroyed, is more likely, as argued for by Hossfeld and Zenger (*Psalms* 2, 243–44).

(Here, even Watson admits that the sea is personified.)⁵⁸ Verse 9 goes on to describe how YHWH established and maintains the boundary between land and sea:

⁹ You set a limit; they do not transgress.
They do not return to cover the earth.

Verses 10–18, in language reminiscent of the Egyptian “Great Hymn to Aton,”⁵⁹ recount the second miracle that allows life to flourish on earth. God makes springs to gush up from below (v 10) and sends rain from above (v 13). The beneficent distribution of water allows vegetation to fructify and animal life to thrive. In sum, what we have in verses 5–18 is a by-now-familiar picture of the cosmos as the product of the twofold miracle of expulsion and distribution of water by a creator God. The sea is God’s personified enemy and an enduring threat to creation that God defeats and dominates.

To the twofold miracle of creation recounted in Ps 104:5–18, the psalmist adds a third miracle, the domestication of Leviathan and the pacification of the sea, that allows for human activity on the sea. This is what becomes possible when God has defeated the enemy.

²⁵ Yonder is the sea, awesome and vast,
There are creeping things without number,
small creatures with large ones.
²⁶ There go the ships,
Leviathan whom you formed to play with. (104:25–26)

⁵⁸ Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 240.

⁵⁹ For the text of the Egyptian hymn, see James B. Pritchard, ed., *ANET*, 369–71 and notes. For an analysis of these parallels, see Levenson, *Creation*, 58–64; Christoph Uehlinger, “Leviathan und die Schiffe in Ps 104,25–26,” *Bib* 71 (1990) 499–526; and Annette Krüger, “Psalm 104 und der grosse Amarnahymnus: eine neue Perspektive,” in *The Composition of the Books of Psalms* (ed. Erich Zenger; Leuven: Peeters, 2010): 609–21.

This is a compact and radical reimagining of the nautical world. In the still “awesome and vast” sea, Leviathan is singled out by name as a wonderful and delightful creature. It has been utterly transformed from the many-headed dragon who needs to be crushed (Ps 74:13–14) into a creature God created “to play with”! We can hear a faint echo of its primordial roar and imagine its ferocious antagonism. And Leviathan’s domestication is all the more dramatic because we can. The once proud and powerful personification of the rebellious sea is now the humble and meek representatives of the large and small sea creatures, integrated into the cosmos of God’s creation as his plaything. Under God’s rule, it is safe for human ships to join the sea creatures. They no longer pose a threat to their pelagic ventures.

This brings us to the conception of the sea as a fit place for human activity in Ps 104:25–26. The Great Hymn to Aton, with which Psalm 104 shares some similarities, mentions ships sailing in the sea:

The ships are sailing north and south as well,
For every way is open at thy appearance.
The fish in the river dart before thy face;
Thy rays are in the midst of the great green sea.⁶⁰

In light of the other parallels between the Egyptian Hymn and Psalm 104, a direct or indirect borrowing from Egypt is not out of the question.⁶¹ However, a native Canaanite provenance of the theme is more likely, as Phoenician-Canaanite exemplars of the

⁶⁰ *ANET*, 370.

⁶¹ Levenson, *Creation*, 58–64.

combination of motifs “sovereign creator god-ship(s)-Leviathan” also exist.⁶² The tradition history aside, what is important for our purposes is that Psalm 104, along with the domestication of Leviathan, presents the sea as pacified for human activity. In the psalm, the issue is no longer that God is victorious over the sea and Leviathan. That is assumed. The issue is that Leviathan, the greatest of the great sea creatures, does not threaten human ships and, what is more, that the sea itself is a safe place for human ships of commerce and adventure. The sea of Ps 104:25–26, beyond being demythologized, is pacified and made, if not quite inhabitable, at least open for travel.

Genesis 1

The sea (תהום) and its waters (מים) in Genesis 1 are primordial elements, not a deity, that God separates twice over, first, to create space between the supernal and the infernal sea and, second, to create dry land upon the infernal sea. Furthermore, the Priestly writers distinguish the sea monsters from the spatial sea and declare that God created the sea monsters, along with all other sea creatures. Leviathan or Rahab, proper names for the personified sea deity, are undifferentiated from and dissolve into the common noun “the sea monsters” (התנינִים, Gen 1:21). Furthermore, simply a class of sea creatures, the sea monsters are highlighted only to be subsumed under the category “fish of the sea” (דגת הים, Gen 1:26, 28) and placed under human rule (1:26, 28). This

⁶² Uehlinger cited in Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 55–56. For an image of the Syrian seal, see Uehlinger, “Leviathan,” 518 Abb. 3. See also Dahood, *Psalms 101–150*, 33; Georges Nagel, “À propos des rapports du psaume 104 avec les textes égyptiens,” in *Festschrift für Alfred Bertholet* (eds. O. Eissfeldt et al.; Tübingen: 1950) 395–403.

represents a “stage beyond Psalm 104 in the demythologization of the sea monsters.”⁶³ Where we can hear an echo of the conflict between God and the sea monster in Psalm 104, no possibility of conflict is reflected in Genesis 1. In sum, the sea in Genesis 1 is not personified but is an uncreated, primordial element. The sea monsters, in contrast, are creatures, blessed with the rest of the living creatures to fill the waters and placed under human rule.

Psalm 95

Psalm 95 states that YHWH made the sea: “To him belongs the sea, for he made it” (95:5a). We find ownership claims for the world (תבל) in Ps 24:1 and 50:12. But the claim that God made the sea and dry ground is found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible only in Jon 1:9. The other closest parallel is Ezekiel’s mocking citation of the king of Egypt’s boast: “My Nile is my own, and I made [it] for myself” (29:3). The claim that God created the sea is a radical one within the Hebrew Bible. Now, Psalm 95 does not mention sea monsters as does Genesis 1. The analogous ownership claims in Pss 24:1 and 50:12 suggest that, if the sea belongs to YHWH, we should understand that “its fullness” (מלאו) and “those that dwell in it” (ישב בו) also belong to YHWH. Thus, the declaration that God made and owns the sea likely assumes that God owns and made all the sea creatures, including the sea monsters. This marks the final stage in the process of demythologization of the sea. The sea and, we presume, the sea monsters are squarely

⁶³ Levenson, *Creation*, 54.

placed under God's ownership as their maker and his reign. Even the memory of *Chaoskampf* is placed under erasure. It is silenced and denied absolutely.

Conclusion

From this brief survey, we can propose two analytical categories for determining the degree to which a mythic figure or idea has been demythologized: fragmentation and bending. When a beam of white light is refracted through a prism, the beam of light is bent and separated into its various colors. Likewise, demythification involves separating the various components of a composite mythic figure and their bending.⁶⁴

First, fragmentation. The mythic conceptualization of the sea figure combines and holds together various aspects of the sea figure, its two dominant aspects being its personification (as a deity or a sea monster) and its spatiality (as the cosmic or the geographical sea). Thus, the fragmentation of the sea figure into its personified and spatial aspects is one key aspect of its demythification. We have sufficient data to illustrate this. The sea figure in Psalm 29 is mythic and is richly composite. It appears in the text as the cosmic "many waters" and the flood-throne, but there can be no doubt that the sea figure was also thought of as a sea deity who battled YHWH, analogous to Yamm in the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle*. Psalm 74, which still retains a mythic conception of the sea, does not distinguish between the sea deity, the sea monster, and Leviathan. Together, they make up God's cosmic and historical enemy. The conception of the sea in Ps

⁶⁴ On the topic of the transformation of myth, see Claude Lévi-Strauss, "How Myths Die," in his *Structural Anthropology*, Vol 2 (trans. Monique Layton; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976) 256–68.

104:5–18 emphasizes the spatial aspect of the sea figure but does not separate out its personified aspect. The waters are still personified. However, the Priestly writers of Genesis 1 and the psalmist of Ps 104:25–26 clearly separate the spatial sea and the personified sea. The result is a highly demythologized conception of the sea. We conclude, then, that the fragmentation of the sea figure into its spatial and personified components is one clear sign of demythification.

Second, bending. The sea figure or the constitutive elements of the sea figure may be “bent” and made historical or natural. For example, in Psalm 74, the composite sea figure is bent to talk about Israel’s experience of salvation at the exodus event. The sea figure is historicized. Another example, the spatial sea and the sea monster in Genesis 1, Psalms 94, and 104:25–26 are demythologized separately into geographical space and into God’s creature. The sea figure is fragmented and its component parts naturalized or made geographical individually.

Demythification, it may be proposed, happens along two coordinated axes: fragmentation and bending. Bending alone and, less frequently, fragmentation alone can characterize demythification. However, they often go hand in hand, and total demythification involves the bending of the component elements of a mythic figure independently to the point that the conceptualization of each element represents a clean break from a mythic conception of the world. Within the framework proposed, the most complex and interesting subject for study is the apocalyptic sea, which will occupy our attention in a later chapter. Suffice it to say for now that the apocalyptic sea is the result of a kind of reverse bending and reverse fragmentation that is to be distinguished from simple remythification or the recrudescence of myth. The various elements and

dimensions of the sea figure, having already been fragmented and bent, are bent again, to varying degrees back toward the mythical, and combined again in a way that leaves the seams and the stitching exposed. The result, as we will see, is a fascinating and monstrous thing.

I have avoided dating the psalms in our discussion except to indicate the broadest of possible periods of origin. The first reason for this is that dating psalms is a difficult and highly contested issue. For example, proposed dates for Psalm 74, which I would place in the exilic period following the destruction of the Solomonic Temple, go as late as the Maccabean period.⁶⁵ And different parts of Psalm 104 have been assigned to different editorial stages and different dates.⁶⁶ The other reason that I have not dated the psalms rigorously is that chronology does not explain the nature or degree of demythification, which is the issue under discussion. That is to say, chronology does not equal typology. There is, to be sure, a certain degree of correlation between chronology and demythification. The sea in the pre-exilic Psalm 29 is more mythical than the sea in the post-exilic Genesis 1. And the issue of genetic influence, say between Psalm 104 and Genesis 1, is chronological before it is spatial or cultural. However, demythification is not evolutionary, even if each new generation redefines the threshold of possibilities that is genetically dependent on what was accomplished in the previous generation; and demythification is not like a biological breakthrough so that, once achieved, it is no longer possible to go back. Demythification or, better, the art of refraction is, in large part, an intellectual and theological tool the biblical writers used to cope with their

⁶⁵ See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 243–44.

⁶⁶ See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3*, 46–48.

changing environment (geographical, political, religious), to adapt their rich fund of traditions for a new time and, sometimes, for a new place.

If I am right to suggest that the art of refraction was a theological tool, we can better understand why the sea figure, which lies at the center of the sea myth pattern, was so often the medium chosen for manipulation. The weighty matters related to the sea figure (creation, kingship, and the temple) tell us that what was at stake with each refraction of the sea and the reconfiguration of the various elements of the sea myth pattern had to do with nothing less than the character of God as creator, king, and redeemer and his relation to his people, the nations, and creation. Given the weighty theological and historiographical task with which the biblical writers were burdened and privileged, the sea myth pattern provided a rich constellation of ideas, figures, and relationships like no other. The sea myth pattern, to risk overstatement, was Israel's most valuable thought-cluster and the art of refraction her most versatile tool. The reason that, as we will see, the sea figure comes up again and again at critical moments in the Hebrew Bible is because it is intimately connected to three pivotal issues for Israelite religion.

A final note on Tsumura and Watson. The fact that myths and in turn the mythic figures, such as the sea figure, were fragmented and recontextualized in the Hebrew Bible means that it is easy to overemphasize the context over against the mythic figure or the mythic fragment. The recontextualization of a mytheme in a non-mythic environment may be interpreted as demythologization. Watson and, to a lesser degree, Tsumura fall into this trap. Watson's treatment of Psalm 74 is an illustrative example. The words of Ps 74:12–17 clearly refer to a mythic event. However, by overemphasizing the historical context of the lament (the destruction of the Temple) and the historical aspect of the

reference (“working salvation in the midst of the earth”), Watson argues that history is the only legitimate lens through which to read the entire psalm. This is not only methodologically unsound but also, in my mind, impoverishes the text theologically. I am now talking exclusively about Watson, since Tsumura is more careful in this respect. In arguing that “nowhere in the Old Testament, still less in the Psalter, is the sea manifested as a person being, and nowhere does Yahweh engage in conflict with it,”⁶⁷ Watson turns the ancient Israelites into a flat reflection of a theological ideal. To say that, in Israelite religion, “[s]o great is [God’s] sovereign mastery over his creation that sometimes he stirs up the sea so that its waves roar, but elsewhere stills it”⁶⁸ is to deny the Israelites the sophistication to acknowledge that things happen in life and in history that are outside, even contrary to, the goodly character of God, that chaos is a real element of reality. The recognition of the reality of chaos is the necessary precondition for the possibility of wrestling with many questions of theological depth. And the literary deposit of the biblical writers is proof positive that the biblical writers did wrestle with such questions.

Watson concludes her book:

However, when this *rudis indigestaque moles* is separated out into its constituent elements, and its individual themes and concerns distinguished, the idea of ‘chaos’ is itself uncreated, transformed into a coherent yet varied theological system of sometimes interconnected yet fundamentally distinct ideas.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 4.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 399.

This is a telling admission. Separating constituent elements of a myth (fragmentation) and transforming them (bending), as we argued above, make up the one process of demythologization. In this sense, Watson's methodology is more demythologization than interpretation. And if the result of Watson's analysis is "a coherent yet varied theological system," that is an imposition of her own theological belief in a God so powerful that no question of his sovereignty is permitted. It is more the result of constructive theology than the result of careful exegesis. In my own reading, the Hebrew Bible is theologically complex and rich and very far from being a system. Watson set out to undo Gunkel's legacy on the study of creation and chaos in the Hebrew Bible. In the end, I prefer Gunkel's version of chaos, rich in mythic echoes and allusions, over Watson's version of creation, even if that means there is "mehr Chaos als Schöpfung."⁷⁰

II. The Sea and Kingship

Kingship is an important aspect of the religious and social history of ancient Israel. From the earliest poetry (Exodus 15) to the latest writings preserved in the Hebrew Bible (Daniel 7), the God of Israel is celebrated as king. The size and shape of the divine kingdom changed with the flux of historical circumstances. But the fact of God's kingship, especially during times of national catastrophe, endured both as a

⁷⁰ Julius Wellhausen famously wrote in a letter to Adolf (von) Harnack about Hermann Gunkel's book *Schöpfung und Chaos*, "Hier ist mehr Chaos als Schöpfung." See Machinist, foreword *Creation and Chaos*, by Gunkel, xviii and n. 11. For a recent and thorough review and critique of Watson's thesis, see Bernard F. Batto, "The Combat Myth in Israelite Tradition Revisited," in *Creation and Chaos: A Reconsideration of Hermann Gunkel's Chaostkampf Hypothesis* (eds. JoAnn Scurlock and Richard H. Beal; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013) 217–36.

theological stumbling block and as a reassuring rock. The history of human kingship is nested within the royal framework of divine kingship. And its introduction and dissolution mark periods of great religious and social turbulence, opportunity, and creativity. One important aspect of the theological debate that took place within ancient Israel concerned the relationship between human kingship and divine kingship. In this section, we will examine the role the sea figure plays in mediating this relationship as it is represented in the Psalter.

Before we dive into the Psalter, we need to frame the issue in order to avoid interpretative pitfalls. An efficient way to do so may be to summarize the two opposing interpretative options concerning the relationship between divine and human kingship and suggest, without much in the way of refinement, that the correct interpretation lies somewhere in between. At one extreme are scholars like George Mendenhall who deride Israelite monarchy as a “pagan” incursion, having nothing to do with Israelite faith in YHWH, those whom Levenson once called the “segregationists” – or better, separatists.⁷¹ Mendenhall writes, “What we can prove is the fact that the cultic/political system of Jerusalem during the Monarchy had nothing to do with the Yahwistic revolution and was actually completely incompatible with that religious movement.”⁷² He is far from alone. Rainer Albertz writes, “The transition from the pre-state period to the period of the state at the end of the twelfth century marks a deep change in the history of Israelite religion... it was the establishment of the kingdom and the consequent far-reaching social changes

⁷¹ See Jon D. Levenson, “The Davidic Covenant and Its Modern Interpreters,” *CBQ* 41 (1979) 205–19. Levenson (personal communication) offers “separatist” as a better term.

⁷² George Mendenhall, “The Monarchy,” *Int* 29 (1975) 155–170, here 166.

that posed the decisive challenge to the young Yahweh religion.”⁷³ It is significant that Hossfeld and Zenger lean toward this interpretation of the relationship of human kingship: “The introduction of the kingship marks the deepest cleft in the religious and social history of early Israel. No institution so enduringly influenced and remade the structures of the Early Iron Age ‘agricultural tribal societies of the marginal hill and desert landscapes’ (M. Weippert) as the establishment of leadership functions that were monarchically organized.”⁷⁴ To generalize the opinion of those at this end of the spectrum, a dramatic social and theological disturbance, a cleft, characterizes the introduction of human monarchy into Israel. It was theologically incompatible with Yahwism and transformative, if not disruptive, to the tribal structure of society.

At the other end of the spectrum are scholars who emphasize the continuity between pre- and monarchic societies like Lawrence E. Stager and J. David Schloen.⁷⁵ Stager correctly observes, “[T]he reorganization of Israel during the monarchy was not so radical as most scholars have maintained.”⁷⁶ Schloen, developing Stager’s and Max

⁷³ Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period, Volume I: From the Beginnings to the End of the Monarchy* (trans. John Bowden; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1994) 105.

⁷⁴ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 204.

⁷⁵ Lawrence E. Stager, “The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel,” *BASOR* 260 (1985) 1–35. J. David Schloen, *The House of the Father as Fact and Symbol: Patrimonialism in Ugarit and the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2001). See also J. J. M. Roberts, “In Defense of the Monarchy: The Contribution of Israelite Kingship to Biblical Theology,” in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (eds. Patrick D. Miller, Jr., Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) 377–96.

⁷⁶ Stager, “Archaeology of the Family,” 24.

Weber's ideas, proposes the "patrimonial household model" to explain how human kingship might have been integrated into the household of the divine king:

In a patrimonial regime, the entire social order is viewed as an extension of the ruler's household – and ultimately of the god's household. The social order consists of a hierarchy of subhouseholds linked by personal ties at each level between individual 'masters' and 'slaves' or 'fathers' and 'sons.'⁷⁷

Within this elegant and emic model of ancient Near Eastern social structure, the household of the human king fits comfortably between the divine household and the household of the tribal head. Both conceptually and socially, the advent of the human monarchy was not a major disruption to Israelite society.

We can find textual warrant for both interpretations. In accord with the interpretation of Mendenhall and other separatists, the Bible does not portray human kingship as native to Israel but as an institution that the Israelites adopted later from the nations around them (Deut 17:14; 1 Sam 8:5, 20). Indeed, human kingship could be and was understood to be a rejection of the divine king (1 Sam 8:7–9; cf. Hos 13:9–11⁷⁸). The Deuteronomist, above all, sounded a warning against the evils of kingship and legislated laws in order to limit the authority of the king (Deut 17:14–20; 1 Sam 8:11–18; cf. Judges 9).⁷⁹ The establishment of a human king was a social and theological

⁷⁷ Schloen, *House*, 51.

⁷⁸ For a discussion of this and other passages concerning kingship in Hosea, see Peter Machinist, "Hosea and the Ambiguity of Kingship in Ancient Israel," in *Constituting the Community: Studies in the Polity of Israel in Honor of S. Dean McBride Jr.* (eds. John T. Strong and Steven S. Tuell; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005) 153–81.

⁷⁹ Roberts ("Defense of Monarchy," 380) calls for balance in regards to the Deuteronomist, noting that "[e]ven the Deuteronomistic historian (Dtr), who is normally

innovation that, at some level, disrupted Israelite society and posed a theological challenge to YHWH's kingship.⁸⁰

There is biblical precedent for the integrative view as well. For example, David's kingship seems to have been predicated upon tribal ties. In order to approve David's kingship, the elders of Israel gather and declare: "Indeed, we are your bone and your flesh" (2 Sam 5:1; cf 1 Chr 11:1). David says the same to the elders of Judah in 2 Samuel 19: "You are my brothers, you are my bone and my flesh" (v 13). This, of course, is idiomatic. And it is language that affirms kinship ties. We remember, for example, that Abimelek says something similar to the Shechemites in Judges 9 in order to claim his kinship ties to them (v 2). (It is not insignificant that Abimelek, whose name means "My father is king," puts forth his kinship as a reason for his becoming ruler.) Better, Adam says of Eve: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gen 2:23). The Israelites used family language to conceptualize kingship, and actual tribal ties were the basis for kingship. At some level, the monarchical society was based on and was an extension of tribal social structures. The deeply tribal nature of the monarchy might be adduced from the fact that the schism between the Northern and Southern kingdoms occurs along tribal lines. And the succession of kings in the South likely was more stable than in the North because the South was really made up of one tribe, Judah, with Benjamin metaphorically and literally being the little brother. Not devaluing the

considered rather critical of kingship, preserves both the promonarchical and the antimonarchical sources in his account of the transition from tribal confederacy to monarchy, and he, along with many other biblical writers, invests the monarchy with the sanction of Yahweh's promissory covenant to the Davidic dynasty."

⁸⁰ For a fuller discussion of the issues and passages involved, see Albertz, *Israelite Religion*, 105–26.

dynasties of the North, such as the Omride dynasty which was quite successful and powerful, the many coup d'états there are likely attributable to competing tribal claims to the throne.⁸¹

As we have seen, the textual and linguistic evidence for the patrimonial household model is scattered across the Bible and embedded in larger narrative contexts. In my view, this speaks in favor of the integrity of the argument that the conception of the king's household as an extension of the patriarch's house was not an imaginative leap culturally. No explicit argument for the link is needed because the linguistic code for the conceptualization is very much embedded in the culture. There is, however, one text that explicitly ties the divine household to the household of the king. It is also an important text that acknowledges and works through the antagonism between divine and human kingship. In 2 Samuel 7, David discloses his desire to build a house (בית), that is a temple, for God (v 2). God rejects the proposal, "Are you the one to build a house for my dwelling?" (v 5). It is a rhetorical question. But the double-sidedness of the implied answer is worth spelling out.

The first and obvious side of the answer is that David's son will build God's house (v 13). The text credits David with the desire to build a house for his deity, a desire initially blessed by the court prophet Nathan, but excuses him for not actually having done so by explaining that it was God who forestalled the plan, not David who neglected his duty to his God. The text is apologetic. The other side of the answer is that it is not David who will build a house (בית) for God but God who will build a household

⁸¹ For a fuller discussion of the relationship between kinship and kingship, see Hayim Tadmor, "'The People' and the Kingship in Ancient Israel: The Role of Political Institutions in the Biblical Period," in *Jewish Society Through the Ages* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971) 46–68.

(בית) for David (v 11): “YHWH shall build a house for you.” There is, to my ears, a hint of competitiveness in God’s response: “Is it you who will benefit me? No, I am the patron and you the client. It is I who will build a house for you.” God does not reject David’s kingship and does not say that David’s kingship is a rival to his – as he does about Saul’s kingship in 1 Samuel 8. Instead, God absorbs the household of David and integrates it into his own. He makes David family; of David’s descendants, YHWH says, “I will be a father to him, and he will be a son to me” (v 14). Through a clever pun on the Hebrew word בית, which can mean “temple” and “household,” human kingship is reimagined as a part of the divine household and no longer as an alternative to divine kingship. Not David, but Solomon, God’s own son and member of the divine household (בית), will build the temple (בית), not for “my dwelling,” but for “my name” (v 13).⁸² David had overstepped his prerogative as a human king in offering to build a dwelling for the divine king, in effect to integrate the divine into the household of the human king. Human kings, even with divine approval, are able to build a house fit only for the divine name. In the rest of the oracle, the divine king demonstrates his overwhelming superiority to the human king in recounting his past faithfulness and in granting future faithfulness, forever. And it is this competitive display of grandeur that will result in another theological crisis when the Davidic monarchy comes to a definite halt.

⁸² The Chronicler amplifies this interpretation. 2 Sam 7:16 reads: “And your house and your kingdom will be sure forever before me [reading with Mss; see *BHS* apparatus ad loc.]; your throne shall be established forever.” God is the speaker, and it is David’s house and kingdom that will be established forever. In contrast, 1 Chr 17:14 reads, “And I will stand him in my house and in my kingdom forever, and his throne will be established for ever.” The change is subtle, but the effect could not be more dramatic. David and the Davidic king are recast as stewards in God’s kingdom.

In sum, the segregationist and the integrative views of the relationship between divine and human kingship are both correct. The advent of human kingship placed real social and theological pressures on the existing Israelite society and religion. We must take seriously the textual evidence that point this out, even if some of them arise from a time after the end of the monarchy, as reflecting a real interpretative option and tension. However, the language and culture of ancient Israel held the resources to reconceptualize human kingship as an integrated social reality at harmony with the belief in divine kingship. The household of the human king was nested within the larger household of the divine king. Minor father-son rivalry may have existed. But the human king was not a true rival to the divine king. The proof of the native nature of this reconceptualization lies in the observation that, long after the demise of the monarchy, Israel continued to hold on to the idea of a human king as an instrument of salvation in the figure of the Messiah, son of David. So natural and successful was the integration of an initially “foreign” idea to the culture of the Israelites that its dissolution brought on about another period of theological turbulence, opportunity, and creativity.

The sketch in broad strokes of the relationship between the human monarchy and divine kingship will have to suffice as an introduction to the narrower task at hand, namely, the exploration of the relationship between the sea and the conceptualization of kingship in Israel as it is represented in the Psalter. Rather than the advent of human kingship, the dissolution of the Davidic monarchy in 587 B.C.E. will be the pivotal historical background for the discussion to follow. We will proceed in two steps. We will first discuss the relationship between the sea figure and divine kingship and human kingship, separately. Then, we will examine the relational dynamics between divine and

human kingship as mediated by the sea figure. We will argue that the national catastrophe of 587 B.C.E. incited a radical reconceptualization of human kingship as even more closely tied to divine kingship than in some pre-exilic traditions and, at the same time, as more thoroughly subordinate to divine kingship.

A. The Sea and Divine Kingship in the Psalter

In the sea myth, kingship is the crowning achievement more so than creation. Marduk's two acts of creation (of the cosmos and of human beings) are steps he takes to advance from the temporary kingship he negotiates in return for confronting Tiamat toward the permanent kingship he wins in demonstrating that his reign is orderly, just, and beneficent. The theme of kingship is even more dominant in the *Baal Cycle*, where the drama in the extent six tablets concerns Baal's struggle to regain (from Yamm), establish (with El's permission), and extend (into Mot's realm) his kingship. In the previous section, we found a similar dynamic between creation and kingship in Psalms 29, 74, 95, and, to a lesser degree, in Psalm 104⁸³. YHWH's victory over the forces of chaos (*prima creatio*) is celebrated as the first among his royal acts (Ps 74:12–15) and *creatio continua* as the foundation of his enduring kingship (Ps 104:5–13). Kingship in these psalms is both the efficient and the final cause of creation. In this section, we will

⁸³ Concerning Psalms 103–106, Lindsay Wilson (“On Psalms 103–106 as a Closure to Book IV of the Psalter,” in *The Composition of the Book of Psalms* [ed. Erich Zenger; Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2010] 755–66, here 760) writes that, “although these four psalms concern God's activity in creation and redemption, if we dig a little deeper, we strike a bedrock of God ruling as king.” She (*ibid.*, 758–60) cites as support for this observation a number of recent studies that have advocated the priority of kingship over creation in Deutero-Isaiah, the book of Job, and the Psalms in general.

study the sea as it relates to YHWH's kingship in the "YHWH is king" psalms, Psalm 93–100.

The relative greater importance of kingship over creation is nowhere more evident in the Psalms, perhaps in the entire Hebrew Bible, than in the "YHWH is king" psalms.⁸⁴ The first psalm of the group, Psalm 93, announces YHWH's kingship at the very beginning: "YHWH is king" (יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ, 93:1a),⁸⁵ and the theme echoes throughout the psalm group (95:3; 96:10 97:1; 98:6; 99:1). The announcement of YHWH's kingship is

⁸⁴ The various thematic and semantic links that weave through Psalms 93–100 demonstrate their unity. For a short treatment of this issue, see Erich Zenger, "The God of Israel's Reign over the World (Psalms 90–106)," in *The God of Israel and the Nations: Studies in Isaiah and the Psalms* (eds. Norbert Lohfink and Erich Zenger; trans. Everett R. Kalin; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2000) 161–90, esp. 168–83. For an extended treatment, see David M. Howard, Jr., *The Structure of Psalms 93–100* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997). Hossfeld and Zenger (*Psalms 2*), slightly modifying Zenger's earlier position ("God of Israel's Reign"), propose that Psalms 93, 95, 96, 98, and 100 formed an earlier liturgical group. The most impressive support for their original unity is the fact that Psalm 100 is a pastiche of verbatim and near verbatim of passages from Psalms 93, 95, 96, and 98. See the helpful chart in Zenger, "God of Israel's Reign," 179, with the caveat that Hossfeld and Zenger (*Psalms 2*, 495) no longer see dependence on Psalm 99. Echoes of Psalm 100 in 99 are easily explained by the later dating of the psalm and its dependence on Psalm 100. Hossfeld and Zenger argue that, to the original liturgical group, Psalms 97 and 99, psalms that reinterpret the primary theme: יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ in light of contemporary circumstances, were inserted later. Psalm 94, a lament that reflects a Wisdom influence, may have been inserted at a still later period (Zenger) or along with Psalms 97 and 99 (Hossfeld and Zenger). The verbal (God as the "rock", 94:22 and 95:1) and thematic ("the upright in heart" [94:15] versus those with "hearts gone astray: [95:10]) links between Psalm 94 and 95 indicates a purposeful insertion, in any case. For more on this particular issue, see Zenger, "God of Israel's Reign," 176–77; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 455–56; Howard, *Structure*, 174–76.

⁸⁵ The important formula, יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ, can be understood ingressively ("YHWH has become king; cf. 1 Kgs 1:11, 18) or duratively ("YHWH is king"). Word order and cultic setting has played an important role in the scholarly debate. On the one hand, Mowinckel (*Psalms*, I.107 and II.222–24), who argues that Psalm 93 was recited at the Enthronement Festival of YHWH, translates the formula ingressively: [On this day] YHWH has become king. On the other hand, Krauss (*Psalms 60–150*, 233–34) and Mitchell Dahood (*Psalms 51–100*, 340), in emphasizing the word order, favor a durative understanding: [It is] YHWH [who] reigns/is king. A third option, to take the formula as both ingressive and durative, has been advocated more recently (Hossfeld & Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 469 n. a).

followed immediately by descriptions of his creative acts; “he established the world,” says the psalmist (93:1b). As in Psalm 93 so in the entire psalm group, creation is the background to the celebration of YHWH’s kingship. The psalmists repeatedly recall and extol creation because it points to YHWH’s kingship. Thus, the sea of creation plays a vital role in defining YHWH’s kingship in Psalms 93–100.

Before we turn our attention to the sea in the “YHWH is king” psalm group, a note of warning is in order. Though creation is the setting to the crown jewel that is kingship, we should be careful not to underestimate the significance of creation in its own right and in relation to divine kingship in this psalm group and, more generally, in the Hebrew Bible. For the world of God’s creation is the realm of his kingdom. There exists behind the kingship of YHWH the horizon of creation theology. We should keep in mind that Genesis 1 frames the entire Hebrew Bible. Creator and king are inseparable halves of the divine equation. Individual texts, such as Psalm 93 or Genesis 1, may emphasize one or the other, but we should not lose sight of this overall balance.

Psalms 93–100. Taking the “YHWH is king” psalms as a unit, Hossfeld and Zenger argue that we can discern a drama about YHWH’s kingship in the psalm group. They schematize the drama into three chronological stages:

(a) YHWH is through/since creation the king of the universe. (b) He reveals his kingship in and through Israel, the foundation of his throne being “righteousness and law” (97:2), and he does so before the forum of the world of nations. (c) The completion of his kingship occurs in an eschatological event of judgment of/in Israel and of/among the nations, which will lead to Israel and the nations together acknowledging and praising YHWH’s kingship (cf. Psalm 100).⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 485–86.

We can also analyze the drama spatially. (1) YHWH is established as king in his temple in Zion (93:5; 97:8; 99:2). (2) The proclamation and enactment of YHWH's kingship moves outward from Zion to the nations along with the dispersed people of Israel (96:3, 10; 97:6; 98:2–3). (3) The centrifugal movement of Israel is mirrored by the centripetal movement of Israel and the nations (back) to Zion (95:1–2, 6; 96:7–9⁸⁷; 99:2, 9; 100:1, 4). The temporal dimension of the drama, highlighted by Hossfeld and Zenger, highlights the graduated universalism of the psalm group: Israel constitutes the core of “the people of [God's] pasture and the sheep in his hand” (95:7), but the nations can and will become “his people and the sheep of his pasture” as well (100:3). The spatial dimension of the drama, on the other hand, underlines the enduring centrality of Zion and the temple to YHWH's global kingdom, a topic we will turn to in the following section: It is in Zion that YHWH's throne is established and to Zion that all peoples will return. Now, within the drama of the “YHWH is king” psalm group, the sea plays multiple roles as YHWH's conquered foe at creation, the domain of YHWH's reign, and as the singer of YHWH's praise.

YHWH's victory and mastery over the sea at and since *creatio prima* is clearly represented in Ps 93:3–4. Here the mythical conception of *Chaoskampf* against forces of chaos come through the Israelite liturgy. However, what in Ugaritic myth is a battle between two deities, Baal and Yamm, has become a struggle of YHWH against the forces of nature. This is not to say that the sea poses no threat to YHWH, that “[s]o great is his

⁸⁷ Cf. Ps 29:1–2. The temple clearly lies in the background of Psalm 29 (v 9). In alluding to Psalm 29, among other things, Psalm 96 projects the temple onto its own background.

sovereign mastery over his creation that... he stirs up the sea so that its waves roar.”⁸⁸

The sea had and continues to pose a threat to creation, as the verbs in verse 3 make clear.⁸⁹ However, the extent of the threat is radically bracketed by the supremacy of YHWH’s power:

⁴ More than the roaring of the mighty waters –
powerful are the waves of the sea –
more powerful on high is YHWH! (93:4)

The psalmist speaks of YHWH’s kingship, synecdochically represented by the throne (v 2), as having been established concomitantly with the world (v 1b) when YHWH first subjugated the chaos waters. Afterward, the rebel sea persistently raises his voice to challenge YHWH’s kingship. However, YHWH’s comparative superiority, the psalmist assures us, guarantees that YHWH’s kingship will endure.

In this light, the absence in the LXX (LXX Ps 92:3) of the tricolon: יִשְׂאוּ נְהִירוֹת דְּכִים (v 3c), which suggests that the sea continues to rebel against God, is interesting.⁹⁰ The psalmist, with this tricolon, acknowledges that forces within creation have and continue to rebel against the reign of God: “the floods [continually] lift up their roaring” (v 3c). Is it possible that the LXX translators, if indeed they worked with a text similar to the MT, were bothered with the notion of the sea as a persistent rebel and expunged the tricolon? This question brings another question to light: Were the psalmists of Psalm 93 and the

⁸⁸ Watson, *Chaos Uncreated*, 4.

⁸⁹ The first two verbs are (perfect) suffixed forms and the third is a (imperfect) prefixed form: וַיִּשְׂאוּ–וַיִּשְׂאוּ–וַיִּשְׂאוּ. The sense of continued threat is missing in LXX, which lacks the third colon. However, the archaic step parallelism in tricola, characteristic of Ugaritic poetry, in verses 3 and 4 speak in favor of the MT (cf. 24:7–10; 29:1–2a; 77:17–20).

⁹⁰ See n. 106.

“YHWH is king” psalm group not troubled by the reality of rebellious forces within creation as the LXX translators may have been? The “YHWH is king” psalm group as a whole acknowledge the persistence of rebellion against YHWH’s kingship in the realm of history and nature. This frank acknowledgment underlines their response: Nature has already and the nations will in the future acknowledge YHWH’s kingship.

The rebellion of the nautical forces of chaos (93:3) comes to an end long before the nations acknowledge YHWH’s kingship. We already discussed that the psalmist claims the sea for YHWH, that it was created by him (Ps 95:5). Yet this is not the height of YHWH’s victory over the sea. The psalmist of Ps 107:23–30, as we discussed above, thoroughly sap the sea of its mythical powers and say that YHWH is the force behind the calming of the sea (v 29) *and* its roiling (vv 25–26).⁹¹ The sea would be inanimate were it not for YHWH! The psalmists of the “YHWH is king” psalms take a different tact toward declaring YHWH’s incomparable majesty. They claim the sea’s sonorous voice for the service of YHWH and have the sea join YHWH’s choir. As we saw in relation to YHWH’s voice (קול) in Psalm 29, “to thunder” (רעם) is an awesome act. The voice of YHWH thunders and inspires fear and trembling in creation (Ps 29:3aβ, 5–9). In keeping with this common motif, the voice (קול) of the chaotic waters in Psalm 93 is a terrible shout of hostility aimed at YHWH (v 3; cf. v 4). However, in Psalms 96 and 98, the thundering voice of the chaotic waters is reinterpreted as a worshipful sound. Two observations support this conclusion. First, the two imperative psalms (96 and 98) command a “new song” for YHWH. This command extends not only to Israel but also to the “family of the nations” (96:7) and to creation, the sea included (96:11, 12; 98:7, 8).

⁹¹ This is the only psalm where Watson is absolutely right.

Second, the sea is exhorted to “thunder” (רעם I: “Let the sea thunder,” 96:11; 98:7), not in hostility but in praise. That to “thunder” is a command to praise God is determined by the parallel terms, which are all praise-words: שמח (“be joyful,” 96:11), גיל (“shout with joy,” 96:11), עלז (“exult,” 96:12), רנן (“shout with joy,” 96:12), זמר (“praise,” 98:5), רוע (“shout [in triumph],” 98:6),⁹² and מהא (“clap,” 98:8). Instead of disenfranchising and taking away the agency of the sea, as does Psalm 107, Psalms 96 and 98 co-opt the sea and put him to the service of the king, the point being that so great is YHWH’s supremacy that even the mighty thundering of the sea, menace to creation and humanity, can be turned into praise for YHWH. This is a similar theological move to what we saw in Ps 104:25–26 regarding Leviathan. And related is Psalm 148, which continues this line of development and commands sea monsters (תנינים) and the deeps (תהומות) to praise God.

⁹² This verbal root, which appears five times in Psalms 93–100 as a cohortative (95:1, 2) or as an imperative (98:4, 6; 100:1), is an important *Leitwort* that connects this psalm group to Psalm 89. In Ps 89:16, the psalmist describes “the people who know the festal shout (תרועה)” as “blessed” (אשרי). If we read the “YHWH is king” psalms as a direct response to the crisis lamented in Psalm 89, as many have argued, then we have in these psalms a vision of the survival of at least a subgroup of “true” Israelites who recognize and celebrate the enduring kingship of YHWH. Furthermore, if Hossfeld and Zenger are correct in seeing Psalm 100 as an exhortation to the peoples of Israel and the nations who recognize YHWH’s kingship to “shout” (רוע), as I believe they are, then a bold vision of a YHWH-centric theocratic society, with Israel at its center, may be in view. The place of the Davidic figure, representing the Davidic covenant, and that of Moses, representing the Sinaitic covenant, remain a point of debate. For a brief review of various scholarly positions on this matter, see Jean-Marie Auwers, “Le Psautier Comme Livre Biblique,” in *The Composition of the Book of Psalms* (ed. Erich Zenger; Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2010) 67–89, here 80–82, and the literature cited therein. Psalm 97, likely a later insertion to the group, quotes 89:15a: “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne” (97:2b) but, in line with its generally more divisive view of the world, reimagines the “loving-kindness and truth” (89:15b) and the “light” (89:16b) that go before YHWH as “fire” that “blazes all around his adversaries” (97:3).

The submission and the praise of the nations are not as easily won and lie in the future. The psalmists understand the rebellion of the nations in part as a defect of ignorance. Thus, a part of the remedy is for Israel to continue cultically to celebrate and proclaim YHWH's glorious and wonderful deeds among the nations (96:2, 3, 10; 97:6; 98:2), which should lead to the abandonment of idols (96:5; 97:7) and the flocking of all peoples with Israel to Zion (95:7; 100:3) to worship YHWH as the one true king.⁹³ In other words, the rebellion of the nations is the basis for the drama that unfolds in the psalm group. The nations really do rebel against God. Their rebellion is not immaterial, only a matter of the mind. Nevertheless, an important source of their rebellion lies in ignorance. And the psalmist imagines the cure will take the form of education. Ignorance, through education, will lead to repentance, then praise.

In conclusion, it is significant theologically and anthropologically to note the subtle but significant difference between the psalmists' portrayal of nature and the nations. Both nature and the nations are commanded to praise YHWH. They, with Israel, form the eschatological YHWH chorus. However, whereas the sea and the earth are simply claimed for YHWH (95:5), there exists a concerted campaign to convince the nations and to help them turn to YHWH on their own accord. To this end, the Israelites, God's people, are commanded to tell (בשר, 96:2), to recount (ספר, 96:3), to say (אמר, 96:10), and to make known (ידע, 98:2) YHWH and his wondrous deeds. Indeed, creation is commanded to join Israel to accomplish this mission (97:6). As king, God can

⁹³ The appropriateness of Pss 94 and 95:8–10 to the “YHWH is king” psalm group becomes evident within this historical framework. As we will see above, natural forces acknowledge and submit to YHWH's rule and even testify to his glory (97:6b) and worship him (96:11–12; 98:7–8). The last of those who hopelessly rebel against God's rule are human beings, both internal to and outside Israel.

legislate dominion over nature. And he will judge the nations. But he cannot force obedience and praise on the peoples. This, it turns out – volitional obedience and praise from Israel and the nations – is what God desires above all else. And human beings, as frail and foolish as they are, have the power within them to give to God what he desires and cannot have without their consent: praise.⁹⁴

B. The Sea and Human Kingship in the Psalter

A survey of the royal psalms (2, 18, 72, 89, and 144 among others) shows that the psalmists conceived of the human king's relation to the sea in three ways: the king is saved from the threat of the sea; the king is like the beneficent waters of the sea; and the king has dominion over the sea. What is interesting is the fact that the king's relation to the sea, in each case, tells us something about his relationship to the divine king. Furthermore, while the first two ways the sea mediates the human and divine relationship are complementary, the third stands in contradiction to the first two.

First, chaos waters are metaphors for the dangers the human king faces, both human and cosmic, from which the divine king rescues the human king. Psalm 18 is instructive. The historical title of Psalm 18 (v 1) attributes the psalm to David when he succeeded over his enemies and Saul. In fact, the psalm was inserted in an appropriate place in the Deuteronomistic History (2 Samuel 22).⁹⁵ The title, however, is likely not

⁹⁴ Adapted from Michael V. Fox, "Job the Pious," *ZAW* 117 (2005) 351–66, here 363.

⁹⁵ For a detailed treatment of Psalm 18 as read in light of the historical narrative, see Vivian L. Johnson, *David in Distress: His Portrait Through the Historical Psalms* (New York: T & T Clark, 2009) 109–21.

original to the psalm and reflects a later tradition attributing the psalm to David, the paradigmatic kingly figure. Thus, while acknowledging that the psalm may address a more general conflict situation, we can accept the invitation of the tradition behind the title to read the psalm as a royal psalm of thanksgiving. Read in this frame, Psalm 18 talks about the enemies of the human king as the “torrents of perdition” (נחלי בליעל, v 5=2 Sam 22:5) that engulf the king and records the king’s prayer that God deliver him from the “mighty waters” (מים רבים, v 17=2 Sam 22:17). The chaos waters refer both to human and cosmic threats to the king, both to human “enemies” (v 4) and “those who hate” the king (v 18) and to “death” (v 5) and “Sheol” (v 6), cosmic concepts closely related to the sea.⁹⁶

Psalm 144 depicts a similar dynamic between God and the monarch in regards to the sea:

⁷ Stretch out your hand from above,
 set me free and rescue me
 from the mighty waters,
 from the hand of foreigners (בני נכר). (cf. 18:17–18)

It is important to note that the two psalms, 18 and 144, are related. Better, the late Psalm 144 borrows and reuses language and imagery from Psalm 18. In addition to Ps 144:7, which is clearly related to Ps 18:17–18, verses 1–2 of Psalm 144 are a pastiche of more or less direct citations of Psalm 18, placing their intertextual relationship beyond doubt.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Johnson (*David in Distress*, 115–16) suggests that “Sheol” (שאול) alludes to “Saul” (שאול) and evokes David’s tensed relationship with Saul.

⁹⁷ Psalms 18 and 144 are clearly related intertextually, with the latter alluding and reinterpreting the former. Cf. 18:3, 35, 47–48 and 144:1–2. For a fuller discussion of the intertextuality of Psalm 144, see Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 581–90, esp. 581–84.

The psalmist signals that Psalm 144, by his conspicuous textual borrowings, concerns the same topic as Psalm 18, the monarch and his foe. However, the textual dependence also highlights the stark difference in the way the two psalms portray the monarch. Psalm 18 praises YHWH, the divine king, as the ultimate source of salvation for the king against his enemies (vv 1, 17–20). But, in equal measure, it depicts the human king as an active participant in his own salvation and in defeating his enemies (vv 32–43): God trains the hand of the monarch for war (v 35), but the monarch strikes down his enemies to smithereens (vv 39, 43). He, not unlike his God, is a mighty man of war. According to Psalm 18, while God is the one who saves, it is the human king who wields the sword and inspires fear in the “foreigners” (בני־נכר, vv 45, 46) (vv 44–46).

In contrast, the king lifts neither hand nor finger to fight in Psalm 144. It is true, Psalm 144 too says that God trains the king’s hand and fingers for battle (v 1; cf. 18:35). But we do not see them in action. Rather, the psalm emphasizes the frailty of human beings (vv 3–4). It echoes just Ps 8:5 but not the rest of the psalm and reverses the royal anthropology of Psalm 8 (see vv 6–7) by juxtaposing the pessimistic view that human beings are but a “breathe” (הבל, v 4) and a “passing shadow” (צל עובר, v 4). The implication is that the monarch, like all human beings, is weak and needs God. He is unable to save. In fact, the king in Psalm 144 twice petitions God to deliver him from the hand of the “foreigners” (בני נכר, vv 7, 11). This is significant. The term בני נכר occurs only four times in the entire Psalter, twice in Psalm 144 (vv 7, 10) and twice in the related Psalm 18 (vv 45, 46).⁹⁸ Thus, that in Psalm 18 the king declares that the “foreigners” “cringed” (כחש, v 45) and “withered” (בלל, v 46) before him, in contrast to Psalm 144

⁹⁸ The term בני נכר becomes a technical term for foreigners of non-Israelite origin in the exilic and post-exilic period (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 585).

where the king pleads for deliverance from them, becomes important. Whereas the king in Psalm 18, it can be deduced, is the drawn sword in God's hands, a warrior who fights on behalf of the people, the king in Psalm 144 is depicted as one who withdraws from battle to the safety of YHWH the rock, the fortress, and the hiding place. His hands are holy hands that pray for the people from the safety of a hideout, not those of a warrior king. At the end of Psalm 144, the king fades completely into the background, and it is the people who come to the fore:

¹⁵ Blessed are the people for whom it is thus;
Blessed are the people whose God is YHWH.

The depiction of the fearsome warrior king, humble enough to acknowledge that salvation is from God but who nevertheless takes up arms against the sea of troubles, fades and a silhouette of that king replaces him. What separates these two diametrically opposed conceptions of the king?

The second way the human king relates to the sea is as the beneficent waters. The redactors of the Psalter present Psalm 72 as the aged David's prayer for Solomon.⁹⁹ It is

⁹⁹ "Psalm 72 is a prayer of the aged David for his son Solomon" (Erich Zenger, "Zion as the Mother of Nations in Psalm 87," in *The God of Israel and the Nations: Studies in Isaiah and the Psalms* [eds. Norbert Lohfink and Erich Zenger; trans. Everett R. Kalin; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2000] 123–160, here 159). I do not mean this literally. The psalm is clearly a petition for a kingly figure (v 1). However, the redactors of the Psalter have provided a narrower context. The postscripture (v 20) reads: "The prayers of David son of Jesse are ended." Indeed, after this psalm, we do not meet another psalm connected to David until Psalm 101. Apparently, Psalm 72 concludes the second "Davidic Psalter" (Psalms 51–72). If we take this redactional note seriously, then we can identify the ideal speaker of the prayer as David. On this point, see Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 209; also Gerald Henry Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1985) 139–41. Now, the superscription (v 1) mentions Solomon with the ambiguous ל preposition. Many psalms are attributed to David by way of the superscription לִדָּוִד. By analogy, we can understand the superscription in Psalm 72 to

David's prayer for the prosperity of the son of the king (בן־מלך, v 1). As such, it reveals the picture of the ideal king; he is an instrument of God's just rule (v 1) in the social (vv 2–4) and cosmic (vv 5–7) dimensions over a kingdom that extends to the ends of the earth (vv 8–11). Apart from the spatial reference to the sea in describing the limits of the world (v 8), the prayer alludes to the sea one other time in verse 6:

⁶ May he come down like rain upon the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth.

In this conception, the human king like all of creation depends on God to expel the chaotic waters from the earth (Psalms 18 and 144). However, unlike the rest of creation who must wait on God to distribute the beneficent waters of the supernal sea, the king becomes a blessing to creation and to society akin to rain.¹⁰⁰ As king, he is not only subject to God's reign but becomes the harbinger and embodiment of God's blessing. Thus the king is differentiated from other creatures, including human beings, as one who stands on the divine side of *creatio continua* to govern and sustain. He, like all creation,

mean "of Solomon." However, the meaning of the phrase לדוד is far from clear, as is the meaning of the preposition ל. Consider the superscriptions to Psalm 36: למנצח לעבדי־יהוה; Psalm 38: מזמור לדוד להזכיר; Psalm 39: למנצח לידותון מזמור לדוד; etc. Since Davidic attribution of Psalm 72 is likely, per the postscription, we can follow the LXX (Εἰς Σαλωμων, LXX Ps 71:1) and understand the psalm as a prayer of David "for Solomon." For a defense of the ל *auctoris* for the term לדוד and a brief discussion of other translation options, see Kraus, *Psalms 1–59*, 22–23.

¹⁰⁰ Hossfeld and Zenger (*Psalms 2*, 215) put this stronger: "This king is the rain." Their point is that a good king is benefit to both nature and to society. A similar conception of the king as the mediator of God's aquatic benevolence to creation can be found in Babylon. For example, a Babylonian royal proclamation (hymn of Lipit-Ištar) reads: "I am the river of abundance that bears living water" (Anthonioz, *L'eau*, 516). Befitting the Mesopotamian context, Lipit-Ištar above and Hammurabi, in another inscription, liken themselves to rivers. For a discussion of the king as mediator of the river of abundance, see Anthonioz, *L'eau*, 498–519.

benefits from *creatio prima* but, unlike all else, shares God's responsibility in *creatio continua*.¹⁰¹

The third and final way the human king relates to the sea goes beyond the optimism of Psalm 72, where the monarch is likened to the beneficent rains that fall from the supernal sea. At the same time, it shares in the pessimism that accounts for the transformation of the king between Psalm 18 and Psalm 144. This third conception is found in the pivotal Psalm 89, which in many ways is related to Psalm 2.

The body of Psalm 89 may be divided into three sections. The first section praises, in the mode of descriptive wonderment, YHWH and his deeds (vv 6–19). At one point, the psalmist describes YHWH as the victor and ruler over the chaos waters:

¹⁰ You rule over the raging of the sea;
when its waves rise, you still them.

¹¹ You crushed Rahab like a carcass;
with your mighty arm, you scattered your enemies.

The psalmist goes on to claim the heavens and the earth as YHWH's kingdom because he founded the world on the sea (v 12). The first section flows seamlessly into the second, which is introduced by the particle *אז* ("then," v 20) and describes YHWH's promises of an eternal monarchy to David and his household (vv 20–38). In this context, the psalmist claims that the human king is God's son (vv 27–28; cf 2:7). Furthermore, the psalmist states that the human king shares God's dominion over the sea:

¹⁰¹ This picture of things is challenged and transformed by Genesis 1, where human kingship is radically democratized to include all human beings. If God is king, humanity whom God makes according to his image and likeness are like the king, at least, or are kings. For a thorough discussion of this topic, see W. Randall Garr, *In His Own Image and Likeness: Humanity, Divinity, and Monotheism* (Leiden: Brill, 2003). See also Levenson, *Creation*, 111–17.

²⁶ And I [YHWH] set his hand on the sea,
his right hand on the floods.

The conferment of authority over the sea to David universalizes and renders the scope of human kingship cosmic to mirror the kingship of YHWH. Like father like son! Then comes perhaps the sharpest disjunctive ׀ in the whole of the Psalter: ...ואתה זנחת (“But you spurned...,” v 39). The third section is an accusatory lament of divine betrayal (vv 39–46). Within the logic of the psalm where divine and human kingship form a kind of co-regency, God’s promise of eternal loyalty to the house of David (vv 29–38) makes perfect sense. If the Davidic king is God’s son and receives from the divine king his crown authority over creation and governments, then the human institution must go wherever the divine monarchy goes, presumably into eternity. But linking the divine and human kingship in this way exposes divine kingship to the historical contingency of human kingship. The divine kingship must go wherever the human monarchy goes. Thus the demise of the Davidic monarchy puts the divine kingship under question. “How long?” and “Where is your steadfast love of old?” are pleas for the restoration of the Davidic monarchy. At the same time, they are questions about the state of the divine kingship.

A part of the answer to those questions comes in Book IV of the Psalter (Psalms 90–106), at the heart of which is “the YHWH is king” psalm group. But before we come to that, we need to make one final observation about Psalms 2 and 89.

We discussed above the radical change that occurs in the conceptualization of the monarch between Psalm 18 and Psalm 144. A similar about-face occurs between the related Psalms 2 and 89. We will deal with the relationship between Psalm 2 and 89 in

greater detail below, but it is sufficient for now to note that these two psalms alone in the Psalter claim that the Davidic king is God's son (2:7 and 89:27–28). Now, in Psalm 2, after the pronouncement of the paternal relationship between YHWH and David, God addresses the king:

⁸ Ask of me and I will give you nations as your inheritance
and the ends of the earth as your possession.

The king is then depicted with an iron rod in hand, shattering his enemies like clay vessels (v 9). Important to note is that the king's enemies are human, kings and rulers of the earth, and that the king is an active agent in protecting and expanding his kingdom. We get a different picture of God's son the king in Psalm 89. Psalm 89 talks about the king's sonship to God in stronger language than Psalm 2. God calls David his firstborn (בכור, v 28). But in contrast to the active king in Psalm 2, though God sets his hands upon the sea, the monarch does not lay a hand on his enemies. Rather, God is throughout the active agent: God "exalts" the king (v 20), "crushes" the king's enemies (v 24), and "makes" him the "highest of the kings of the earth" (עליון למלכי־ארץ, v 28).

An important responsibility of the Davidic king, according to Psalm 89, is to keep YHWH's law (תורה, v 31; cf. Deut 17:18), to walk according to his judgments (משפט, v 31), keep his statues (חקים; cf. Deut 17:19), and follow his commandments (מצות, v 32; cf. Deut 17:20), that is, to meditate upon his laws day and night (Ps 1:2). The warrior king of Psalm 2 becomes in Psalm 89, to an extent, a scholarly and a priestly king (Ps 110:4)

like the one pictured in Deuteronomy 17.¹⁰² This is not unlike the transformation of the king that takes place between Psalms 18 and 144. In trading human foes for a cosmic nemesis, the sea, the frailty of the human king renders him dependent on the divine king for protection. The best that the king can do for his people is to pray on their behalf. The result is that the human king fades in importance in relation to the divine king. Thus Psalm 144 ends:

¹⁵ Blessed are the people for whom it is thus;
Blessed are the people whose God is YHWH.

The redactional ending of Psalm 2 may already announce the same sentiment: “Blessed are all who take refuge in him,” that is, in YHWH not David (v 12). After the historical demise of the Davidic monarchy, the relationship between the human and divine king was reconceived so as to place YHWH as the ultimate and true source of salvation. The Davidic figure remains but in a somewhat altered, if not diminished, form. In the realm of history where the human monarch was active, we now see the divine king. God bless the king, but more importantly, blessed are the people whose God is YHWH.

C. The Sea and Kingship in the Psalter

We are now in a position to say something about the relationship between the sea figure and kingship generally in the Psalter. But since the goal of this discussion is not only to show that the sea figure plays a role in defining the relationship between divine

¹⁰² The king’s devotion to God’s laws are not unique to Psalm 89 but appear throughout the Psalter, including in Books I–III. See John H. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms* (SBT, 2nd series, 32; London: SCM, 1976) 141–42.

and human kingship but also to demonstrate that its role is significant and complementary to the divine-human drama of kingship scholars have found in the Psalter, it is necessary first to outline the pertinent aspect of that drama. In brief, Books I–III of the Psalter is a sort of biography of David and the history of the Davidic monarchy. The concluding Psalm 89 laments the demise of the Davidic monarchy and highlights the problem of the Davidic covenant. Books IV–V are, in a variety of ways, responses to the problem posed by the first three books of the Psalter.

Hossfeld and Zenger, among others, argue that Psalm 2–89 makes up the “Messianic Psalter.”¹⁰³ They date the formation of the Messianic Psalter to the Persian Period when hope for the restoration of the Davidic monarchy would have been revived.¹⁰⁴ There are, broadly speaking, two dimensions to the Messianic Psalter: the biographical and the theological. The Messianic Psalter is a biographical sketch of David’s career as king, which metonymically stands for the Davidic monarchy as a whole. The superscriptions referring to David and to incidents in David’s life as recounted in the Deuteronomistic History establish David’s life as the context in which to read the Messianic Psalter.¹⁰⁵ Thus Psalm 2 is about David’s anointing; Psalm 18 about

¹⁰³ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 5–6, 209; Erich Zenger, “Psalm 87,” 159–60; Erich Zenger, “‘Es sollen sich niederwerfen vor ihm alle Könige’ (Ps 71,11): Redaktionsgeschichtliche Beobachtungen zu Psalm 72 und zum Programm des messianischen Psalters Ps 2–89,” in *“Mein Sohn bist du” (Ps 2,7): Studien zu den Königpsalmen* (eds. Eckart Otto and Erich Zenger; SBS 192; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2002) 66–93, esp. 80–91. For a brief overview of scholarly positions concerning the Messianic Psalter, see also Auwers, “Le Psautier,” 73–76.

¹⁰⁴ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 5. Zenger (“Psalm 72,” 89) previously dated the Messianic Psalter to the Hellenistic period.

¹⁰⁵ Brevard S. Childs, “Psalm Titles and Midrashic Exegesis,” *JSS* 16 (1971) 137–150. See also Johnson, *David in Distress*.

his rise above Saul and his enemies; Psalm 51 about his sin and repentance; Psalm 72 his prayer at an old age for his son Solomon; and Psalm 89 about the end of the Davidic monarchy.¹⁰⁶ Theologically, the Messianic Psalter navigates the tension between the hope for the restoration for the Davidic monarchy and the greater hope for an utopian transformation of the kingdom into a universal and cosmic form.¹⁰⁷

Objections have been raised against the validity of seeing Psalm 2–89 as a coherent and intermediary edition of the Psalter.¹⁰⁸ But there are good reasons to view Psalm 89 as the conclusion of an intermediary edition of the Psalter.¹⁰⁹ In any case, even

¹⁰⁶ For a brief treatment of the Psalms as a biography of David and an account of the history of the monarchy in general, see Marti J. Steussy, *Psalms* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2004) 13–32. For a treatment of the transformation of the royal theology after the fall of Jerusalem, see *ibid.*, 33–49. Steussy (*ibid.*, 31) writes, “These psalms [the royal psalms: 2, 1821, 45, 61, 63, 72, 89, and 144] seem to sketch a royal biography: coronation (or symbolic birth: “Today I have begotten you”), leadership in battle, marriage, continued reliance on God, and finally handing the scepter on to a new generation.”

¹⁰⁷ Zenger, “Psalm 72,” 89–91.

¹⁰⁸ See Auwers, “Le Psautier,” 74 and works cited in n. 17. The first objection concerns the connection between Psalms 1 and 2, clearly meant to be read together as indicated by the macarismic formula at the beginning and the end of the two psalms: ... אֲשֶׁר־יִשְׂמַח (“Happy is/are...,” 1:1; 2:12). Now, the argument might be made that this connection indicates that the two psalms belong to the same redactional layer, thus debunking the notion of a Messianic Psalter (2–89). However, Ps 2:10–12, including the macarismic formula, has been shown to belong to a later redactional layer, probably to be identified with Psalm 1 (Auwers, “Le Psautier,” 75). The second, more serious objection is that the Messianic Psalter should not end with an impassioned plea to God without an answer (Ps 89:52; Ps 89:53 is a postscript and not part of the psalm proper). Auwers finds this objection decisive. He does not go as far as Millard who rejects the hypothesis of a Messianic Psalter altogether, but he argues that the Messianic Psalter concluded with Psalm 83, that is, with the Elohistic Psalter (*ibid.*, 75–76).

¹⁰⁹ First, Psalm 89 has been shown to occupy a terminal position. It is the end of the first three books of the Psalter. Of course, this does not mean that an edition of the Psalter needed to have ended here. However, it is significant that in the Qumran scrolls of the psalter, Psalms 1–89 always appears in the order found in the MT whereas “die

if we cannot agree on the redactional history of the Psalter, which is admittedly complex and beyond assured reconstruction, Psalm 89 nevertheless leaves us with a question that demands an answer. And as Gerald H. Wilson and others after him have seen, Books IV and V address the problem posed by Psalm 89 about the apparent failure of the Davidic covenant.¹¹⁰

Anordnung der Psalmen ab 90 ziemlich durcheinander geht und mit apokryphen Stücken durchsetzt wird” (Frank-Lothar Hossfeld, “Ps 89 und das vierte Psalmenbuch (Ps 90–106),” in *“Mein Sohn bist du” (Ps 2,7): Studien zu den Königspsalmen* [SBS 192; eds. Eckart Otto and Erich Zenger; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2002] 173–183, here 173). See also Gerald H. Wilson, “Shaping the Psalter: A Consideration of Editorial Linkage in the Book of Psalms,” in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* [ed. J. Clinton McCann; JSOTSupp 159; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1993] 72–82, here 73–74). Other editorial and generic observations mark the division between Psalms 89 and 90 as a significant division between two major sections of the Psalter. Many psalms after Psalm 90 do not have superscriptions in contrast to Psalm 1–89 where most do. From Psalm 90 on we see a sharp decline in the number of laments and petitions and an increase in doxologies. (See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 3, 1; Hossfeld, “Ps 89,” 173–77; Wilson, “Shaping the Psalter,” 73–74.) Second, the unconditional nature of God’s promise to David for an eternal and universal kingship in Psalm 89, at the same time that it makes the accusation of God’s bad faith a shock, also implies that God will respond positively. The psalmist “makes his chief concern the fate of the Davidic dynasty and, beginning with the situation of dynastic discontinuity in which he finds himself, reminds God of the obligations God has undertaken – indeed, by his accusations puts God under pressure to act” (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 405). The psalmist fully expects that God will respond to reestablish the Davidic monarchy. Auwers may still object that this is not a satisfactory answer, but we might note that there are other biblical parallels of such cliff-hanger endings that conclude a large body of work with only a hint of future hope. Consider, for example, 2 Kings 25 which concludes the so-called “Primary History” with the mere mention that the Babylonian king “lifted the head of Jehoiachin, king of Judah” (v 27) or, better, 2 Chronicles 36 which concludes the entire Hebrew Bible with the Cyrus decree. We may add the conclusion of the Pentateuch (Deuteronomy 34) and the Prophets (Malachi 3) among endings that end in exile but with a hopeful gaze for return and restoration (Martien A. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile: The Metaphorization of Exile in the Hebrew Bible* [VTSupp 141; Leiden: Brill, 2011] 199–200). It is not difficult to imagine that the redactors responsible for the Messianic Psalter ended the Psalter with a strong petition that took seriously the present, less-than-ideal situation that at the same time articulates a real hope that God will act to rectify the situation.

¹¹⁰ Gerald H. Wilson (*Editing*, 215) writes, “In my opinion, Pss 90–106 function as the editorial ‘center’ of the final form of the Hebrew Psalter. As such this grouping stands as

Books IV and V and the various redactional activities associated with their formation represent a number of responses to the question of the Davidic monarchy, the exile, and other theological and historical issues. Among these, the first and most direct response to the issue of human kingship comes in Psalms 93–100, which Hossfeld and Zenger argue conclude “the YHWH is king Psalter.” The gist of the response, which we examined in more detail above, is that YHWH endures as king, that he has lost control over neither nature nor the nations. In fact, the (temporary) demise of the Davidic kingdom and the dispersion of the people of Israel points toward a greater historical culmination when all the nations will flock to Zion in acknowledgement of the kingship of YHWH. YHWH has always been and remains king: יהוה מלך. In later stages of the formation of the Psalter, the Davidic figure returns. We see this in Psalm 144. But the picture of the king has morphed from its pre-Psalm 89 ideals of a warrior king into a prayerful priest.

What role does the sea figure play in this divine-human drama of kingship? The sea figure mediates the relationship between the divine king and the human king and helps dramatize the transition from Books I–III where divine kingship is the background

the ‘answer’ to the problem posed in Ps 89 as to the apparent failure of the Davidic covenant with which Books One–Three are primarily concerned. Briefly summarized the answer given is: (1) YHWH is king; (2) He has been our ‘refuge’ in the past, long before the monarchy existed (i.e., in the Mosaic period); (3) He will continue to be our refuge now that the monarchy is gone; (4) Blessed are they who trust in him!” Book V is an answer to the problem of exile (ibid., 220–28). See also J. Clinton McCann, “Books I–III and the Editorial Purpose of the Hebrew Psalter,” in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter* (JSOTSupp 159; ed. J. Clinton McCann; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993) 93–107. For Wilson, the Davidic kingship is eclipsed by the eternal kingship of YHWH. When David “returns” toward the end of the Psalter, it is to point to YHWH, to proclaim that YHWH alone is eternal king, worthy of trust, not him or any other human figure (228). In my opinion, Wilson overemphasizes the Moses dimension of Book IV (see Zenger, “The God of Israel’s Reign over the World,” 165–166, 168) and misses the subtle but real ways in which the hope for a human king endures in the Psalter.

to the human kingship of David to Books IV–V where divine kingship takes center stage. The divine king is depicted throughout the Psalter as having defeated and as maintaining control over the cosmic sea. The one point at which God’s mastery over chaos is placed under doubt comes when God places David’s hand upon the sea in Psalm 89. The awesome image may indicate that David is made co-regent with God over the cosmic waters. But it could also mean that David takes over God’s responsibility to rule and master the sea.

In any case, when the human monarch fails, resulting in the destruction of God’s Temple and the exile of his people, God’s wisdom in choosing David and God’s power as king come under question. Did God unwisely entrust the government of the sea to David? Do the destruction of the Temple and the exile signal a permanent return of the chaos waters? Is God still king? The resounding answer is that God is king and has since creation exercised uncontested rule, despite apparent evidence to the contrary, over the sea. Note that the problem and the response can be articulated in terms of the sea. How about David? David returns but not as one having dominion over the sea but as one who prays to God for deliverance from the sea, for himself and for the people (Psalm 144). That is, David returns not so much as a king but more as a priest (Ps 110:4). In stark contrast to the Books I–III where the Davidic figure is often referred to as “king,” this designation is not repeated in Books IV–V.¹¹¹ The implication is clear. YHWH alone is king. “YHWH shall reign for ever!” (146:10).

¹¹¹ Note that the Davidic figure is referred to as “king” (מֶלֶךְ) only in the first three books of the Psalter (Pss 2:6; 18:51; 20:10; 21:2, 8; 45:2, 6, 12, 15, 16; 61:7; 63:12; 72:1; 89:19). In Books IV–V, only the leaders of foreign nations (102:15; 105:14, 20, 30; 110:5; 135:10, 11, 17, 18, 19, 20; 138:4; 146:11; 149:8) and YHWH (93:1; 95:3; 96:10; 97:1; 98:6; 99:1, 4; 146:10; 149:2) are referred to as “king.” One possible exception is Ps

In conclusion, I underline the observation that the sea figure not only plays a significant role in the divine-human drama of kingship represented in the Psalter but also helps dramatize the interaction between God and the king. The narrative of their interaction can be summarized thus: 1) God delivers the king from the sea; 2) the king is a blessing analogous to rain; 3) God gives the king authority over the sea; 4) chaos waters return with the demise of the Davidic monarchy; 5) God reasserts mastery over the sea; 6) David returns, sits at the right hand of God, and prays that God save him and the people from the mighty waters; 7) the sea will praise God the king. This correspondence between the complex issue of reading the Psalter as a book and the relatively simpler coordination of the occurrences of the sea figure in relation to kingship adds support to ongoing and exciting Psalter exegeses. It also demonstrates in miniature the principle that underlies the larger goal of this dissertation to find a *muthos* in the network of sea figures in the Hebrew Bible.

III. The Sea and the Temple

The Jerusalem Temple is a living repository of symbols that make present ideas, histories, and even beings.¹¹² Therefore, if the sea figure was important to Israelite religion, we can expect this to be evident in the geographical, architectural, and ornamental dimensions of the sacred structure. In chapter 2, we spoke about the Gihon,

144:10 where “David” is the parallel term to “kings” (מלכים). But there David is specifically labeled “servant” (עבד). The title “servant” is, it should be noted, “both humble and highly privileged” (Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, 150).

¹¹² On the rich significative power of the Temple architecture and iconography, see Crawford, *Solomonic Temple*.

common to both Mount Zion and the Garden of Eden, as a conduit between the regal and cultic traditions of Zion and the creative and cosmic traditions of the paradisiacal garden. In addition to the Gihon, the Temple houses two more connections to the sea that reify in concrete form the sea myth pattern: the Molten Sea and the Temple building itself. The differences in the ways the Sea and the Temple architecture relate to the sea myth pattern will become clear below. What unites them, apart from their physical proximity, is that they are non-verbal bearers of a story and at the same time the visible sign of God's invisible grace, what I call, actualized hierophany.

A. The Molten Sea

The erection of the temple is the third and final goodly consequence of God's victory over the sea. In *Enuma Elish*, the temple is built for Marduk as a final homage to his past creative and kingly acts. In the *Baal Cycle*, the temple confirms Baal's kingship and is the headquarters for his creative activities. The story of when and how YHWH's temple is built belongs, with one key exception,¹¹³ not to the realm of myth but to history. David has the desire and, according to the Chronicler, makes extensive preparations for building the temple, but his son Solomon actually oversees its erection. Within the historical account of when and how the Jerusalem Temple was built, we find reference to

¹¹³ Exodus 15 reflects a historical memory that is shaped by a mythic pattern. The victory of the divine warrior over his enemy, Egypt not the sea, and his triumphal march into the land culminate in the erection of a temple whence he reigns as king forever (vv 17–18). The narrative context is historical, but the pattern is mythic. We will return to this passage in the next chapter.

a certain Molten Sea. This is a conspicuous window on the mythic background of the Temple.

The Molten Sea (הים מוצק, 1 Kgs 7:23; 2 Chr 4:2) was a large, round basin, with a diameter of ten cubits (14 feet 7 inches) and a height of five cubits (7 feet 3.5 inches) and able to hold two thousand baths of water (almost 10,000 gallons!) (2 Kgs 7:23, 26).¹¹⁴ It was made of bronze (ים הנחשת, 2 Kgs 25:13=Jer 52:17; cf. 1 Kgs 7:14) and sat on top of twelve bovine figures, also made of bronze, that faced the cardinal points (1 Kgs 7:25).¹¹⁵ As for its history, the Sea was commissioned by Solomon, along with other cultic paraphernalia and ornamental features of the Temple, and made by the master craftsman Hiram (1 Kgs 7:13–14; cf. 7:40; 2 Chr 2:13; 4:11, 16). Later, Ahaz (735–715 B.C.E.) removed “the Sea from the bronze oxen that were under it, and put it on a pediment of stone” (2 Kgs 16:17). Ahaz no doubt used the oxen to pay off the Assyrian king (see 2 Chr 28:21), and his choice to keep the Sea and give away the twelve bovine figures tells us the relative importance of the Sea.¹¹⁶ Finally, in 587 B.C.E., the Babylonians dismantled and looted the Sea and other valuables from the Jerusalem Temple (2 Kgs 25:13). We do not know whether the Sea was made again for the Second Temple.

¹¹⁴ Kings and Chronicles differ on the capacity of the Sea. According to 1 Kings (7:26), it could hold two thousand baths (almost 10,000 gallons); according the 2 Chronicles (4:5), three thousand baths. C. C. Wylie (“On King Solomon’s Molten Sea,” *BA* 12 [1949] 86–90, here 90) explains that the discrepancy reflects the hemispherical shape visualized by Kings and the cylindrical shape visualized by the Chronicler.

¹¹⁵ For a fuller discussion of the Sea, its physical dimension and cultic significance, see Crawford, *Solomonic Temple*, 134–42, 259–62.

¹¹⁶ It is possible that it was the value of the bronze of the bovine figures relative to that of the Sea that was at issue. Crawford (*Solomonic Temple*, 154–55) ties the removal of the bovine figures to Ahaz’s reform movement, aimed to rid the Temple of all theriomorphic imagery.

The Molten Sea is a memorial to God's royal victory over his watery foe at *creatio prima* and embodies the beneficence of his creative reign over the waters. This mythic identity, which I will defend shortly, began to be suppressed from biblical times. The first sign of the demythologizing tendency of the biblical writers may be found in the addition of the participial modifier, מוצק ("molten," 1 Kgs 7:23; 2 Chr 4:2). מוצק, from the root יצק ("to dish up [food], pour out [liquid], cast [metal]"), clarifies how the Sea was manufactured. Now, the LXX of 1 Kgs 7:23 reads: Καὶ ἐποίησεν τὴν θάλασσαν, and does not refer to the manufactured nature of the Sea.¹¹⁷ In fact, outside 1 Kgs 7:23 and the dependent 2 Chr 4:2, the Sea is always called "the Sea" (הַיָּם, 1 Kgs 7:24, 39, 44; 2 Kgs 16:17; 25:16=Jer 52:20; 2 Chr 4:4, 6, 10, 15), with the exception of 2 Kgs 25:13 (=Jer 52:17) where the context – the Assyrians are plundering the Temple – dictates that it clarify the material value of the Sea. It may be argued that reference to how the Sea was made also fits the context of 1 Kgs 7:23; Hiram, a human being, is making the various cultic items using the manufacturing expertise of his day. This must curb the desire to overstate the case. Nevertheless, the Greek reading does provide an interpretative option to take the (added) reference to the man-made nature of the Sea in the MT as a condensed effort to suppress the reference to the sea deity Yamm since to point to the human origin of a cultic item is to underline its non-divine nature and undermine its divine status.¹¹⁸ Whether the Sea was actually cast or not, the addition of

¹¹⁷ See *BHS* apparatus ad loc.

¹¹⁸ Crawford (*Solomonic Temple* 134, n, 107, also 259–60) favors "the LXX reading on the suspicion that the modifier מוצק would have been added to demythologize the object by calling attention to its manufacture." He qualifies the statement, "though this may be an assumption rooted too much in modern conceptions of fabrication." It might be noted, in response, that biblical prophets and psalmists ridiculed foreign idols by calling

the descriptor מוציק may have been an unobtrusive editorial effort to dampen the mythic reference.

The Chronicler, dependent on but not bound to the Deuteronomistic History, takes the demythologization of the Sea one step further.¹¹⁹ He faithfully repeats the description of the Sea found in Kings but with minor variations (cf. 2 Chr 4:2–6 and 1 Kings 7:23–26).¹²⁰ The variation that stands out is the addition of a purpose clause attached to the Sea: “and the sea for the priests to wash with it” (והים רחצהל לכהנים בו), 2 Chr 4:6b). Several modern exegetes read this (added) note back into 1 Kings 7, and some, on account of the notice that the Sea was set aside in the southeast corner of the Temple (1 Kgs 7:39; 2 Chr 4:10),¹²¹ reduce the Sea to “a private pool for priestly ablution.”¹²² I do not doubt that the waters of the Sea were used for cultic purposes, including for priestly

attention to the fact that they were made by human hands out of common material (Isa 40:19–20; 44:9–20; Jer 10:3–5, 8–9, 14–15; Pss 115:4–8; 135:15–7). Therefore, calling attention to the manufactured nature of the Sea, if indeed it was added later, is not an inconsequential detail.

¹¹⁹ The Chronicler’s *Vorlage* of the Deuteronomistic History may not have been what is now preserved in the MT, as Steven L. McKenzie (*The Chronicler’s Use of the Deuteronomistic History* [HSM 33; Atlanta: Scholars, 1984]) has argued. He (*ibid.*, 27) has argued, following Lemke, that “Chr is responsible for a variation from S[amuel and Kings] when no other witness to the text of S agrees with C and the variation attests to a demonstrably consistent interest on the part of Chr.” Concerning 2 Chr 4:1–5:1 and 1 Kgs 7:23–51, McKenzie (*ibid.*, 95) concludes that “these two accounts are extremely close.” 2 Chr 4:6b, as I argue, is an explanatory plus, much like the addition of דמות before בקרים in 4:3.

¹²⁰ See note 119.

¹²¹ In contrast, André Parrot (*The Temple of Jerusalem* [trans. B. E. Hooke; SBA 5; London: SCM, 1957] 46) interprets the fact that the Sea “was not very easy of access” to indicate a symbolic significance in addition to its functional one.

¹²² Mordechai Cogan, *I Kings* (AB 10; New York: Doubleday, 2001) 272. See also Jacob M. Myers, *II Chronicles* (AB 13; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965) 22; and Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37–52* (AB 21; New York: Doubleday, 2004) 523–24.

ritual cleansing. But to reduce the Sea to “a private pool” exaggerates the measured demythologization of the Chronicler and ignores the unarticulated symbolic value of the Sea. Its great size, its precious metal, and its prized status over the bovine figures suggest a significance beyond a functional one. The Sea was not only a wash basin but an actualized hierophany of God’s victory over the chaotic waters and his life-giving reign.

Both Mesopotamia and Canaan have been proposed as the source of the best analogy to the Sea in the Zion Temple. The Mesopotamian option provides a rich word-object pair to the Israelite Sea. Wayne Horowitz writes, “Sumerian *abzu* and Akkadian *apsû* are names for Apsu temples and shrines, *cultic water basins*, and the god Apsu, as well as the cosmic Apsu.”¹²³ Several texts also locate the foundation of the temple at the Apsu, the subterranean waters.¹²⁴ The Mesopotamian *apsu* water basins, it is safe to suggest, were not mere cultic objects but also a reference to the other ideas and entities that were called by the same name. Thus, if the Sea is analogous to the Mesopotamian *apsu*, what we have in the Sea is a cultic object rich with mythic and cosmic symbolism.¹²⁵

As suggestive as the Mesopotamian analogy is, however, the closer analogy to the Israelite Sea, geographically and culturally, comes from the West Semitic world. The evidence is not conclusive, but the match between text and artifact is significant. The

¹²³ Horowitz, *Cosmic Geography*, 307, emphasis added.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 308–309, 336–37.

¹²⁵ Cogan (*1 Kings*, 271) points out that *apsu* was used to refer to a water basin very rarely and late. He concludes, therefore, that the comparison of the Sea to the Akkadian cultic water basin is forced. This may be so. However, even the rare and later usage of *apsu* to refer to a water basin demonstrates a conceptual fluidity between the cosmic waters and a cultic object that may underlie both the Mesopotamian and Israelite phenomena.

textual evidence is biblical, as we do not have evidence of cultic objects called “the sea” from outside the Bible. But there are material artifacts of West Semitic provenance that resemble the biblical Sea, evidence that cultic water basins were a West Semitic phenomenon as well as East.¹²⁶ Psalm 29, which we examined above, is our best textual evidence for equating the Molten Sea to a sea deity. We already discussed the close analogy between Psalm 29 and an episode in the *Baal Cycle*. Thus, it is sufficient at this point for us to defend the position that YHWH’s “flood”-throne is the Molten Sea.

Psalm 29 opens with an exhortation for the “divine beings” (בני אלים, v 1), presumably members of the divine council, to praise YHWH. After recounting the awesome effects of YHWH’s thunderous voice, the scene imperceptibly moves from heaven to the earthly temple: “And in his temple, all are shouting: Glory!” (v 9).¹²⁷ The underlying assumption is that heaven and earth meet in the temple. Without further effort to differentiate between heaven and the earthly temple, the psalm goes on to declare that “YHWH sits enthroned on the flood (מבול)” (v 10). Where is the flood-throne located? As YHWH’s throne, the flood no doubt exists in heaven and refers to the supernal sea (cf. Ps 104:3, 13). At the same time, since heaven is made present on earth in the temple, a cultic object likely made present the “flood”-throne in the temple. If so, its cultic significance would dictate that the object be large and prominent. The Molten Sea fits that description. The Sea represents the defeated aquatic enemy of YHWH, as suggested

¹²⁶ For a discussion of some of the material evidence, see Crawford, *Solomonic Temple*, 134–42. Most interesting among them is the sixth-century Cypriot stone basin, which Crawford thinks were made by Phoenician craftsmen (ibid., 140–41). Its size (1.87 meters tall and 3.19 meters in diameter), decoration (palmettes, bovine figures, etc.), and that it was made by Phoenicians make it an interesting analogy to the Sea in the Solomonic Temple.

¹²⁷ See note 44 above.

by the analogy between Psalm 29 and the *Baal Cycle*, and the supernal sea whose waters God sends down as rain. The Sea is a non-verbal bearer of the story of YHWH's victory over the sea deity and an actualized hierophany of God's beneficence.

The concept of an actualized hierophany requires explanation. It is possible to see the flood-throne as decorative, recalling great moments of the past but not making anything cultically present. This interpretation, in my mind, underreads the cultic significance of the sea and is akin to reading mythic metaphors in the Psalter as merely decorative (cf. Ps 74:13–15). Rather, the flood-throne is a hierophany in that it recalls and cultically makes present YHWH at the time of his victory over the chaos sea. I call it an “actualized” hierophany because the Sea represents the rebellious sea and at the same time actualizes the result of God's victory, namely, the beneficent waters of God's reign. It is because the Sea is an actualized hierophany that its waters have the power to cleanse. The Chronicler wrote that the Sea was “for the priests to wash with it.” The cleansing quality of the Sea water was likely not merely physical but also cultic. In my mind, the sacral power of the Sea cannot be divorced from the representational dimension of the Sea. The Sea represented the conquered sea deity; as such, its waters were actually the goodly gift of God's kingship. That is to say, the Sea reveals God's creative rule over the sea and actualizes its benefits as sacred water. It is an actualized hierophany, which is the reason that the waters of the Sea were used for priestly washing.

In conclusion, I must mention Zechariah and Ezekiel's visions. Zechariah seems to have believed that waters that issue from the Temple had cleansing qualities, powerful enough to wash the House of David and Jerusalem of their impure sin (13:1). Ezekiel, in a vision, saw that the waters from beneath the Temple is for life and rejuvenating the

world, beginning with the Dead Sea (47:1–12). The connection between the Dead Sea and Sodom, the epitome of sinfulness in the Hebrew Bible, makes purgation of sin a likely component of Ezekiel’s conception of the power of the sacred water. As we discussed, a Gihon tradition explains a part of Zechariah and Ezekiel’s visions. Like its paradisiacal counterpart, the Gihon spring in Zion has the creative capacity to water the dry earth into life. But the Gihon tradition and the Molten Sea tradition should not be radically separated. They form a single matrix that express the basic idea of God’s dominion of the cosmic waters. The Gihon tradition and the Molten Sea tradition together should inform our conception of the waters related to the Temple and Zion. The sacred waters that flow from the Temple were not only life-giving like the waters of paradise but also purgatory. An appreciation for the composite nature of the waters can help us understand the source of their dual powers to cleanse sins and to give life.

B. The Temple Building

If we step back from the Sea and enlarge our perspective, we come across yet another physical connection to the sea myth in the Temple: the Temple building itself. Cory D. Crawford has made an interesting argument that Noah’s Ark in P is homologous to the Temple.¹²⁸ He is careful to note that it is not that the Temple architecture mirrors the Ark but that the Priestly writers conceived of Noah’s Ark with the Temple in mind. The post-exilic provenance of P guarantees that the Temple was the template for P’s Ark and not the other way around. Thus we cannot talk about the Temple in terms of Noah’s

¹²⁸ Crawford, *Solomonic Temple*, 272–307.

Ark, only about the Ark in terms of the Temple. The influence goes in only one direction. Nevertheless, the homology between the Noah's Ark of P and the Temple does tell us what the Priestly writers thought about the Temple. Different from the Molten Sea, whose history is coterminous with the first Temple, the Priestly Noah's Ark represents an interpretation of the significance of the Temple, be it from after the destruction of the Temple. As such, it tells us the place of the Temple in the conceptual world of the post-exilic Priestly writers and about the hopes and aspirations the Priestly writers may have attached to the new Temple.

The homology between Noah's Ark and the Temple is first architectural (cf. Gen 6:14-16 and 1 Kgs 6:2-10). Crawford argues that the Ark and the Temple share the same dimensions in width, length, and height.¹²⁹ However, as he admits, the correspondences in width and length are tenuous and require some imagination.¹³⁰ Only their height, at thirty cubits, is identical (Gen 6:14 and 1 Kgs 6:2). More convincing than the dimensions is the fact that both structures are three-deckered with a door on their side (Gen 6:16; 1 Kgs 6:5-8; cf. Ezek 41:7).¹³¹ Claus Westermann comments concerning P's description of the Ark as having a "door in the side" (Gen 6:16), "This sentence tells us clearly that the ark that Noah is to construct is not a ship. The door is mentioned here because the entrance into and exit from the ark form important stages in the narrative."¹³² The door

¹²⁹ Ibid., 286-87.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid., 288-89. Crawford (ibid., 289-91) also points to the similarities in how the construction of the Ark and the Temple are told.

¹³² Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 421.

does serve a narrative function; it is how the living things get into Noah's Ark and provides the opportunity, at least in the J version, to depict YHWH tenderly closing the door behind Noah (7:16b). Just as important, as Crawford points out, is the fact that it mimics an architectural detail of the Temple: "The entrance for the middle story was on the south side of the house" (1 Kgs 6:8b).¹³³ The side door is a feature out of place in a boat, since it makes it unseaworthy, but at home in an imitative structure of the Temple. The same is true for the three-decker structure. It serves a narrative function: the multiple stories are needed to make storage space for the animals and the foodstuff. They make better sense as imitation of the Temple.

Were the similarities between the Ark and the Temple limited to its physical dimension, the case for their homology would be interesting but not consequential. However, the architectural homology reflects a theological homology as well. In order to see the theological connection between the Ark and the Temple more clearly, we must also consider the Tabernacle. Benno Jacob observes, "The ark and the Tabernacle are the only buildings that the Torah describes."¹³⁴ We can be more specific: The Ark and the Tabernacle are the only buildings that P describes. Thus scholars have tried to relate the two Priestly structures to each other. This, however, without great success.¹³⁵ The failure in part is due to the fact that, as Crawford points out, the connection between Noah's Ark and the Tabernacle is best seen within a triangulated relationship with the Temple in the third, mediating position. Both Noah's Ark and the Tabernacle are directly

¹³³ Crawford, *Solomonic Temple*, 288–89.

¹³⁴ Cited in Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 421.

¹³⁵ For a fuller discussion about the relationship between the Ark and the Tabernacle, see Crawford, *Solomonic Temple*, 282–85.

analogous to the Temple and indirectly to each other. On this issue, Westermann comments:

P looks to the Tabernacle, the place where Yahweh meets his people, as the goal of the history which begins with the covenant with Abraham and extends to the erection of the sanctuary in Jerusalem. The place where God allows his glory to appear is the place whence the life of the people is preserved. The ark corresponds to this in the primeval event where the concern is for the preservation of the construction of the ark because by means of it God preserved humanity from destruction. The people of Israel which alone has in its midst the place where God reveals his glory is part of the human race which exists now because it has been preserved by this same God.¹³⁶

If the Tabernacle and the Temple signify God's presence among the Israelites in particular, then Noah's Ark signifies God's mindfulness of all creation. The Ark is a kind of universalized Temple and Tabernacle.

Jon D. Levenson depicts the covenantal traditions of the Hebrew Bible as a series of nested concentric circles. The smallest circle is defined by God's covenant with Israel (Exodus 24). The next outer circle is defined by his covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17). The outermost circle is defined by the covenant with Noah (Genesis 9).¹³⁷ The Noahide covenant establishes, to use Levenson's language, the universal horizon of God's particular relationship with Israel. The language of nested covenantal relationships can serve as an imperfect analogy to but an insightful interpretative lens on the Ark-Tabernacle-Temple complex. If the Tabernacle and the Temple are for Israel in particular, then the Ark is for all of creation to which Israel belongs. Now, the Priestly conceptualization of the Ark as a type, even an archetype, of the Temple adds a dynamic

¹³⁶ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 421.

¹³⁷ Levenson, "Universal Horizon," 147.

dimension to the particular-universal relationship. Just as Israel's election undoubtedly has an instrumental aspect for the benefit of the universal, so too the Temple has a universal and cosmic mission as a salvific and redemptive force.¹³⁸ More specifically, the Ark as a Priestly interpretation of the universal significance of the Temple brings to light the role the (second) Temple is to play as the vehicle for the salvation of creation in light of the cosmic-significant catastrophe of Israel's exile and the destruction of the (first) Temple. We must clarify this point.

The primeval flood at the time of Noah is an anti-creation event. God, who has had full mastery over the cosmic waters since Genesis 1, sets them loose to "destroy the earth" (Gen 6:13). He allows chaos to return once more, undoing the cosmic order God created by splitting the waters twice over to create heaven, earth, and sea. The supernal and the infernal seas burst through their boundaries to inundate the whole earth (Gen 7:11). And the undoing of the cosmic boundaries proves lethal to all creatures (save the sea creatures), including human beings. The *Epic of Gilgamesh*, to which the biblical story of Noah is related,¹³⁹ poignantly writes:

¹³⁸ Ibid., 154–56. We have already seen this elsewhere, in Mount Zion as the source of paradisiacal waters of life and forgiveness and in the Temple as the seat of God's reign over the cosmic sea. The architectural argument confirms the universal importance of the Temple. This interpretation of the Ark rests on two other observations. First, the Priestly writers established the universal scope of their theological vision in Genesis 1, as Levenson (ibid., 146) has noted. The Ark as a vehicle for the redemption of creation fits neatly into that framework. Second, the universal interpretation of the Ark and the Temple is not unlike the interpretation we put forth above concerning the "YHWH is king" psalm group. There, the dispersed people of Israel had an instrumental mission to the nations, which is to culminate in the eschaton when all the nations gather as one flock in Zion. The Temple is the spatial center of the world redeemed for its creator.

¹³⁹ An editor of *Gilgamesh* borrowed the flood story from *Atrahasis*. On this point, see Jeffrey H. Tigay, *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982) 215–17.

It is I who give birth, these people are mine!
And now, like fish, they fill the ocean! (XI 123–24)¹⁴⁰

The sea rules again and undoes creation. Almost all die. But in the watery chaos, there is one haven where cosmic boundaries have been maintained. Joseph Blenkinsopp notes that the three-decker structure of the Ark “reflect[s] the three-decker world of ancient Near Eastern cosmologies.”¹⁴¹ Metaphorically and literally, then, the Ark is a “miniature cosmion.”¹⁴² Its architecture reflects the three-tier order of the cosmos, and it houses in itself the principle of life, a pair of all living creatures.¹⁴³ Thus, once the waters subside and order is restored to the cosmos, the Ark unleashes the seeds of life that will repopulate the earth. The Ark, which is modeled after the Temple, is a cosmic, redemptive vehicle.

The Ark and the flood are also metaphorical vehicles for the Babylonian exile, the tenor. We noted above the possibility of interpreting the Babylonian exile as an anti-

¹⁴⁰ *The Epic of Gilgamesh: The Babylonian Epic Poem and Other Texts in Akkadian and Sumerian* (trans. Andrew George; New York: Penguin, 1999).

¹⁴¹ Joseph Blenkinsopp, “The Structure of P,” *CBQ* 38 (1976) 275–292, 286.

¹⁴² For the use of this language in regard to the Temple, see Lawrence E. Stager, “Jerusalem and the Garden of Eden,” in *ErIsr* 26 (Frank Moore Cross Volume; eds. Baruch A. Levine et al.; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1999) 183–94, here 183. See also, Levenson, *Creation*, 78–99.

¹⁴³ According to P, Noah brought in a pair of all animals, clean and unclean (6:19–20; 7:14–16). According to J, Noah brought in a pair of all unclean animals but seven pairs of all the clean animals (7:2–3). The purpose of taking pairs of the animals was to keep them alive. For J, seven pairs of the clean animals were necessary because some of the clean animals were to be sacrificed to YHWH upon exiting the Ark (8:20). More than one were needed to ensure their survival. For P, it was imperative that only a single pair of all the animals were taken because Priestly theology forbade sacrifice until after the revelation at Sinai.

creation state, as the return of the chaos waters. In Psalm 74, petition for the restoration of the Temple and for return from exile require cosmic, creative language (vv 13–15) because the destruction of the Temple and the exile of Israel have cosmic, creative consequences. In Psalm 89, the fall of the Davidic monarchy implies that the sea over which the Davidic king had been given authority (v 26) has returned with disastrous results. A similar argument can be made concerning Deutero-Isaiah. The concept of Exile is central to the book of Isaiah.¹⁴⁴ Deutero-Isaiah in particular uses a variety of metaphors to talk about the exile.¹⁴⁵ Martien A. Halvorson-Taylor writes, “In Second Isaiah, exile is described according to a number of metaphors, many of which are distinct refractions of the same strait – the state of being without the saving activity of the אלהים. The underlying interpretation of exile as Israel’s period of awaiting YHWH’s redemptive intervention draws in associations for exile that include servitude, infertility, and spousal abandonment; these form the system of associations for the redemption that the אלהים offers.”¹⁴⁶ We can supplement this insight by pointing to the repeated depiction of YHWH as creator, as von Rad and Stuhlmüller have noted. If redemption must take the form of creation, the state out of which Israel needed to be delivered, the exile, must have been conceptualized as a state of anti-creation, as a watery chaos.

¹⁴⁴ Francis Landy, “Exile in the Book of Isaiah,” in *The Conception of Exile in Ancient Israel and Its Historical Contexts* (eds. Ehud Ben Zvi and Christoph Levin; BZAW 404; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010) 241–56.

¹⁴⁵ Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile*, 107–149. This, too, is not foreign to Exodus, since the reason YHWH provides for delivering Israel is, in part, based on his kinship ties: “Israel is my first-born son... Let my son go” (Exod 4:22–23). On this, see David Daube, *The Exodus Pattern in the Bible* (All Souls Studies 2; London: Faber and Faber, 1963) 13–14, 27–29.

¹⁴⁶ Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile*, 148.

The examples from Psalms and Isaiah show that one could think of the exile in terms of anti-creation. Better evidence that the Priestly writers of the flood narrative had the exile in mind comes from Ezekiel. According to P, one reason that God decides to undo creation, that is bring about the “end of all flesh” (קץ כל־בשר), is because “the earth is filled (מלא) with violence (חמס)” (Gen 6:13). The idiomatic phrase, מלא + חמס, appears three times in Ezekiel (out of six times outside of Genesis 6). In one instance, the phrase characterizes the sin of the king of Tyre (28:16), and his punishment is expulsion from the mountain of God, probably to be equated with the Garden of Eden (cf. 28:13, 14). It is significant that the punishment for the sin of overabundant violence is expulsion from the infected land. In the two other occurrences of the idiom in Ezekiel, it characterizes the sin of Judah (7:23; 8:17). The complementary punishment is that God will “bring the worst of the nations” to dispossess their houses (7:24), namely that he will bring about the “end” (קץ, 7:2; cf. Gen 6:13). “The worst of the nations” are the Babylonians and “the end” is the exile.¹⁴⁷

The relationship between Ezekiel and P is certain but far from straightforward.¹⁴⁸

Thus, we cannot argue confidently on the basis of analogy. Even so, the analogy is

¹⁴⁷ On the tradition history of the catch phrase קץ and its relation to the “land of Israel,” see Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24* (Hermeneia; trans. Ronald E. Clements; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979) 203–204.

¹⁴⁸ Menahem Haran (“Ezekiel, P, and the Priestly School,” *VT* 58 [2008] 211–18, here 212) has recently proposed the hypothesis that P and Ezekiel “are independent manifestations of the same school, of which P is the authentic expression whereas Ezekiel is its loose extension.” I would agree with Haran’s thesis in regard to the laws of P and Ezekiel. However, this relationship cannot be extended to the P narratives. As Ska (*Pentateuch*, 159–61) has noted, the greatest difference of opinion concerning the date of P lies between the dating of the laws of P to the preexilic period and the P narratives to the exilic or the postexilic periods. In my opinion, the Priestly narratives date to the

tempting. Did the Priestly writers share Ezekiel’s conviction that the exile was the punishment for the sin of filling (מלא) the earth with violence (חמס)? We cannot be certain. Nevertheless, the fact that P and Ezekiel share a rare idiom, the postexilic provenance of P, and the example of the psalms and Deutero-Isaiah give us grounds to propose that the Priestly conception of the flood, apart from being a primeval event, also points metaphorically to a future reality awaiting the Israelites on account of their sin: the watery chaos of the exile. The prefiguration, however, was not all despair. For, on the sea among the sea monsters, a small but robust boat could be spotted, carrying the architectural plan and the principle of life for the (new) creation.¹⁴⁹ A primeval archetype for the (new) Temple. It would become the (new) seat of the creator and king of nature and history, established on the highest mountain in the world, Zion.

postexilic period and is later than Ezekiel. This allows for the possibility that P in Genesis 6 has been influenced by Ezekiel. We need not, for our purposes, consider the relationship among Ezekiel, the Holiness Code (H), and P. For a measured review of the issues involved in determining the relationship between Ezekiel and H, see Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 46–52. For an insightful characterization of Ezekiel’s dependence on H, see Michael A. Lyons, “From Law to Prophecy: Ezekiel’s Use of the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17-26)” in *Transforming Visions: Transformations of Text, Tradition, and Theology in Ezekiel* (eds., William A. Tooman and Michael A. Lyons; Princeton Theological Monograph Series 127; Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010) 1–32. For a brief review of scholarly positions on the relationship between P and H, see Ska, *Pentateuch*, 151–53.

¹⁴⁹ The image of the Ark as a miniature cosmion reminds me of the Babylonian, “Marduk, Creator of the World,” in which the earth is depicted as a raft:

Marduk tied together a raft on the face of the waters,
He created dirt and heaped it on the raft. (II 17–18)

For a brief treatment of the flood-boat as temple motif in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, see Anthonioz, *L’eau*, 287–89 and Steven W. Holloway, “What Ship Goes There: The Flood Narratives in the Gilgamesh Epic and Genesis Considered in Light of Ancient Near Eastern Temple Ideology,” *ZAW* 103 (1991) 328–55.

Part III. Sea Metaphor

In the previous section, we examined the depiction of the sea figure in Ugaritic and Mesopotamian mythology, how the mythic sea figure relates to the three goodly consequences of *Chaoskampf*: creation, kingship, and the temple, and the relationship between the sea, on the one hand, and creation, kingship, and the temple, on the other, in the Hebrew Bible. Under the assumption that the cultural heritage underlying Ugaritic, Mesopotamian, and the biblical conceptualizations of these relationships overlap, we noted an important formal difference between the presentation of the mythic sea in these corpora. In the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle* and the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, the sea figure, Yamm and Tiamat, respectively, participates in the unfolding of a more or less continuous narrative within a mythological world. We called this the sea myth. In contrast, we found that the sea myth is present throughout the Hebrew Bible but in fragments and often also in a transformed state. Neither a unified narrative nor a unitary world could be reconstructed from the mythic fragments found in the Bible.¹ However, we did find that the pattern of positive and negative relationships between the sea and the triad of goodly consequences set out in the sea myth endured in the Hebrew Bible. We called this the sea myth pattern.

¹ This statement is not in contradiction to the claim made in the previous chapter that the sea figure in relation to the motif of kingship parallels the divine-human drama of kingship of the Psalter – a unified story, of sorts. What I mean here is that the sea myth fragments in the Hebrew Bible do not, in themselves and together, recreate the sea myth akin to the ones found in Ugarit and Babylon.

In the following chapters, we continue to examine the transformation of the sea myth in the Hebrew Bible and move now to the use of the sea myth as a metaphor for non-mythic events, the exodus, the exile, and the eschaton.

Chapter 5. Sea and Exodus

The biblical account of Israel's emancipation and exodus from Egypt (Exodus 1–15), particularly of the Sea Event (13:17–15:21), marks a decisive moment in the sacred history of Israel and in the development of a biblical worldview. The exodus is presented as the birth event of Israel as a people redeemed for and by God, who reveals himself as one faithful to his past promises to the patriarchs. Furthermore, the multi-layered account of the Sea Event, which concludes the exodus, preserves in its stratified layers clues to the process by which generations of Israelites came to understand the exodus and the Sea Event as a typological and mythical event with durative significance for all Israelites, past, present, and future. Perhaps not surprisingly, the sea myth plays an important role in the presentation and the conceptualization of the Sea Event, serving as a metaphorical analogy for the Event on several levels. Thus, the sea myth, though refracted according to the historical and theological programs of the biblical writers, shines brightly to endow the Sea Event with meaning and significance that transcend the merely historical and the merely punctual. The Sea Event is mythicized and in turn mythologized and becomes to

Israelite tradition an archetype for God's enduring redemptive purpose for his people.²

We turn our attention to the analysis of this literary and theological process in this section.

The Sea Event (13:17–15:21), as per the consensus of critical scholarship, is composite.³ The whole is a well integrated and continuous narrative, but seams remain

² I reserve the term “mythologized,” following William Johnstone (“The Mythologising of History in the Old Testament,” *SJT* 24 [1971] 201–17, here 212), for the process by which an “event or circumstance in Israel’s own awareness and experience may become a myth, that is, be interpreted in a way in which it transcends itself and in the light of Israel’s own origins and goals.” Mythicization, in contrast, refers to the process in which a historical event is remembered and recounted in mythic terms and as unfolding in accordance to mythic patterns. Though not in every case, mythification precedes mythologization, as we will see is the case with the Sea Event. In metaphorical terms, in mythification, myth is metaphor for history; and in mythologization, history (mythified or not) is metaphor to history. We will examine how the Sea Event is mythologized within the biblical tradition in the next chapter to speak about the return from the Babylonian exile. Mythologization is very similar to what others have called the typological use of inner-biblical tradition. For a full theoretical treatment of the issue of typology, see Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) 350–79. For a fuller, though far from satisfactory, treatment of the typological use of the exodus motif, see Friedbert Ninow, *Indicators of Typology within the Old Testament: The Exodus Motif* (Friedensauer Schriftenreihe: Reihe I, Theologie; Bd. 4; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001).

³ There has been relative stability concerning the source critical divisions – not to say anything about source ascription – of the narrative account of the Sea Event. Nevertheless, few critical disagreements that reflect the interpretative commitments of the commentators have risen in recent decades. John Van Seters (*The Life of Moses: the Yahwist as Historian in Exodus-Numbers* [Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1994] 133) assigns to his 6th century Yahwist three critical verses (Exod 14:9a, 22a, 23, 28), assigned to P by virtually all commentators (Martin Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary* [trans. J. S. Bowden; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962] 103; William H. Propp, *Exodus 1–18: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 2; New York: Doubleday, 1998] 476–84; Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* [OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974] 220; Cornelis Houtman, *Exodus*, 2 vols. (trans. Johan Rebel & Sierd Woudstra; Kampen: Kok, 1993] 2.235; Thomas B. Dozeman, *Exodus* [ECC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009] 311, 314–15). This makes the Yahwist the one who first depicted the sea crossing, not the Priestly writers, and supports Van Seters’ hypothesis that J comes after DtrH. In his recent Exodus commentary, Thomas B. Dozeman (*Exodus*, 303) assigns to P verses that were traditionally assigned to J or JE (13:18b, 21–22; 14:19b, 20aβ, 24aβ; 15:20–21). Most of these verses deal with the pillar of cloud and fire. His unusual ascription of

and indicate the presence of redactional activity.⁴ The major division is between the prose account (13:17–14:31) and the poetic account that follows (15:1–21). As we will argue below, the poetic account is older and inspired the expansive and explanatory prose account. The poetic account itself contains two songs, the Song of Moses (or the Song at the Sea; 15:1b–18) and the Song of Miriam (15:21b). Opinions vary as to which song is older, but we need not dwell on this issue as it does not touch on the conceptualization of the sea figure with which we are primarily concerned. Of the two, we will focus on the Song of Moses or the Song at the Sea. Of greater interest to our study are the layers of the prose account. Past scholarship tried to identify three separate traditions within Exod 13:17–14:31: a Yahwistic (J) layer, an Elohist (E) layer, and a Priestly (P) layer. More recent scholarship, less confident that two sources can be distinguished within the non-Priestly material, divides the prose account into two: a P and a non-P layer. We will attempt to circumnavigate the ongoing debate concerning the Pentateuchal sources, though we will at points need to discuss specific issues in depth, and concern ourselves

15:20–21 to P has to do with the larger argument that the Sea Event is the conclusion Exodus 1–15 in the P account. In the Non-P account, the Sea Event is depicted as the first of the wilderness wandering. The second half of the Song at the Sea (15:13–18) looks forward to the Wilderness Wandering and ultimately to the entrance into Canaan. However, the Priestly writers placed Exod 15:20–21 to return the reader’s gaze back to the Sea Event and to the destruction of Egypt. Dozeman’s source critical judgments do not affect the analysis of the sea imagery and need not concern us here. However, Van Seters’ does. In my mind, however, his judgment is to be dismissed as special pleading. He ignores classic markers of P, such as the use of ירשה for “dry ground” (14:22a), and assigns to J whatever verses is required by his interpretative commitments. For our part, we follow Childs’ division (*Exodus*, 220). We will not concern ourselves with E. For a recent defense of the E source, see Joel Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis* (ABRL; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012) 103–128, esp. 124–25.

⁴ Jean Louis Ska, *Le passage de la mer: etude de la construction, du style et de la symbolique d’Ex 14,1–31* (AnBib 109; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1986) 21–24.

primarily with the older Yahwistic account of the Sea Event, what recent Pentateuchal scholars subsume under the category non-P, and the later Priestly redaction of J, about which there exists near consensus.

More specifically, after setting the scene leading up to the Sea Event and arguing that the Sea Event and the Song at the Sea are an apt conclusion to the first half of the Book of Exodus (chapter 1–15) (Section I), we will examine the various ways in which the sea figure, the sea myth pattern, and the sea myth inform the presentation of the Sea Event and the conceptualization of its significance (Section II). In Section II, we will first argue that, in the earliest surviving account of the Sea Event, the Song at the Sea, historical memory and mythic pattern come together to form a hybrid genre in which history is mythicized and myth is historicized (or better, *heilsgeschichtisiert*).⁵ Central to the argument will be the replication, therefore the reactualization, of the Canaanite sea myth pattern we examined above on the plane of history. Second, we will analyze the efforts taken to naturalize the sea figure and to historicize the Sea Event in the J account. We will be careful not to impose our modern conception of what is natural or historical on the ancient text but insist that the ancients recognized the difference between geography and cosmography and between the mythical and the historical.⁶ Third, we will

⁵ Johnstone, “Mythologising,” 208.

⁶ George Widengren (“Myth and History in Israelite-Jewish Thought,” in *Culture in History: Essays in Honor of Paul Radin* [ed. Stanley Diamond; New York: Columbia University Press, 1960] 467–95, here 474) writes that “in Israelite thought, myth in our sense of the word was, so to speak, added to history in our sense of the word.” He argues that the Israelites, along with other ancient Near Eastern peoples, did not place a sharp boundary between myth and history, which are modern categories, and warns against uncritically introducing concepts foreign to the ancient text. This is an important point to keep in mind. At the same time, we should be careful not to impose simplicity and unity where distinctions, though perhaps not along our categories, exist. For example, I agree

analyze the Priestly remythification of the sea figure and the Sea Event, arguing that the P account echoes the Babylonian myth of creation and thereby makes a metaphorical connection between the creation of the people of Israel and the creation of the cosmos as recounted in Genesis 1. In sum, we will provide a preliminary account of the ways in which the sea myth was metaphorized in the Hebrew Bible as a vehicle to history, the tenor.

I. The Sea Event in Context

A. *Characters*

The Book of Exodus opens onto a transitional scene between promise and fulfillment, danger and salvation. One of God's two promises to Abraham, that he will make Abraham into a great people (Gen 12:2), has been fulfilled: "But the Israelites were fruitful and fertile; they multiplied and grew very, very strong; and the land was filled with them" (Exod 1:7).⁷ However, the second promise of land (Gen 12:7; 17:8) has yet

with Gaster ("Myth and Story," 187) that the ancients recognized a distinction between the durative nature of myth and the punctual nature of its manifestation in historical time and space, between heavenly causes and earthly effects. Even within the historical plane, the Israelites who celebrated the Sea Event recognized a difference in the manner of their ancestors' presence on the seashore and the manner of their presence as witnesses to the same but different salvific event. The greater danger for contemporary students of ancient texts is the imposition of alien categories, but we must acknowledge the impossibility of working critically without categories. Best practices are those that use categories with critical awareness.

⁷ This verse demonstrates the complexity of the source critical issues of the exodus tradition. The language of Exod 1:7 reflects both Priestly and non-Priestly accounts of God's promise to the patriarchs. On the one hand, פרה, שרץ, and רבה are typically Priestly,

to be fulfilled.⁸ The land in which the Israelites sojourn is not the promised land of Canaan but Egypt, the house of slavery (Exod 20:2). And under Pharaonic rule, the blessed fertility of the Israelites itself becomes a cause of danger that threatens to undo the first promise and jeopardizes the fulfillment of the second. It rests on God to remember his promises and to deliver the Israelites from the clutches of the Pharaoh.

We are told in the beginning of Exodus that the legendary Joseph and his generation have died and that a new Pharaoh,⁹ who does not know Joseph or his deeds, now rules over Egypt.¹⁰ This new Pharaoh, the first principal character to appear on the

as are the expressions, “the land was filled” and “very, very (מאד מאד)” (cf. Gen 1:20–22, 28; 17:2, 6, 20). On the other hand, the motif of strength (עצום) is not typical of P and has parallels in J narratives (cf. Gen 18:18; 26:16). See the discussion in Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, 125–26; Dozeman, *Exodus*, 68. In fact, the pairing of the motif of multiplicity (רבה) and strength (עצום) is typically Deuteronomistic (cf. Deut 7:1; 9:14; 26:5), and we should probably treat the phrase “they multiplied (רבה) and grew [very, very] strong (עצום)” in Exod 1:7 as a unit looking forward to Exod 1:9, a non-Priestly, possibly Deuteronomistic, passage. The phrase “very, very” is a Priestly redaction. Should we see the Deuteronomist at work in these passages? For a discussion of the relationship between Exodus and Deuteronomy, see Dozeman, *Exodus*, esp. 12–16 and William Johnstone, *Chronicles and Exodus* (JSOTSupp 275; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998) 217–41.

⁸ Rolf Rendtorff (*The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch* [trans. John J. Scullion; JSOTSupp 89; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1990] 57–68) identifies four separate promises to the patriarchs: land, blessing, descendants, and guidance.

⁹ The Pharaoh is never named. The two pharaohs who partake in the exodus story are to be equated typologically one to the other. The indefiniteness of the pharaoh may have served a purpose in allowing many peoples to identify with the story of Egyptian oppression. On this point, see Ronald Hendel, “The Exodus in Biblical Memory,” *JBL* 120 (2001) 601–622.

¹⁰ The account of the death of the Joseph and his generation (Exod 1.6, 8) mirrors that of Joshua and his generation (Josh 24.29; Judg 2.8, 10). Compare:

וימת יוסף וכל־אחיו וכל הדור אההו ... ויקם מלך־חדש על־מצרים אשר לא־ידע את־יוסף (Gen 50.26; Exod 1.6, 8)
יוסף וכל־אחיו וכל הדור אההו ... ויקם מלך־חדש על־מצרים אשר לא־ידע את־יוסף

scene, does not recognize in God’s half-fulfilled promise to Israel, their great number and vitality, an undefeatable blessedness but oddly and tragically sees only a potential threat to national security (1:9–10). Thus, defying the will of God he does not see and refuses to acknowledge, the Pharaoh devises plans to suppress the perceived threat. His first plan, intense slave labor (פרך),¹¹ has the opposite of the intended effect; it further invigorates the Israelites (1:12; cf. 1:19). His desperate response is to command the two Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah,¹² to kill all newborn Hebrew boys: “When you act as

שנים... וימת יהושע בן־נון עבד יהוה בן־מאה ועשר שנים... וגם כל־הדור ההוא נאספו אל־אבותיו ויקם דור אחר אחריהם אשר לא־ידע את־יהוה וגם את־המעשה (Josh 24.29; Judg 2.8, 10)

The verbatim echoes are without doubt intentional. And a clear pattern emerges: The death of a key figure and his generation and the rise of another, ignorant figure or generation mark the transition from one era to the next. For a fuller discussion of the source critical implications of this observation, see Van Seters, *Life of Moses*, 16–19; Erhard Blum, “The Literary Connection between the Books of Genesis and Exodus and the End of the Book of Joshua” in *A Farewell to the Yahwist?: The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation* (eds. Thomas B. Dozeman and Konrad Schmid; SBLSSymS 34; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006) 89–106, here 104; and Dozeman, *Exodus*, 65–68.

¹¹ The word פרך appears six times in the Hebrew Bible (Exod 1:13, 14; Lev 25:43, 46, 53; Ezek 34:4).

¹² We cannot be certain whether Shiphrah and Puah are “Hebrew midwives” or Egyptian “midwives of the Hebrews.” Their names are Semitic, meaning “beauty” and “splendor,” respectively, but the phrase המילדות העבריות can be understood in either way. LXX translates the phrase, αἱ μαῖαι τῶν Ἑβραίων. The opinion of commentators vary on the ethnicity of the midwives, but all agree that they act in an exemplary manner in defying the Pharaoh out of fear of God (1:17). The Talmud (*b. Soṭah* 11b) and the Aramaic Targum (*Targum Pseudo Jonathan* [ArBib 2; trans. Michael Maher; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1994] 162) identify Shiphrah with Moses’ mother, Jochebed, and Puah with Miriam. St. Ephrem (*The Exodus Commentary of St Ephrem* [ed. & trans. Alison Salvesen; Mōrān ‘Ethō 8; Kerala, India: St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute, 1995] 13), whose interest in the female characters in his Genesis and Exodus commentaries is well known (see Alison Salveson, “Some Themes in Ephrem’s Exodus Commentary” *The Harp* 4:1–3 [1991] 21–34) writes, “‘They became good’ means that they became a great dynasty, though they had imagined that Pharaoh would wipe out their entire line

midwives to the Hebrew women, look at the birth stool¹³; if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she may live” (1:16). With this command, the Pharaoh arrogates to himself power over life and death and thereby makes himself an enemy of God. However, that power is denied him by his subordinates: the Hebrew midwives disobey the Pharaoh’s command and save the lives of the Israelite boys out of fear of God (1:17).¹⁴ Fear of God, it turns out, leads to ethical, life-affirming action. When Shiphrah and Puah prove unwilling or unable to participate in genocide, the Pharaoh makes the discrete command to two individuals a national decree to all his people: “Every boy born [to the Hebrews] you shall throw into the Nile; but let all the girls live” (1:22). Motivated by fear, the Pharaoh means to exterminate the Hebrew race.

It is into this murderous world of Pharaonic tyranny that a beautiful Hebrew boy, later to be named Moses (2:10), is born to a Levite couple, later identified as Amram and Jochebed (Exod 2:1–2; 6:20).¹⁵ The heroic midwives play no part in this part of the story, and it is Moses’ mother and sister, supposedly Miriam (Num 26:59), who take action to

because of all the babies they had saved” (note that the text cited is not found either in MT or Peshitta; cf. b. *Sotah* 11b–12a). For modern interpreters, see Dozeman, *Exodus*, 74–75.

¹³ “Birth stool” is an acceptable, though not certain, translation of the rare word אֲבִימָה, which appears here and in Jer 18:3, where it clearly means “potter’s wheel.” See Childs, *Exodus*, 20.

¹⁴ The Pharaoh’s genocidal plans are repeatedly spoiled by relatively powerless women, here by the two midwives, a little later by his own daughter. On the long view, we might include Rahab as a female figure who foils human efforts to harm the Israelites.

¹⁵ On the issue of the history of traditions of Exodus 2, see Childs, *Exodus*, 8–11, and Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, 155–58.

save the boy's life.¹⁶ Three months after the boy's birth, when it becomes no longer possible to keep her son safely in hiding, Jochebed places the boy in a caulked papyrus basket (תבה) and sets the basket in the reeds (סוף) by the bank of the Nile (2:3).¹⁷ The boy's sister, Miriam, watches from afar to see what will come of him (2:4). When the Pharaoh's daughter retrieves the basket and, though knowing that he is a Hebrew boy (2:6), shows compassion on him, Miriam is quick to have the Pharaoh's daughter hire Jochebed to nurse the boy (2:7–9).¹⁸ In an ironic turn of events, Jochebed receives wages to nurse her son. When the boy is weaned, the Pharaoh's daughter adopts him as her son, names him Moses, and rears him in the Egyptian court (2:10).¹⁹ However, Moses does not forget his Israelite roots and, when the need to choose arises, favors the (oppressed) Israelites over the (oppressive) Egyptians: Moses avenges one of his Israelite kin and kills an Egyptian (2:11–12). In this, he takes the matter of life and death into his own hands as had the Pharaoh. When the matter is made known to the Pharaoh, he seeks to kill Moses. So Moses flees to Midian until the Pharaoh should die (2:15; cf. 2:23; 4:19).

¹⁶ Miriam is named for the first time in Exod 15:20. The fact that Jochebed and Miriam save Moses, not the two midwives, is surely the reason that the Talmud and the Targum identify Shiphrah and Puah with Jochebed and Miriam. See note 12 above.

¹⁷ The echoes to the flood narrative (Genesis 6–8) and to the Sea Event (Exodus 14–15) are interesting. Noah's Ark is also called a תבה (Gen 6:14) and the Sea Event takes place by ים סוף (Exod 13:18; 15:4). Does Moses' salvation from the Nile typologically mirror the salvation of humanity and Israel from the destructive powers of the chaos waters in the time of the worldwide flood and at the Sea Event?

¹⁸ This is the second instance when female subordinates ignore/disobey the Pharaoh's command.

¹⁹ The Bible links the name Moses (משה) to the verb משה ("to draw out"). This is a folk etymology. The name Moses is probably Egyptian, meaning "son" as in Ahmose, Thutmose, etc. A reflex of this Egyptian etymology may be preserved in the statement, "And he became her son" (2:10aβ). See Dozeman, *Exodus*, 81–82.

Moses' first attempt to save an Israelite ends in failure, but it foreshadows his future role as God's mediator, dealing out destruction and ultimately death to the Egyptians in order to redeem Israel.²⁰

God is the final principal character to appear on the scene. The Pharaoh who initiated the policy of cruel slavery against the Israelites has died, but the oppression continues under new leadership (2:23aα). The Israelites groan and cry out (2:23aβ). In a touching anthropomorphism and an expression reminiscent of sacrificial language, it is said that "their cry for help rose up to God" (2:23b). God hears and remembers the covenant he made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (2:24).²¹ And as the Pharaoh's forgetting of Joseph and his deeds led to (evil) action, so God's remembering leads to (goodly) action. God will allow the Pharaoh neither to negate the proliferation of the Israelites nor to prevent their acquisition of the promised land. God does not set foot on earth, so to speak, and chooses to work through Moses, his servant. Nevertheless, it is clear that it is God who is the redeemer and not Moses.²²

²⁰ Moses is a mediating figure par excellence. See Hendel, "The Exodus in Biblical Memory," 615–20.

²¹ A part of the divine drama is the struggle to establish a history that informs and motivates divine action. This is the first clue to the historical dimension of God's character in the Book of Exodus. Though it would be presumptuous to say that God's former promises bind him, it is minimally true that they motivate him to act. Past promises define present action. And as we will see, present action foreshadows future behavior. For how God acts in Exodus foreshadows how he will act during the Babylonian exile. This is the argument of Deutero-Isaiah.

²² There is some tension within the biblical tradition whether God or Moses is responsible for the deliverance of Israel (cf. Exod 32:7 and 11). On the one hand, it is clear that it is God's doing. On the other, Moses is the visible instrument. In any case, the Passover Haggadah emphasizes God's agency, at the denial of the agency of Moses and other entities, the point being that God alone is responsible for the redemption of Israel at every age, past, present, and future. Salvation is not contingent upon the leadership of a

With the three principal characters finally on stage, the first act of the drama begins – the first decisive step toward the full fulfillment of God’s double promise to Abraham. The narrative arc that begins here will take us out of Egypt, through the crucible of the sea, the testing fires of the wilderness, to the revelation at Sinai, across the Jordan, and into the promised land of Canaan.²³ For the Israelites, the drama is a movement from danger to salvation, from being a group of slaves to becoming a nation of priests. For God, the drama is the process by which he acquires a people and is made known to the Egyptians, the nations, to Israel, and also to himself. For the God who (first) introduced himself to Moses as “I will be who I will be” (אהיה אשר אהיה; Exod 3:14), after it all, is able to say to Joshua, “As I was with Moses so I shall be with you” (אהיה אשר אהיה) (אהיה אשר אהיה עמך)²⁴ (כאשר הייתי עם־משה אהיה עמך; Josh 1:5; 3:7).²⁵ “I will be who I will be” (אהיה אשר אהיה) becomes “As I was... so I shall be...” (כאשר הייתי... אהיה...). The Exodus, in addition to being a story about the birth of Israel as God’s people, about what it means for Israel to

remarkable human being. God alone is able to save. On this point, see David Henshke, “‘The Lord Brought Us Forth From Egypt’: On the Absence of Moses in the Passover Haggadah,” *AJSR* 31 (2007) 61–73.

²³ Milgrom (*Numbers*, xviii) shows, in a diagram of the pedimental structure of the Hexateuch, that the narrative arc of the Hexateuch stretches from the promise of the land of Canaan to Abraham to its fulfillment, with Sinai at the apex of the structure.

²⁴ Fishbane (*Biblical Interpretation*, 352) identifies כאשר as a fixed rhetorical term that indicates a typological relationship.

²⁵ A closer analogy exists between Exod 3:12 and Josh 1:5 (cf. Josh 3:7; Judg 6:16). The crux of Exod 3:12 revolves around the interpretation of the nature of the sign, whether the sign refers to God’s promise that he will be with Moses, that the Israelites will worship God on this mountain, or something else (e.g., the burning bush). See Childs, *Exodus*, 56–60. JPS interprets that God’s promise of companionship is the promised sign: “And he said, ‘I will be with you; that shall be your sign that it was I who sent you.’” However, the sign most likely refers to the burning bush (Childs, *Exodus*, 59–60). Nevertheless, it is still legitimate to relate Exod 3:12 and Josh 1:15, since it is YHWH’s presence that guarantees Moses and Joshua’s office.

be a nation elected of God, is also about what it means for YHWH to be the God of Israel, about a God's passionate devotion to his chosen people.²⁶ The story of Israel and of YHWH are inextricably intertwined, and it turns out that history matters to divine character as much as for human beings. Just as certain historical experiences have a durative, almost mythological significance for the people of Israel, so too do they for God. God's past promises and past actions have predictive, if not prescriptive, force for how God acts in the present and in the future.²⁷ History matters to Israel – and to Israel's God. In other words, both Israel and her God are historical beings, and they share a common history that binds them.

B. The Goals of the Exodus 1–15

Thomas B. Dozeman identifies the theme of Exodus 1–15 as “the power of YHWH.”²⁸ This aptly describes the cycle of “sign and wonders” that dominates the narrative of Exodus 3–15. YHWH gives Moses the power to perform signs before the

²⁶ Levenson (“Universal Horizon,” 156) writes that the mystery of God's election of Israel lies in passion (קשה; cf. Deut 7:7–8).

²⁷ For example, toward the end of Exodus, Moses declares, “YHWH: YHWH is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in faithfulness (חסד) and truth” (Exod 34:6). This character of God, revealed and discovered on the occasion of the rewriting of the lost Ten Commandments, reverberates throughout the Bible as a reminder to God and to Israel of an enduring dimension of God's character, one that is defined in history but endures as confessional truth (cf. Joel 2:13 [=Jonah 4:2]; Pss 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; 145:8; 2 Chron 30:9; James 5:11; etc.). The relationship between these echoes – and arguably others (e.g., Deut 4:31; Dan 9:9) – is complex, especially in regard to Exod 36:7, which many later citations omit (cf. Joel 2:13 [=Jonah 4:2]; Pss 86:15; 145:8) and/or reinterpret (cf. Joel 2:13 [=Jonah 4:2]; Ps 103:9–18).

²⁸ Dozeman, *Exodus*, 45–46.

Israelites (4:1–9) and also the power to perform signs and wonders against the Egyptians, culminating in the awful display of the power to deal death on all Egyptian firstborns, human and beast (4:22–23; 7:3; 12:29). What are the goals of this extended display of power? There are two interrelated goals. The first goal is the exodus proper, that the Israelites exit Egypt to worship YHWH on Mount Horeb (3:12; cf. 3:1). (The emancipation of the Israelites is an unadvertised – at least to the Pharaoh – corollary to the exodus.) The second goal is that the Israelites and, to a lesser extent, the Egyptians acknowledge YHWH. The two goals are closely linked together, but it is the latter goal that crowns the first half of the Book of Exodus. The politico-cosmic battle between God and the Pharaoh, mediated by Moses, is for control over the fate of the Israelites and also for the heart and mind of the Israelites and the Egyptians.

The first goal of removing the Israelites from Egypt is a response to the situation in which God finds the Israelites and himself in the opening chapters of Exodus. On the human side of the situation, the Israelites are suffering under the oppressive slavery of the Egyptians. On the divine side, when God hears Israel's moaning, he recalls his promise of numerous progeny and the land of Canaan to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (2:24). God has a promise he needs to keep. The exodus, then, is both God's sufficient response to the immediate human situation of Israelite enslavement and a preliminary and necessary response to the divine situation, his need to fulfill his promise of land to the patriarchs. God's response to an acute human predicament is couched within an overarching divine purpose.

Alongside the goal of spatial relocation appears a different and somewhat novel goal.²⁹ It is not enough that God is able and succeeds in extracting the Israelites from Egypt. God desires to be known. The success of the first goal, repeatedly announced at the start of the drama with divine authority, is beyond doubt (3:8, 17). And had not God repeatedly hardened the Pharaoh's heart from releasing the Israelites (4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17), one senses that this goal might have been accomplished sooner and would have required fewer and lesser displays of power.³⁰ That is to say, the overwhelming demonstration of power, the signs and wonders, has another purpose besides the emancipation of Israel: to convince the Pharaoh, the Egyptians, and the Israelites that God is YHWH, an entity to be feared, trusted, and acknowledged as such. This is the second goal of the exodus.

The stimulus of the second goal, narratively speaking, may be found in God's first encounter with Moses. When God commissions Moses to the task of delivering the Israelites up out of Egypt, Moses retorts by questioning whether the Israelites will trust him and his testimony about God. He says, "Say I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" (3:13). At a later point in the conversation, Moses says, "Say they do not believe me or listen to me, but say, 'YHWH did not appear to you'" (4:1). Moses shows God the need to be known, the need to demonstrate his power and authority to

²⁹ In all of Genesis, God is never the object of knowing (יָדָע). Divine desire to be known appears for the first time in Exodus 6:7 – though human confession that he does not know God appears earlier in Exod 5:2. Knowledge of God becomes a prominent theme in Deuteronomy.

³⁰ For the hardened heart motif, see Robert R. Wilson, "The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart," *CBQ* 41 (1979) 18–36.

convince an unbelieving people that he is YHWH, someone who can accomplish what he purposes.³¹ More than Moses, the Pharaoh gives YHWH reason to desire acknowledgment. When Moses and Aaron declare YHWH's command to the Pharaoh, "Release my people that they may celebrate a festival for me in the wilderness," the Pharaoh retorts, "Who is YHWH that I should obey him and release Israel? I do not know YHWH, and I will not release Israel" (5:2). Human forgetfulness, human ignorance, and human mistrust are the motivations for God's new found desire to be known, feared, and trusted. Lack of faith characterizes the human condition, and winning their trust becomes a divine goal. It is not enough that the Pharaoh releases the Israelites. He and the Egyptians must acknowledge YHWH (Exod 7:5, 17; 14:4, 18; cf. 14:25). And it is not enough that the Israelites are brought out; they must consent to it and acknowledge YHWH as the author of their salvation (14:31; 15:1–21).

The importance of the second goal is evident from the beginning of Exodus. The generation after Joseph is characterized by forgetfulness and ignorance. The new Pharaoh, so the Egyptians by inference, does not know Joseph, hence his God (1:8). In addition, we can surmise that the new generation of Israelites do not know the God of their fathers. As discussed above, the opening of Exodus echoes the opening of Judges.³² In Judges, it is stated that after the passing of Joshua and his generation, "another generation arose after them, who did not know YHWH or the work that he had done for

³¹ According to Childs (*Exodus*, 56–60), the burning bush is the sign that confirms to Moses the authenticity of his commission and is the guarantee that the commanded task can be accomplished. This suggests that God already knows the need for signs for purposes of convincing. The burning bush may also be interpreted as a sign of divine immanence, not a sign that points outside itself.

³² See note 10.

Israel” (Judg 2:10b). We can infer from the intertextual echo between Exod 1:6, 8 and Judg 2:8, 10 that the new generation of Israelites born in Egypt, like the new generation born in Canaan, had forgotten their God and his past deeds. This deduction is confirmed by the Israelites’ apparent need for (new) knowledge and for miracles in order to be convinced to trust Moses and YHWH (4:1–9).

The ignorance of the Israelites and the Egyptians concerning God and his deeds makes their education an important goal of the exodus. YHWH states this goal explicitly. He says to the Israelites, “I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am YHWH your God, who brought you out from under the burden of the Egyptians” (6:7).³³ And he says of the Egyptians, “The Egyptians will know that I am YHWH, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the Israelites from among them” (7:5). Within this context, we might note the instrumentality of the Pharaoh’s hardened heart. It creates the necessary condition under which YHWH can educate the Egyptians through “signs and wonders” and by “great acts of judgment” (7:3–4; cf. 14:4, 17–18). It might even be said that the Pharaoh is condemned to instrumental ignorance, his education never becoming a divine goal, because the hardening of the Pharaoh’s heart is necessary for the education of the Egyptians and the Israelites.

In sum, there are two related goals for the first half of Exodus. First, God desires to emancipate Israel from Egypt, the house of slavery. Second, God desires to be known as YHWH, the one who brought his people Israel up out of Egypt and as the omnipotent and incomparable one (Exod 9:14). The first goal initiates divine involvement in the

³³ This is the first time divine desire to be known is articulated in the Hebrew Bible.

history of Israel but it is the second goal that continues to motivate his ever increasing interest in Israel's survival and flourishing.³⁴

C. Sea Event as Conclusion?

If Israel's exodus from Egypt and the education of Israel and Egypt are the goals of Exodus 1–15, they are fully achieved only at the Sea Event (Exodus 14–15).

According to one tradition (P), the Sea Event takes place in Pi-hahiroth (14:2). That is to say, the Sea Event takes place within the land of Egypt and indicates that Israel has not yet escaped the sphere of Egyptian influence.³⁵ Only afterward does Israel head into the wilderness (15:22). The Sea Event is the final miracle that definitively cuts the bond of slavery between Israel and Egypt. Furthermore, as we will see in more detail below, it is only at the conclusion of the Sea Event that the second goal of the exodus, to win the hearts and minds of the Israelites and the Egyptians, is achieved. The Egyptians only finally acknowledge YHWH and his power moments before their death: "Let us flee from the Israelites, for YHWH is fighting for them against Egypt" (14:25). More importantly, the Song of Moses and the Song of Miriam, sung by the men and women of Israel, indicate that the Israelites only then come to faith and acknowledge God, not only for having saved them (15:1–12) but as able to fulfill his promise of land (15:13–18). The

³⁴ The concern for acknowledgement becomes a motivating factor in the way God acts in history. See Exod 32:11–14; 1 Sam 12:22; Isa 48:9 Ps 23:3; etc. Ezekiel identifies in God's concern for his name the primary motivation for the way YHWH treats Israel (Ezekiel 20).

³⁵ Dozeman, *Exodus*, 304.

Sea Event marks the conclusion to the exodus and the achievement of the two goals that animate the narrative of Exodus 1–15.

It should be noted at this point that the Sea Event can be interpreted as the introduction to the Wilderness Wandering tradition for three reasons. First, the Israelites are already in the wilderness at the time of the Sea Event. According to a second tradition (J), the Sea Event takes place at or near Etham, at the edge of the wilderness (13:20). And the Pharaoh notes that the wilderness has closed in upon the Israelites, suggesting that the Israelites are already in the wilderness well before the Sea Event takes place (14:3).³⁶ Second, the Israelites complain to Moses that they prefer slavery in Egypt over death in the wilderness (14:10–14). The theme of complaint looks forward to the wilderness murmuring tradition (Exodus 14–18; Numbers 11–21).³⁷ Third, according to this reading, the Sea Event is the prologue to the Wilderness Wandering and forms an *inclusio* around that tradition with the Jordan crossing (Joshua 3–4, esp. 4:23). The Israelites enter the wilderness through the Red Sea and exit the wilderness through the Jordan.

Reading the Sea Event as an anticipation of the Jordan crossing is not only possible, it is traditio-historically correct. The connection between the Sea Event and the Jordan crossing is one that the biblical writers themselves made. First, Exod 15:12–18 look forward to the wilderness wandering, the Jordan crossing, the conquest, and the

³⁶ Ibid., 300, 304.

³⁷ George W. Coats (*Rebellion in the Wilderness: The Murmuring Motif in the Wilderness Tradition of the Old Testament* [New York: Abingdon, 1968] 128–137) argues that the theme of complaint is a secondary development. But the murmuring is integral to the prophecy-fulfillment pattern of J, on which see below, and should not be excised as secondary.

building of the temple, as we will discuss more fully below. Second, Joshua explicitly connects the Jordan crossing to the Sea Event. In Josh 4:22–23, he commands the Israelites: “Tell your children, ‘Israel crossed this Jordan on dry ground (יבשה).’ For YHWH your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you crossed over, just as (כאשר) YHWH your God had done at the Red Sea, which he dried up before us until we crossed over.” Third, Psalm 114, as we discussed above, also makes this connection through poetic parallelism, equating crossing the Red Sea out of Egypt to crossing the Jordan River into the promised land. The Red Sea is the entrance into the wilderness, and the Jordan River is the exit. Thus, it makes sense to read the two events, the Sea Event and the Jordan crossing, as typologically equal and as bookends to the Wilderness Wandering tradition. The Sea Event is the introduction to the Wilderness Wandering, which the Jordan crossing concludes.

The Sea Event, then, is Janus-faced. It looks backward to the entire exodus tradition and functions as an apt conclusion to it. As we will see below, it actually looks further back to creation and relates the creation of the cosmos to the creation of Israel. At the same time, the Sea Event looks forward to the entrance into the promised land. In sum, the Sea Event is a nodal event that functions as an exit and an entrance and connects three complexes of tradition: the exodus from Egypt, the wilderness wandering, and the entrance into Canaan.

II. The Sea in the Sea Event

A. The Thrice Told Tale

Jean Louis Ska argues that the canonical text of the Sea Event (Exodus 14–15) displays the Aristotelian unities of place, time, and action and can be read rhetorically as a unity: The action takes place in one location, by the sea, within a single, continuous unit of time, and progresses without break from crisis to resolution.³⁸ In addition, he demonstrates that the prose account (Exodus 14) is a unity structurally, held together by two interlocking frameworks. He writes, “Les trois parties du récit [14:1–14, 15–25, and 26–31] sont chaque fois introduits par un discours de Dieu à Moïse (14, 1–4.15–18.26).”³⁹ He continues, “Les trois conclusions forment un tout organique: la première (14,13–14) annonce les deux suivantes (14,14 et 14,25; 14,13 et 14,30–31).”⁴⁰ Divine speech introduces each section, and Moses’ prophetic speech at the conclusion of the first section anticipates the conclusions of the latter two. Regarding the relationship between the prose and the poetry, Ska correctly notes that narrative logic bridges the generic divide: the poetic hymn (15:1–21) gives voice to the faith and hope born at the end of the prose account (14:31).⁴¹

The unity of the canonical form of the Sea Event is a testament to the skill of the various hands that preserved received tradition at the same time adding newer materials. Their skill, however, did not preclude the critical scholars’ ability to discern redactional seams between the prose and the poetry and within the prose account. Traditional source

³⁸ Ska, *Le passage*, 22–23.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

critical scholarship distinguishes at least three strands of tradition: the poetic Song at the Sea, the Yahwistic prose account, and the Priestly prose composition.⁴² This prior work allows us to examine each component layer and study the development of their idiosyncratic handling of the Sea Event.

Before we do, however, we need briefly to establish a relative chronology among the various traditions. To state the conclusion upfront, I follow the majority opinion and date the Song at the Sea earliest, followed by J, then P.

In a recent monograph, Brian D. Russell argues that the Song at the Sea (Exod 15:1–21) is early, datable to the late 2nd millennium, and that it served as the inspiration for the prose account of the Sea Event (Exodus 14).⁴³ In effect, he reinvigorates Frank M. Cross' arguments concerning the Song by defending old arguments against more recent critiques and by supplementing them with new evidence.⁴⁴ Russell's multi-pronged case for the antiquity of the Song at the Sea brings us closer to an end to the debate and is worth summarizing at this point.⁴⁵

In Part I of his book (chapters 1–4), Russell presents a fresh translation and interpretation of Exod 15:1–21. In Part II (chapters 5–10), he lays out a convincing argument for the antiquity of the Song at the Sea and for its priority in relation to Exodus 14 and other prose and poetic reflexes of the Sea Event.

⁴² The Elohist source has come under increasing suspicion and has been abandoned by most Pentateuchal scholars. See note 3.

⁴³ Brian D. Russell, *The Song of the Sea: The Date of Composition and Influence of Exodus 15:1–21* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007).

⁴⁴ Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 112–44.

⁴⁵ Cross (*ibid.*, 121 n. 29) said something similar about Robertson's dissertation. The debate about the date of the Song at the Sea, however, has continued.

Russell devotes Chapter 5 to laying the linguistic case for the early date of the Exod 15:1b–18. In the first half of the chapter, he summarizes David A. Robertson’s classic arguments in support of “the one equivocal, firmly grounded conclusion” of his study, that Exodus 15 is early biblical poetry.⁴⁶ Of Robertson’s six arguments, Russell emphasizes the “use of *yaqtul preterite and perfect forms for past narration” and the “use of third masculine plural suffix ׀.”⁴⁷ He also underlines the consistent use of the archaic features, noting that inconsistent use would point to archaizing. The Song is a genuine example of archaic poetry.

In the second half of Chapter 5, Russell provides comparative data that suggests resemblance between Exodus 15 and Ugaritic literature, including the use of staircase parallelism and word pairs.⁴⁸ Since Canaanite influence is evident in clearly late texts, such as Isa 27:1, these parallels are not conclusive evidence that the Song is early. Russell thus judiciously concludes, “taken alone this evidence is ambiguous for the dating of the Song of Moses and the Israelites. As part of the overall case for the antiquity of Exod 15, the heavy clustering of such parallels serves to corroborate this thesis.”⁴⁹ Indeed, if we posit that there was literature written before the monarchy but after the Amarna period, the time period left to us is the 12–11th c. BCE. The earliest of

⁴⁶ David A. Robertson, *Linguistic Evidence in Dating Early Hebrew Poetry* (SBLDS 3; Missoula, MT: SBL, 1972) 155.

⁴⁷ Russell, *Song*, 60. The six examples of archaic features found in Exodus 15 are: “(1) the use of *yaqtul and perfect forms for past narration (throughout), (2) the preservation of final y/w in an open syllable (v. 5), (3) the use of the relative pronoun ׀ (vv. 13, 16), (4) the use of -an + -hu in (v. 2), (5) the use of the third plural suffix ׀ (9x in Exod 15:1b–18), and (6) the use of enclitic mem on the preposition ך (vv. 5, 8).”

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 66–71.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 71.

biblical writings, which likely would have shared many features with other Canaanite literatures, belong to this time period. Linguistically and culturally, the Song at the Sea fits this description and likely dates to this time period.

In Chapter 6, Russell deals with the historical allusions made in the Song and their implications for dating. Not surprisingly, he finds no definitive evidence for early dating. Neither does he find evidence for late dating. Russell, nevertheless, adds to the cumulative case for an early dating. He finds that the list of nations in Exod 15:14–16: Philistia, Moab, Edom, and Canaan, preserves “true historical memory of the time, and thus leaves open the possibility of a date near the beginning of the Iron Age.”⁵⁰ He also notes that the tradition of women leading victory celebrations is early, as reflected in Judg 5:1; 11:34; and 1 Sam 18:7, and concludes that the presence of the Song of Miriam (Exod 15:20–21) supports an early date for the pericope as a whole.

Russell devotes the majority of the space in this chapter to the thorny issue of determining the geographical referent in Exod 15:13 and 17: *מכון, הר נחלתך, בנה קדשך* and 17: *מקדש, לשבתך*. After reviewing the case for the land of Canaan as a whole, Gilgal, Shiloh, and Jerusalem, and rejecting each, he settles on Sinai. To an extent, his prior interpretative decision that the Song does not depict a Jordan crossing – Russell sees only reference to the crossing of the Red Sea or the Wilderness in Exod 15:16 – forces Russell to reject all options west of the Jordan.⁵¹ Furthermore, he rejects Jerusalem for chronological reasons. For Jerusalem to be the referent, the *terminus post quem* would

⁵⁰ Ibid., 79.

⁵¹ Ibid., 30, 83.

have to be the time of Solomon, a century or two after Russell's dating of the Song on linguistic grounds. Thus, he is left with Sinai, for which he presents multiple arguments.

Contra Russell, many scholars interpret the crossing (עבר) in 15:16 as referring to Israel's crossing into Canaan.⁵² This interpretation, without compromising on the early date, permits Gilgal, Shiloh, and the land of Canaan to be the geographical referent. We need not, for our purposes, decide on which reference is most likely, but I favor a pre-monarchic temple (מקדש) at either Gilgal or Shiloh, the sacred mountain symbolically representing the land of Canaan as a whole. Russell's argument for Sinai does not make sense of the permanence implied by the image of planting (נטע; v. 17), the reference to Philistia and Canaan among Israel's enemies (vv. 14–16), and the reference to a temple (מקדש; v. 17). God's dwelling and inheritance, so also that of the nation of priests, must lie within Canaan.⁵³

In Chapters 7–9, Russell deals with the inner-biblical uses of the Exodus 15 and their implications for dating. The basic point is that, to use Michael Fishbane's language, Exodus 15 is the *traditum* to such texts as Isaiah 11–12, Psalm 118, the Psalms of Asaph (Pss 74, 77, 78), Exodus 14, and Joshua 2–5, the *traditio*. These discussions contribute to the overall argument for the antiquity of the Song at the Sea.

⁵² Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 141; Baruch Halpern, "Doctrine by Misadventure Between the Israelite Source and the Biblical Historian," in *The Poet and the Historian: Essays in Literary and Historical Biblical Criticism* (ed. Richard Elliott Friedman; Chico, CA: Scholars, 1983) 41–73, here 51; Dozeman, *Exodus*, 341.

⁵³ There is a redactional solution to the issue of the historical referent. For example, one might argue that Exod 15:13–17 is late, from or after the Solomonic era. This would allow Jerusalem to be the referent. While it is undeniable that, within its canonical context, Jerusalem is the obvious referent, the redactional solution is to be rejected on form-critical grounds. As I will argue below, the Song at the Sea replicates the entire sea myth pattern. Excising 15:13–17 would destroy this unity.

Of particular interest for us is Russell's treatment in Chapter 9 of the relationship between the Song at the Sea and the Yahwistic and the Priestly accounts of the Sea Event in Exodus 14. Russell follows Cross and Baruch Halpern to argue that the Song at the Sea preserves the oldest tradition concerning the Sea Event and serves as a source for the later narrative accounts of the Yahwist and the Priestly writers.⁵⁴ Cross writes, "Most of the prose sources have reminiscences of Exodus 15 but the song cannot be derived from any of them. The primary and most dramatic theme in the prose sources, the splitting or drying up of the sea and Israel's escape across the dry sea bottom, is wholly absent from the hymn."⁵⁵ That the theme of drying up or splitting the sea is absent in the Song, surprising were the Song dependent on the prose accounts, and that we can demonstrate that the specific aspects of the prose accounts are interpretations of details of the poetic Song, as Halpern has shown, argue for the priority of the Song over the prose traditions.

Now, which of the prose accounts is older, J or P? On this question, old and new Pentateuchal scholars agree that J (or non-P) predates P. Furthermore, the observation that the Priestly layer is not an independent narrative but is rather a redactional layer, as we will see in more detail below, argues for the priority of J over P.

In sum, Exodus 14–15 preserves three traditions about the Sea Event, each subsequent tradition preserving, transforming, and integrating received tradition into an ever widening historical and theological worldview. The Song at the Sea stands at the fountainhead, datable to the Iron Age I. The Yahwist next provides a narrative introduction to the Song, integrating the Sea Event as a crux within a historical narrative

⁵⁴ Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 112–44; Halpern, "Doctrine."

⁵⁵ Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 134.

that arguably spans from the patriarchal age into the age of tribalism. Finally, the Priestly writers reshape and reframe the Yahwistic interpretation of the Sea Event and set it within an even greater theological and historical framework which looks back to creation and forward to the exile. Exodus 14–15 is a coherent and unified episode, displaying the three Aristotelian unities of place, time, and action. It also preserves a thrice told tale of Israel's birth as a beloved people of YHWH.

B. The Sea Event According to the Song at the Sea

The Song at the Sea (Exod 15:1b–18) is a revolutionary text that stands at the fountainhead of what is undoubtedly a powerful worldview: the Bible's insistence on history as a vehicle for typological, even mythological, significance. This intellectual revolution made it possible for historical existence no longer to look to myth for enduring principles that govern life. Rather, history itself could become the site of revelation of such principles. Events of primordial significance could take place in history, and punctual events could reveal enduring patterns.⁵⁶ This revolution was achieved by an initial act of Promethean theft, by stealing from the realm of myth its powerful patterns and potent symbols and giving them to history. The revolution was not unique to biblical literature, and its importance does not rest on that.⁵⁷ The migration of the archetypical

⁵⁶ As we will discuss more fully below, Carol A. Newsom ("The Past as Revelation: History in Apocalyptic Literature," *QR* 4.3 [1984] 40–53) emphasizes the importance of finding patterns in history for apocalypses. In this light, one might say that the Song at the Sea anticipates the rise of historical apocalypses.

⁵⁷ See, for example, Albrektson, *History and the Gods*, and Saggs, *Encounter with the Divine*.

and typological significance of myth to history, whether or not it is duplicated in other literary corpora, is a great achievement of the Bible. And the Song at the Sea, if we can agree on its antiquity, is the first-fruits of this intellectual achievement, an achievement that rivals the much debated rise of monotheism. For the Song at the Sea is the first text in the Hebrew Bible to combine myth and history in its representation of a historical event and inspires the further development of an essentially metaphorical perception of reality that informs much of the Hebrew Bible. We need not look far to find evidence of this influence. The Yahwist and Priestly interpretative accounts of the Sea Event were inspired by the Song at the Sea and are distinct attempts to incorporate the Song's depiction of an inchoate nation into a wider historical and theological worldview. The prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah concerning the Babylonian exile and the biblical and extra-biblical apocalypses are also offsprings of the vision and theology of the Song at the Sea. The following discussion, then, celebrates at the same time it analyses the Song, itself the full-throated song of a people at her birth and a song in which a brave new vision of the world was born.

1. The Song at the Sea and the Sea Myth Pattern

In previous chapters we examined the sea myth pattern as reflected in the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle*, the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, and the Israelite Hebrew Bible. In each, we found that the deity's battle against and victory over the Sea resulted, though in mediated forms, in three goodly consequences: creation, kingship, and the temple. However, we found a major discontinuity between the Hebrew Bible, on the one hand, and the *Baal*

Cycle and *Enuma Elish*, on the other. While the sea myth pattern could be found fully intact as the framing narrative structure in the latter, in the former, the pattern itself was found fragmented and each element of the pattern often variously transformed. We attributed the latter phenomenon in part to the principle of utility. The biblical writers adapted common mythic materials they shared with their neighbors toward ends that were foreign to the original form. In doing so, they refracted the myth through an Israelite prism, fragmenting what was once unified and transforming what was separated.

Yet the sea myth pattern survives intact, it may be argued, as a framing narrative structure in the Song at the Sea. That is to say, the telling of Israel's emancipation from Egypt in the Song mirrors in structure the sea myth pattern. This is hardly new. Cross already recognized that the Song at the Sea replicates the sea myth pattern: "(1) the combat of the Divine Warrior and his victory at the Sea, (2) the building of a sanctuary on the 'mount of possession' won in battle, and (3) the god's manifestation of 'eternal' kingship."⁵⁸ We should likely see the theme of creation in the Song at the Sea, on which see below, thus completing the sea myth pattern. Otherwise, we are in full agreement with Cross' analysis that the Song at the Sea replicates *in nuce* the sea myth pattern: divine combat precedes creation, kingship, and temple. Mythic pattern and historical event meet here and are mapped onto each other's frame of reference. The results of the metaphorical union are faithful replication of the sea myth pattern on the plane of history and impertinent deviation therefrom.

2. *The Sea Event (Exodus 15:1–12)*

⁵⁸ Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 142.

The hallmark of the sea myth is the presence of a sea deity or sea monster, whom the protagonist god defeats. The first major, and most significant, deviation of the Song at the Sea from the sea myth is the fact that the Song knows of no sea monster or sea deity that YHWH battles. The Song celebrates an event that took place at the sea but not one in which the sea is God's primary antagonist. The sea in the Song is not Yamm known from the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle* or Leviathan, Rahab, or Dragon we find elsewhere in the Bible. That is not to say, however, that the sea is here merely an ornamental metaphor, as Stephen C. Russell argues.⁵⁹ The sea retains its mythological identity. Only because it does can it serve as the conduit that makes the sea myth pattern available to the biblical writer for depicting a historical event. To paraphrase Ricoeur: the sea is not Yamm and yet is Yamm. The full appreciation of the power of the Song at the Sea to evoke mythic patterns while faithfully presenting historical reality hangs on understanding the double and simultaneous participation of the sea in the world of myth and in the world of history.

That the sea in the Song at the Sea is not Yamm is an obvious but profound observation. An antagonism of sufficient power characterizes Yamm in the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle*. This is also true of Mot who, at one point, swallows Baal. Yamm is a credible threat to Baal, and this makes Baal's eventual victory praiseworthy and the triumphant Baal worthy of kingship. In this light, what makes the Song at the Sea incredible is that it does not even acknowledge the sea as a threat to YHWH. Whatever the early history of

⁵⁹ Stephen C. Russell, *Images of Egypt in Early Biblical Literature: Cisjordan-Israelite, Transjordan Israelite, and Judahite Portrayals* (BZAW 403; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009) 149–76, esp. 162–73.

the Song and its conception of YHWH, the Song assumes the slaughter of Yamm. Only its carcass remains as a spatial entity, a mythic vessel in which YHWH's actual enemy, Egypt, is thrown, sunk, and killed.

If the sea in the Song is not Yamm, what or who is it? What exactly is its relationship to the mythic world whence it came and the historical reality in which it now resides? Can such binary categories describe the sea?

Stephen C. Russell, as mentioned above, argues that the sea is an ornamental figure of speech, a "metaphor for destruction."⁶⁰ His arguments are primarily two. First, he points out that Egypt's watery destruction is one among other metaphors for destruction. The Egyptians are said to be consumed by fire like chaff in 15:7 and to be swallowed by the earth in 15:12. Russell says, without explicitly arguing the point, that "it is more customary to regard them [the fire and earth imagery] as metaphors for destruction."⁶¹ By extension, the argument goes, the water imagery too should be regarded as a metaphor along with the fire and earth imagery.⁶² Russell's implied argument is flawed. He dismisses too easily the possibility that destruction by fire, earth, and water were meant literally and not merely figuratively. A reader must ask, If not by these means, as the Song states, how else did God destroy the Egyptians? God could have empowered the Israelites themselves to destroy the Egyptians. Indeed, the Israelites

⁶⁰ Ibid., 162.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Note that fire (15:7), wind (15:8), earth (15:12), and water are involved in the destruction of Egypt. "We can still recognize in the mixed metaphor the poet's desire to have all nature participate in Egypt's demise" (Propp, *Exodus 1-18*, 530). The question is whether these are ornamental figures of speech or actual elements manipulated by YHWH.

are depicted as being armed in one layer of the tradition.⁶³ However, a self-delivering Israel goes against the ethos of the Song, which celebrates YHWH's saving acts. In sum, if Russell does not think that the destruction of the Egyptians, therefore Israel's deliverance from Egypt, was merely metaphorical, by which he means fictive, he must provide an alternative account of Egypt's destruction when he characterizes the Song's depiction of their demise by means of fire, earth, and water as metaphorical.

Russell's second argument for the merely metaphorical nature of the water imagery in the Song is that "[i]n biblical and ancient Near Eastern literature, water is often used as a metaphor for danger or destruction."⁶⁴ He also shows that the related images of sinking or drowning in the water (15:4, 5, 8, 10) and of being cast into the water (15:1, 4) appear in biblical and other ancient Near Eastern literatures.⁶⁵ Against David Tsumura, who denies any mythological influence on such images in the Hebrew Bible, Russell judiciously notes that "these biblical metaphors derive their power from their rich mythological background."⁶⁶ I agree that sinking into, drowning in, and dying by means of water can and are used as metaphors for danger and destruction in the Hebrew Bible and in other ancient Near Eastern literature. In fact, water is a common metaphor for danger and destruction in Western, if not world, literature.⁶⁷ However, this

⁶³ The technical term *חמשים* implies that the Israelites were organized in military units (Exod 13:18).

⁶⁴ Russell, *Images*, 163.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 166–70.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 172.

⁶⁷ Hans Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator: Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence* (trans. Steven Rendall; Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997).

far from demonstrates that the water imagery in the Song at the Sea specifically is merely figurative.

The implied fire imagery in 15:7 (יאכלמו כקש), which is an extension of the primary metaphor of that verse depicting God's anger as something that burns (חרון), may well be metaphorical in the sense Russell means.⁶⁸ An argument can also be made that the image of the earth swallowing God's enemies is metaphorical. However, this would not preclude the possibility that ארץ also refers to a real place, the underworld located below the sea.⁶⁹ Indeed, not only does the poet of the Song insistently depict the enemy's destruction as watery, he depicts the destruction as taking place in a logical sequence of events: the enemy is shot with the sea (15:1);⁷⁰ he is cast into the sea (15:4); the watery deep covers him (15:5a, 10a); he sinks into the watery depths (15:5b, 10b); and presumably dies when he is swallowed into the earth, that is, into the underworld below the sea (15:12).⁷¹ These snapshots of Egypt's watery demise are impressionistic

⁶⁸ Note, however, that the heat of God's anger is of sufficient, conceptual reality to set the Egyptians on fire.

⁶⁹ Gunkel, *Creation*, 293 n. 8.

⁷⁰ רמה בים. If we take כ as instrumental and retain the meaning of "shoot" "cast" for רמה, we arrive at the possible translation: "he shot with the sea." Ex 15.1, 21; I agree with A. Strich that רמה in Ex 15:1, 21 retains its usual meaning, "to cast, shoot" (class presentation, "The Song of the Sea: Seminar," Harvard University, February 2009).

⁷¹ Note that, after turning aside to praise God in more general terms (15:6–7), the poet returns to recounting God's salvific acts at the sea in 15:8–12. 15:8–9 is a flashback that returns to the events preceding 15:5, only then to resume the narrative in 15:10. Thus, 15:10 repeats in other words what was already recounted in 15:5. After another generic praise of YHWH's incomparability (15:11), the narrative reaches its climactic end when the Egyptians are swallowed whole into the underworld (15:12). What we have in 15:1–12, then, is not a haphazard collection of discontinuous vignettes of the Sea Event but an artistic representation of the Event in roughly chronological order, studded with generalized panegyric and resumptive flashbacks. A similar sequence of events is

but also roughly sequential and together recount a coherent event. In 15:1–12, the sea is the stage to the deadly drama of Egypt’s demise, not an ornamental figure of speech. That is to say, the first half of the Song displays the Aristotelian unities of place, time, and action: Egypt’s destruction occurs, not in a metaphorical nowhere, but really at the sea in a unified sequence of events. Yes, the sea in the Song is not Yamm. But neither is it a mere figure of speech. It is a real place.

The Song calls the sea ים סוף (15:4b). This is an ambiguous term, since it may refer to the Red Sea (i.e., the Gulf of Aqabah and the Gulf of Suez), the Sea of Reeds, or a cosmographical Sea at the End. The suggestion that ים סוף should be translated Sea of Reeds is based on the observation that Hebrew סוף is a loanword from Egyptian *ṯwf(y)* “papyrus reed.”⁷² ים סוף means “papyrus reed” in several places in the Hebrew Bible (Exod 2:3, 5; Isa 19:6), and this observation has been used to buttress the argument that ים סוף is not the Red Sea but some minor, reedy body of water east of Avaris.⁷³ However, Bernard F. Batto has argued, convincingly in my opinion, that ים סוף does not refer to a conjectural Sea of Reeds in the Song or anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible.⁷⁴ Noting that “every certain referent of the term *yam sūp* is to the Red Sea or its northern extensions into the gulfs of Suez or Aqabah,” Batto concludes, “at no period in Israelite

attested in Ezekiel’s oracles against Tyre: the deep (תהום) rises over Tyre; the mighty waters (מים רבים) cover Tyre; and Tyre goes down into the netherworld (ארץ תחתיות) (Ezek 26:20).

⁷² Batto, “Reed Sea,” 27.

⁷³ John Bright, *A History of Israel* (3rd ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981) 122–23. For a review of this issue, see items listed in Batto, “Reed Sea,” 27 n. 1.

⁷⁴ Batto, “Reed Sea,” 27–30.

history is there any evidence that *yam sūp* ever referred to a body of water other than the Red Sea,” including in the Song at the Sea.⁷⁵

Batto, however, does not say that ים סוף was only geographical and, building on the suggestion of Norman H. Snaith, argues that ים סוף simultaneously refers to the cosmographical Sea at the End.⁷⁶ Snaith suggests that ים סוף “means that distant scarcely known sea away to the south, of which no man knew the boundary... the sea at the end of the land.”⁷⁷ To support this hypothesis, he points to the terms to which ים סוף stands in parallel in Exod 15:4–5: sea (ים), deeps (תהמת), and depths (מצולת), and notes, “In verse 5 with references to the Deep and the depths we have passed into the realm of the great Creation-myth, that story of the fight against the monster of Chaos which is interwoven with the story of God’s rescue of the people from bondage both in Egypt and in Babylon... This is the depths of the primeval ocean, of Tiamat the great sea monster.”⁷⁸

Batto builds on Snaith’s observations and argues that “*sūp* is attested in the Hebrew Bible in the precise [mythological] meaning required by Snaith’s thesis.”⁷⁹ He finds this meaning in Jon 2:4, 6:

⁴ You cast me into the deep (*mēsûlâ*),
into the midst of the Sea
and River (*nāhār*) encircled me.
All your breakers and your billows passed over me.
⁶ The waters encompassed me up to the throat,

⁷⁵ Ibid., 27, 35.

⁷⁶ Norman H. Snaith, “ים סוף: the Sea of Reeds: the Red Sea,” *VT* 15 (1965) 395–98.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 398.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 397.

⁷⁹ Batto, “Reed Sea,” 32.

the Abyss (*těhōm*) encircled me;
Extinction (*sûp*) was bound to my head.⁸⁰

Batto argues that the usual translation of סוף as reeds or some kind of plant is “demonstrably wrong” and that “the context requires *sûp* to have something to do with a cosmic battle against chaos.”⁸¹ “Given the context of images of non-existence and in parallelism with mythic waters and the Abyss, here *sûp* (or *sôp*) must be derived from the Semitic root *sûp*, ‘to come to an end,’ ‘to cease (to exist).’”⁸² If Batto is correct, then ם סוף in Exod 15:4b may be translated as “the Sea at the End” and understood to refer to the sea at the “ends of the earth” (אפסי ארץ).

We discussed earlier (in Chapter 2) that the ancient Israelites conceived of the earth as a flat disk floating on the cosmic, inferior sea and that the same cosmic sea surrounds the earth all around. We also stated that the Israelites saw a basic continuity between the geographic seas and the cosmic seas. Based on similar observations, Batto argues that the poet responsible for the Song at the Sea, in speaking of ם סוף, did not distinguish the Red Sea to the south from the cosmic sea at the end of the earth, “a sea which in their minds was fraught with connotations of primeval chaos.”⁸³ In sum, the sea in the Song is literally the Red Sea, the geographical sea to the south, and literally the cosmic Sea at the End. The geographic sea and the cosmic sea occupy the same space in the unified world of the ancients.

⁸⁰ Ibid. Batto’s translation.

⁸¹ Ibid., 32, 33.

⁸² Ibid., 34.

⁸³ Ibid., 35.

The dual participation of the sea in geography, the plane of historical existence, and in cosmography, the plane of mythic existence, makes it possible for the sea to serve as a conduit between myth and history. Being fully a geographic location, the sea is the stage on which the Pharaoh and his army, his horse and chariot, meet their demise. Their defeat did not take place in a metaphorical nowhere, in the mind of the poet, but in a this-worldly locale contiguous with both Egypt and Israel. At the same time, the sea is a cosmic place contiguous with the world of myth. It is Yamm or the carcass of Yamm, God's cosmic enemy whom he defeated and controls as creator and king from his everlasting temple. In this frame of reference, we might say that YHWH uses his once mythic foe as a tool to destroy present, historical enemies.

In the narrative interpretations of the Sea Event of J and P, we can discern a heavier emphasis on history and geography over against myth. But the two categories are so utterly fused together in the Song at the Sea as to frustrate all attempts to locate the plane of origin, whether we are here dealing with history that has been mythicized or myth that has been historicized.⁸⁴ The duality is complete. It is metaphorical. The sea is Yamm and is not Yamm. By extension, we can say that the Sea Event is myth and is not myth, history and not history. As we will discuss shortly, the rest of the sea myth pattern, the theme of creation, kingship, and temple, appears in the Song at the Sea. Each of these elements also participates in the duality of the sea: YHWH creates not the cosmos but the historical people of Israel; he reigns over the peoples of this world, e.g., Israel, Egypt, Edom, Philistia, and Moab, and not only over deities; and his dwelling place is simultaneously an earthly place where his people Israel might dwell and the cosmic

⁸⁴ Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 143–44.

mountain of God. The worldview encapsulated in the Song at the Sea is a metaphorical one, the result of the union between myth and history, and the sea in the Song at the Sea is an effective icon that itself embodies the metaphorical union it points to.

3. *Goodly Consequences: Creation, Temple, and Kingship (Exodus 15:13–18)*

The first half of the Song at the Sea (Exod 15:1–12) recounts and celebrates the one continuous event in which YHWH defeats Egypt at the sea and presumably wrests the Israelites from under Egypt's tyranny. The second half of the Song (15:13–18) recounts the next series of events: Israel's journey to and entrance into the land. Exod 15:1–12 commemorates God's victory at the sea, and Exod 15:13–18 recounts, in the mode of assured prophecy, the goodly outcomes of that victory: creation, temple, and kingship.⁸⁵

In his analysis of the Song at the Sea, Cross emphasizes the themes of kingship and temple.⁸⁶ Indeed, those are the two most prominent themes in the Song while the theme of creation is more implied than explicit. Nevertheless, the theme of creation is there. Snaith saw "the great Creation-myth" interwoven in the Song at the Sea, and Batto

⁸⁵ Whether the prefixed verbs in this section are preterite (so Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 125) or imperfective (so Dozeman, *Exodus*, 340–41) is a matter of debate. In my opinion, all prefixed verbs of the original Song at the Sea are preterite. I see no reason that this should change with 15:13. However, in its canonical context, I side with Childs, Dozeman, and others who translate the prefixed verbal forms after 15:13 as future. Since within the canonical, literary context of the Song, the exodus is a past event and the conquest a future event. Dozeman (ibid., 341) writes, "The exodus is the defeat of the enemy in the sea. It is a past event, celebrated in the first part of the Song of the Sea. The conquest of the nations in Syria-Palestine and the enthronement of Yahweh in his temple on his holy mountain remain a future hope."

⁸⁶ Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 142.

writes that “the traditional mythical language is used to express the belief that the emergence of Israel as a people during the exodus was due to a creative act by Yahweh equal to that of the original creation of the cosmos itself.”⁸⁷ As we will see below, the emergence of Israel as a people redeemed for and by God is a theme that J’s narrative account, embedded in a larger narrative arc, emphasizes; and creation is a prominent theme that informs P’s recasting of the Sea Event. However, Snaith and Batto’s insistence on creation in the Song is not dependent on the canonical context of the Song, for the Song itself declares that YHWH “created” Israel as his people, as Cross recognized.⁸⁸ We first turn to the theme of creation in the second half of the Song.

God’s people, Israel, are explicitly mentioned only in the second section of the Song and are identified in three, roughly synonymous ways: “the people you [God] redeemed” (עַם־יְזוּ גְאֹלָה, 15:13), “your people” (עַמְךָ, 15:16), and “the people you created” (עַם־יְזוּ קִנִּיתָ, 15:16). The phrase “your people” (עַמְךָ) is a declaration of Israel’s new identity that emerges out of the fray of 15:1–12, and the declaration retrospectively clarifies the goal of the miracle at the sea: the redemption (גָּאֹל) and creation (קִנָּה) of Israel for YHWH. That is to say, the creation of Israel was the immediate goal of the Sea Event, to be followed by the erection of the temple and kingship.

Martien A. Halvorson-Taylor in her recent book *Enduring Exile: The Metaphorization of Exile in the Hebrew Bible* surveys “the multifarious capacities of the

⁸⁷ Snaith, “Sea of Reeds,” 398; Batto, “Reed Sea,” 35.

⁸⁸ Cross translate 15:16b: “While your people passed over, Yahweh / While your people passed over whom you created” (*Canaanite Myth*, 141).

גאל” and emphasizes the association to kinship.⁸⁹ She attributes Second Isaiah’s preference for גאל over the roughly synonymous פדה to its “connotation of kinship.”⁹⁰ Likewise, David Daube writes, “The main idea [of גאל] is the getting back of a person or object into the family where there is his or its original, legitimate place, partly in the interest of the family, partly in that of the person or even the object.”⁹¹ Thus, when the poet of the Song at the Sea declares that Israel is a people whom YHWH redeemed (גאל), he affirms YHWH’s kinship ties to Israel: Israel is returning to her rightful, legitimate place in the divine family. Indeed, YHWH declared earlier in Exodus that Israel is his firstborn son: בני בכרי ישראל (Exod 4:22).

Now, the dual description of Israel as a people whom YHWH redeemed/created (עם־זו גאלת־קניית) suggests that the verbs גאל and קנה are related. Propp points out that קנה can have an economic (“acquire” or “purchase”), biological (“engender” or “beget”), or a creative nuance (“create”).⁹² Since the parallel word גאל can include an element of payment, though this is not essential, קנה may be understood in economic terms: YHWH acquired or purchased Israel. Supporting this interpretation, Propp points out that Ps 78:54 and Isa 11:11, texts dependent on the Song, use קנה in its economic sense and concludes that, therefore, “the nuance ‘acquire’ dominates over ‘procreate’” in Exod

⁸⁹ Martien A. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile: The Metaphorization of Exile in the Hebrew Bible* (VTSupp 141; Leiden: Brill, 2011) 112–14. See also David Daube, *The Exodus Pattern in the Bible* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963) 27–28; Frank M. Cross, “Kingship and Covenant in Ancient Israel,” in his *From Epic to Canon* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998) 3–21.

⁹⁰ Halvorson-Taylor, *Exile*, 114.

⁹¹ Daube, *Exodus Pattern*, 28.

⁹² Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, 539.

15:16.⁹³ This is unconvincing. While Ps 74:54 and Isa 11:11 are no doubt dependent on the Song at the Sea and use קנה in the sense “to acquire,” these later texts do not define the sense in which the earlier Exodus 15 uses the term. Methodologically, it is sounder to look to the immediate context for clues that limit the semantic range of קנה. Specifically, the strong kinship connotation of גאל, discussed above, and YHWH’s earlier declaration in Exod 4:22 that Israel is his firstborn son favor the biological nuance of קנה, “to engender” in Exod 15:16 (see Gen 4:1; Deut 32:6).⁹⁴

The biological, procreative nuance of קנה is closely related to its creative meaning. In Ugarit, one of Athirat’s epithets is *qnyt ’ilm*.⁹⁵ The epithet features the nominal form of the Ugaritic word *qny* (“to acquire,” “to create, forge,” or “to procreate”), cognate with Hebrew קנה I, and corresponds to El’s epithet “Creator of Creatures” (*bny bnwt*).⁹⁶ Since Athirat is a mother figure to “the seventy sons of Athirat,” a biological nuance is certainly present in Athirat’s epithet. Nevertheless, the term should not be translated as “Mother of the Gods.” She did not engender all the gods. Rather, the epithet should be translated “Creatress of the Gods.”⁹⁷ Similarly in the Hebrew Bible, קנה שמים וארץ occurs as a divine epithet in Gen 14:19 and 22. It is possible to translate the epithet as “procreator of the heavens and the earth.” But clearly a metaphysical nuance dominates, for God is father to the cosmos only in a metaphorical sense. To call God קנה, in most instances, is

⁹³ Ibid., 540.

⁹⁴ קנה in Gen 4:1 describe female engendering and in Deut 32:6 male engendering.

⁹⁵ Aicha Rahmouni, *Divine Epithets in the Ugaritic Alphabetic Texts* (trans. J. N. Ford; Leiden: Brill, 2008) 275–77.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 98–101.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 276.

to call him “creator” and not “father.”⁹⁸ The semantic range of קנה expanded from an original procreative nuance to include the metaphysical notion of creation, since procreation is an apt metaphor for the abstract idea of creation. In conclusion, Cross’ translation of the phrase, עַם־זוֹ קִנִּית, as “people... whom thou has created” is defensible.⁹⁹ We might note, in support of this translation, that Deutero-Isaiah emphasizes the creative nuance of the phrase in replacing the ambiguous word קנה with יצר (“to create, form”): עַם־זוֹ יִצְרֵתִי לִי (Isa 43:21). In sum, the first and immediate goodly consequence of YHWH’s battle and victory over Egypt at the sea is the creation of a new identity for Israel as YHWH’s people. This is not creation *ex nihilo*, but it is a transformative reconstitution of a meaningful and orderly entity out of a chaotic and watery situation: a former group of Hebrew slaves and a mixture of tag-along peoples (Exod 12:38) have become the elected people of God.

While the presence of the theme of creation in the Song at the Sea has been a subject of some debate, virtually all scholars agree that the temple and kingship are prominent and important themes of the Song. The geographical location and identity of God’s “holy abode” (בֹּהַל קִדְשׁוֹ, 15:13), “mountain of inheritance” (הַר נַחֲלָתְךָ, 15:17), “place of dwelling” (מְכוֹן לִשְׁבֹתְךָ, 15:17), and “sanctuary” (מִקְדָּשׁ, 15:17) are infamously ambiguous, as we discussed above. The importance of the sanctuary, however, is beyond doubt. In the second half of the Song (15:13–18), God’s sanctuary is immediately announced as the goal of God’s guidance and Israel’s journey (15:13), and arrival there is foretold in exuberant repetition (15:17). The poet piles three references to the sanctuary

⁹⁸ The older, non-metaphoric meaning of קנה (“father”) is preserved in Deut 32:6.

⁹⁹ Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 141.

one after the other. The poet emphasizes YHWH's agency in making (פעל) and establishing (כון) the sanctuary, perhaps to make clear that YHWH required neither permission from a higher authority (from El) nor help (from Anat and Athirat) nor assistance (from Kothar), as did Baal, to build the sanctuary.

In an interesting turn, it is also revealed that the sanctuary is not only YHWH's abode:

¹⁷ You will bring them [your people whom you redeemed and created]
and plant them
On the mountain of your inheritance.
The place you made to dwell in, O YHWH,
The sanctuary, O Lord, your hands established.

It was a common belief among the ancient Near Eastern peoples that to enter the earthly temple is tantamount to entering the celestial, real temple; such was the homology between type and archetype. Only priests were usually afforded this privilege. But the Song proclaims that the redeemed people of YHWH are to cross over the threshold into sacred space, into the abode and sanctuary of YHWH. It further states that they are to be planted there as permanent residents. If priests alone were privy to enter the sanctuary according to ancient Near Eastern ideology, then the Israelites may be seen as “a kingdom of priests, a holy people” (Exod 19:6). Their inheritance is the mountain of God, a sacred space that is this worldly and yet also heavenly, earth that is also heaven.

The declaration of the third and final goodly result of YHWH's victory at the sea unambiguously follows the emphatic vision of the temple: “YHWH shall reign forever and ever” (15:18). As in the *Baal Cycle*, YHWH's kingship is closely related to the erection of the temple. The temple is a necessary foundation for the reign of God. God

can be said truly to reign over the people he has created only after he has won for them a dwelling place and for himself a sanctuary, the seat of his power. His kingship was never in doubt, but it becomes manifest in the temple and radiates out from there.

In the Song at the Sea, God does not battle his cosmic, aquatic foe. The defeat of Sea is the silent assumption of the revolutionary Song. Rather, YHWH fights a historical enemy, Egypt. Thus the battle the Song describes is almost unspectacular and YHWH's victory almost unremarkable. But the intellectual insight that animates the Song is truly remarkable. The author of the Song at the Sea breaches the dam that held the waters of mythic significance and lets loose into the plane of history the symbols, types, and patterns once thought to be the exclusive property of myth. A brave new world is born. Earth becomes the stage for YHWH's action. Historical events can now have primordial significance. And this-worldly events can reveal mythic patterns.

4. Birth of a People, Birth of a Worldview

David Damrosch, in his insightful book, *The Narrative Covenant*, attributes to the trope of metaphor the critical function that accounts for the development of genres in the Hebrew Bible: "major generic development often occurs not by the isolated modification of an existing genre in itself but by the *merging* of formerly separate genres."¹⁰⁰ The basic argument is that when two different, even seemingly contradictory genres are brought together, it gives birth to a third, hybrid genre. The hybrid genre is not one of peaceful compromise so much as the result of competitive interaction, "a process of

¹⁰⁰ David Damrosch, *The Narrative Covenant: Transformations of Genre in the Growth of Biblical Literature* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987) 36.

adaptation, suppression, and outright polemic.”¹⁰¹ Damrosch identifies two great generic innovations within the Hebrew Bible. The first great innovation of historiography takes place in two steps. The Yahwist took the first decisive step in translating “older epic into historicized prose” in Genesis 2–11.¹⁰² Then, the Deuteronomists continued and completed this generic development when they applied the perspective of poetic epic to historiography proper in composing the story of King David in 1–2 Samuel.¹⁰³ Damrosch characterizes the Yahwistic and Deuteronomistic innovations as steps toward realism and logical causality. The second great generic innovation of the Hebrew Bible, Damrosch argues, is the Priestly writers’ interweaving of historical narrative and law, exemplified in Leviticus.¹⁰⁴ The result of this marriage was a dynamic and dialogic commentary on the perfective (law) and the imperfective (narrative) duality of Israelite identity.

I am troubled by the Hegelianism of Damrosch’s proposal, not because of the thesis-antithesis-synthesis schema of the proposed historical process, but because of the implication that there are pure genres that stand at the beginning and a perfect genre yet to be attained at the end of the historical process. Damrosch does recognize the historical contingencies of generic origins and innovation, but it would have been helpful if he had more explicitly addressed the issue of beginnings and endings. Nevertheless, I find the simple and elegant suggestion attractive and productive for thinking about the history of biblical literature. As Damrosch recognizes, innovations do occur within genres. But the

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 3, 88–143.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 3, 182–260.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 4, 261–97.

meeting of different genres and the resolution of their differences account for at least some of the revolutionary changes within genres. Furthermore, if literary genres give us different ways of perceiving and representing reality, I agree with Damrosch that we can find in the Hebrew Bible evidence of generic innovations that challenged received notions about reality and offered sometimes radical and new understandings of reality as a result of intellectual insight or in response to historical circumstances.

To address my critique of Damrosch's work, I would like here to address the issue of endings and beginnings. To the historical process Damrosch has outlined, I propose that the Song at the Sea is a witness to a generic innovation that predates the Yahwist and had an influence not only on J but also on the poets of the Psalter, the prophets of doom and salvation, and the apocalyptic visionaries of the post-exilic and post-biblical eras. The marriage of the historical and mythical perceptions of reality that occurs in the Song at the Sea, essentially a tale about the birth of the people of Israel, coincides with the birth of a revolutionary worldview. It also happens to be one of the oldest parts of the Hebrew Bible. The history of generic innovation in the Hebrew Bible does not begin with pure genres but in *medias res*.

To look forward to the following chapter, the generic innovation that begins already in the Song continues throughout the history of the formation of the Hebrew Bible, as Damrosch has in part discussed, until the creation of the canon(s) of the Hebrew scriptures. The emergence of the anthology that is the Hebrew Bible marks the end of the history of generic development that Damrosch began to reconstruct, and it is the ambition of this dissertation to unveil one aspect of the innovative perception of reality that the genre of biblical canon communicates. At this point, I am keen to underline what

Brevard S. Childs called the “ongoing search” for the canon, the historical fact of the multiplicity of the canonical forms of the Hebrew Bible. That multiplicity testifies to the imperfectability of the process. There is no ideal genre to be achieved. Rather, there are ongoing interpretative efforts within the various communities of faith, Jewish, Christian, and, to a lesser extent, Muslim, that supplement the biblical canon.

In conclusion, I return to the revolutionary character of the Song at the Sea. One of the oldest passages in the Hebrew Bible, the Song stands first in the series of generic innovations. In it, we find the sea myth pattern of conflict, victory, and goodly consequences mapped onto an account of a historical event. The Song does not sharply differentiate myth over history or history over myth. However, the general direction of the perspectival revolution is clear. The migration is of mythic patterns and mythic themes to history. As others have noted, the mythic pattern of the Song at the Sea mirrors the historical narrative of the Hexateuch, from Exodus to Joshua: Israel exits Egypt to enter Canaan. It might be said that the work of the Yahwist, the Deuteronomist, and the Priestly writers are footnotes to the Song at the Sea, that footnote expanding to form what has been called the Primary History.¹⁰⁵ The Sea Event is the birthplace of a nation. It is also the birth event of a worldview that takes centuries to mature into a continuous historical narrative of a people. When the viability of that historical narrative is challenged by unforeseen historical events, when God’s kingdom is halved, his sanctuary destroyed, and his kingship threatened, radical response becomes necessary. Perhaps unsurprisingly, that response in part takes the form of a reaffirmation of the sea

¹⁰⁵ For recent discussions on the existence of a Primary History, or the Enneateuch, see the essays in Thomas B. Dozeman, Thomas Römer, and Konrad Schmid, eds., *Pentateuch, Hexateuch, or Enneateuch? Identifying Literary Works in Genesis through Kings* (SBLAIL 8; Atlanta: SBL, 2011) and below.

myth pattern, its themes reinterpreted and its historical horizons extended to address the catastrophic events of a new era. YHWH was, remains, and will be he who destroys the forces of chaos to bring about order and life to his kingdom.

C. The Sea Event According to the Yahwist

The Yahwist integrated the Song at the Sea into his account of Israel's early history.¹⁰⁶ In so doing, he composed a prose account of the Sea Event, inspired in part by

¹⁰⁶ The extent and, increasingly, the existence of a coherent body of work attributable to the Yahwist are becoming matters of considerable controversy. Von Rad ("Form-Critical Problem") tied the work of the Solomonic Yahwist to the historical credal statements, in particular the one found in Deut 26:5b–9, and argued that it stretched from Genesis to Joshua – including the Sinai tradition. Under the influence of Martin Noth's theory of a Deuteronomistic History (Deuteronomy–2 Kings; *The Deuteronomistic History* [JSOTSupp 15; trans. J. Doull, J. Barton, M.D. Rutter, and D.R. Ap-Thomas; Sheffield: JSOT, 1981]), von Rad (*OT Theology*) later modified the idea of a Yahwistic Hexateuch in order to accommodate the overlap with the work of the Deuteronomist, though never quite harmoniously. Among more recent Pentateuchal scholars, John Van Seters (*Prologue to History: The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis* [Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1992]; *Life of Moses*) espouses an understanding of the Yahwist most like that of von Rad, only for Van Seters, the Yahwist is a post-Deuteronomistic, exilic figure whose work is a prologue to the Deuteronomistic History. On the other hand, Rolf Rendtorff (*Problem of the Process of Transmission*) recognized in von Rad's insistence on the growth of blocks of traditions clustered around distinct motifs a fundamental contradiction to the classic notion of horizontally continuous sources. Rendtorff said that von Rad's form-critical insights are incompatible with and trump the Documentary Hypothesis. Rendtorff's form-critical critique of the Documentary Hypothesis has taken root, especially among continental European scholars, who have abandoned the Yahwist (see *A Farewell to the Yahwist?*). Two recent works by Konrad Schmid (*Old Testament: A Literary History* [trans. Linda M. Maloney; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012]) and David M. Carr (*The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011]) take advantage of these recent developments and propose new reconstructions of the growth process of the Hebrew Bible. Their reconstructions do not include a Yahwist. More than any other time since Jean Astruc ("Conjectures sur les memoires originaux dont il parait que Moise s'est servi pour composer le Livre de la Genèse," in Pierre Gilbert's *L'invention de l'exégèse moderne: Les "Livres de Moïse" de 1650 à 1750* [Édition du Cerf, 2003] 62–69) first

the Song at the Sea and possibly dependent on traditions now lost to us, that provides the narrative context for the Song. Genre is the most evident difference between the J prose account of the Sea Event and the poetic Song. Whereas the Song adumbrates the Sea Event with sharp, disconnected images in a panegyric song to YHWH (15:1–12), the J account is a continuous narrative that occurs within a larger historical setting. Another change has been made in the frame of reference in which the Sea Event takes place. In the Song at the Sea, the Sea Event is directly connected to the three goodly consequences and together complete the sea myth pattern. The Sea Event takes place in a mytho-geographical world where the entire mythic pattern is mapped onto the plane of history. In contrast, the J account divorces the Sea Event from the goodly consequences, thus disrupting the sea myth pattern, and the miracle at the sea takes place in a world a few degrees removed from the mytho-geographical world of the Song. In fact, the miracle itself becomes secondary in importance to the theological frame that features a new hermeneutics: the ability to see the divine in the mundane.

1. The Yahwist's Account of the Sea Event

There is agreement among scholars concerning the rough outlines of the Yahwist's account of the Sea Event. Inevitably, however, there are disagreements

proposed that two sources, Memoir A and B, were interwoven in Genesis, the Yahwist is in danger of being written out of the Hebrew Bible. In recognition of the ongoing nature of this debate, for the purposes of this dissertation, I retain the Yahwist as a heuristic construct, whose work stretches at least from Exodus to Joshua – though I believe the Yahwist or another hand that predates P was responsible for the bridge between Genesis and Exodus.

concerning a number of verse assignments.¹⁰⁷ For the purposes of our analysis, we follow the source division of B. S. Childs with one minor difference. Childs ascribes to J these verses: Exod 13:21–22; 14:5b, 6, 9α, 10bα, 11–14, 19b, 21aβ, 24, 25b, 27aβb, 30, 31.¹⁰⁸ To these, I would add, with others, 13:20.¹⁰⁹

J's account of Israel's deliverance at the sea begins when the Israelites depart Egypt, led by the cloud and the pillar of fire (13:20–22). The Pharaoh, still in Egypt, has a change of heart about having released the Israelites (14:5b). He gives chase with his army and overtakes the Israelites by the sea (14:5b–6, 9α). When they see the Egyptians behind them, the Israelites complain to Moses, who in response announces YHWH's deliverance (14:10bα, 11–14). The pillar of cloud move from the front to the back of the Israelites, to keep the Egyptians at bay, while, all night, YHWH dries the sea by means of a strong east wind to expose dry ground (הַרְבֵּה) (14:19b, 21aβ). In the morning, YHWH confuses the Egyptian army from upon the column of fire and cloud (14:24). The Egyptians, at this point, recognize that YHWH fights for Israel against them and attempt to flee (14:25b). But before they can escape, the sea returns over the exposed seabed, where the Egyptians haplessly find themselves. YHWH shakes the Egyptians in the sea, killing them (14:27aβb). From a safe distance, the Israelites look on the Egyptians washed ashore, some already dead and others dying, and recognize in the spectacle the evidence of salvation Moses had announced earlier (14:30–31). This moment of

¹⁰⁷ See note 3.

¹⁰⁸ Childs, *Exodus*, 220.

¹⁰⁹ Noth, Van Seters, Baden, and Dozeman assign Exod 13:20 to J/JE/non-P.

recognition leads to praise, the Song at the Sea: “Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to YHWH” (15:1a).

We might note here that the two goals of the exodus are now fully accomplished. The bond of slavery between Egypt and Israel is definitively cut. And Egypt, moments before their death, and Israel, when they recognize in dead Egypt God’s saving power and purpose, recognize YHWH as a God who is for Israel. The Song at the Sea, in the J account, is the confession of the newfound faith of the Israelites in YHWH as their God. That is to say, the older Song at the Sea concludes the Yahwist’s account of the Sea Event. Ska makes this observation in support of the last point: The J account of the Sea Event may be divided into three sections: 13:20–14:14; 14:15–25; and 14:26–15:18. At the conclusion of each section are confessions of faith in YHWH by Moses (14:13–14), the Egyptians (14:25), and the Israelites (15:1–18).¹¹⁰ The Yahwist integrated the Song at the Sea into his own presentation of the Sea Event.

2. The Sea in J and a New Kind of Myth

The Yahwist’s presentation of the Sea Event includes the Song at the Sea. Thus we should not overemphasize the differences between the Song and J. The Yahwist did not displace the Song but incorporated the Song into his composition. Nevertheless, the Yahwist made significant changes to the poet’s gapped presentation of the Sea Event in transplanting it into his own historical, narrative world. For example, the lively sea of the Song, in J, becomes a relatively muted backdrop. Taking cue from Exod 15:8 and 10a, in

¹¹⁰ Ska, *Le passage*, 176.

which YHWH is depicted manipulating the sea with the blast of his nostrils and with his breathe, the Yahwist imagines that YHWH uses a miraculously strong but altogether natural wind to dry the sea: “YHWH drove the sea with a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land” (14:21a). In addition, the Yahwist does not mention the depths or refer to the deep, and the Egyptians are not swallowed into the underworld beneath the sea but die on the seashore. The Sea Event is a miracle, no doubt, but the space in which it takes place and the visible forces involved are very much this-worldly: clouds, fire, wind, land, and sea.

What we can surmise from these changes is that, for the Yahwist, the Sea Event per se is less important than the fact of salvation. The Yahwist shifts the focus away from the Sea Event to the prophecy-fulfillment pattern that frames the Event (Exod 14:13–14, 30–31). The frame models a theological hermeneutics of immanence that sees in the mundane evidence of a transcendent reality. If the Sea Event is the text, the hermeneutical frame is the commentary that literally surrounds the text and interprets it. The interpretation sees in the visible sign of the dead Egyptians the invisible hand of God. Thus, the apex of the J account, as I will now argue, is Exod 14:30–31, the moment of recognition and the realized complement to the vision of salvation in Exod 14:13–14.

In this regard, we first note the common words and phrases that connect Exod 14:13–14 and 30–31: the words, ראה, ירא, ישע, and היום, and the almost identical phrases, יהוה אשר-יעשה (14:13) and היד הגדלה אשר עשה יהוה (14:31). These shared terms, in addition to ensuring the unity of the frame, also make a conceptual link between seeing and fearing. In 14:13, Moses argues that the Israelites should not fear the Egyptians

because they will not see the Egyptians in the same way again. Later in 14:31, seeing God's saving work is associated with fearing God through parallelism:

וירא ישראל את־היד הגדלה אשר עשה יהוה במצרים
וייראו העם את־יהוה

They see God and so fear God. Note that the assonance of the words “to see” (ראה) and “to fear” (ירא) in Hebrew strengthens the conceptual link between what Israel sees and what she fears. The principle underlying this association is simple: “To see is to fear.” When the Israelites see the Egyptians, they fear the Egyptians (14:10). But when they see God, they fear God (14:31). There is a complication here, which requires a hermeneutical solution. The Egyptians exist on the historical plane shared with the Israelites and thus are readily visible to the Israelites. However, YHWH acts in history but by proxy, thus remaining invisible to the Israelites. If they are to see YHWH, it will have to be by means other than physical sight, by faith.¹¹¹

According to the Yahwist, then, the Sea Event is a contest between God and Egypt for visual dominance, to be visible to and seen by Israel as the mastering power over her fate. Whereas the battle between God and Egypt in the Song at the Sea takes place in the mythic geography of the sea, the Yahwistic battle takes place offstage in the perceiving mind of the Israelites. YHWH's physical victory at the sea over Egypt would mean little, for the Yahwist, apart from the complementary victory over Israel's interpretation of the event. The contest between God and his foe has been moved from

¹¹¹ By “faith,” I refer to the willingness to identify the signifier with the signified despite the incongruity between the signifier and the signified. As such, it names an epistemological and hermeneutical mode at odds with a scientific mode of perception but perhaps at home within the mythopoetic world of the Bible.

the physical to the hermeneutical sphere. But how does YHWH win without appearing visibly on stage? The task of the Yahwist is to trace the hermeneutical process by which YHWH becomes visible to Israel.

At this point, we should distinguish between the world of the reader and the world of the text. The reader, privy to the omniscient point-of-view of the narrator, knows that YHWH is responsible for the strong east wind (14:21) and the columns of fire and cloud (14:24). In contrast, YHWH does not appear on the stage as a visible, palpable presence for the Israelites at the Sea Event.¹¹² Thus, it is impossible for the Israelites directly to lay eyes on YHWH. If they see God, they must see him in a surrogate that acts as a (visible) signifier for the (invisible) signified.

What the Israelites actually see at the end of the Sea Event is “Egypt dead on the seashore” (14:30b). This naturally reminds them of the fierce wind and the crushing sea that killed the Egyptians. The Israelites take the first interpretative step here and interpret the cause of Egypt’s demise as “the great deed (יד: literally “hand”) YHWH did against Egypt” (14:31a). The next hermeneutical step is not too difficult: “Dead Egypt” becomes the “hand of YHWH.” This in turn becomes “YHWH.” When the Israelites see “Dead Egypt,” by an act of interpretation, they see the “Living God.” And according to the principle “to see is to fear,” when they see God, they fear God. This hermeneutical process is visible in the triple parallelism of the text:

וירא ישראל את־מצרים מת על־שפת הים
וירא ישראל את־היד הגדלה אשר עשה יהוה במצרים
ויראו העם את־יהוה

¹¹² Fox (“Job the Pious”) similarly distinguishes the world of the text from the world of the reader in the Book of Job.

If the Israelites fear YHWH at the end of the Sea Event, it is because they no longer see Egypt as they had before the Sea Event but rather see YHWH. And if they see YHWH, it is because, by faith, they see YHWH in dead Egypt. YHWH does not appear visibly on stage in the J account. But for those with eyes to see, he is nevertheless present in a surrogate. The military victory YHWH wins in the J account is not as spectacular as the one he wins in the Song; but he wins a more difficult victory. What the Yahwist celebrates is not the prowess of YHWH the divine warrior and the easy, direct recognition of a visible God as the one responsible for Israel's salvation: "My strength and my defense¹¹³ is Yah... This is my God, and I will praise him" (15:2). He leaves that task for the poet. Rather, the Yahwist celebrates the much more subtle and difficult birth of faith that is able to say: "I see in dead Egypt the hand of God... This signifies YHWH."

Roland Barthes, in his essay "Myth Today," redefines myth as a semiological system in which a unique entity, such as a Negro soldier saluting the French flag, is turned into an instrumental signifier of an abstract concept, such as the fact of French imperialism.¹¹⁴ If we accept Barthes' definition of myth, we might describe the Yahwist's transformation of "This is my God" to "This signifies my God" as the transformation of one kind of myth into another kind. Dead Egypt, like the saluting Negro soldier, becomes, within the hermeneutical frame of the J account, a signifier that points, not to itself, but to YHWH's saving act. The mundane spectacle of "Egypt dead

¹¹³ Relating the Hebrew זמרה to a Semitic root **dmr* "to be strong." See the discussion in Propp, *Exodus 1-18*, 511-13.

¹¹⁴ Roland Barthes, "Myth Today," in his *Mythologies* (trans. Annette Lavers; New York: Hill and Wang, 1972) 109-59. The example of the saluting Negro is Barthes'. The semiological process by which transformation comes about, the theft of the personal history of the Negro and the reconstitution of the Negro as a symbol for an abstract concept, while important, does not concern us here.

on the seashore” is turned into an instrumental signifier of an abstract concept: salvation, divine favor, divine immanence.

The brilliance and importance of the Yahwistic hermeneutical innovation lies precisely in the transformation of a concrete historical entity into an abstract signifier. I stated above that, for the Yahwist, the details of the Sea Event are not as important as the fact of salvation. We might add that just as important as the fact of salvation is the faith that enables Israel to see God’s salvation in the details of the Sea Event. This is critical. The hermeneutics of faith that is able to say: “This signifies God” is applicable to various situations. It is repeatable. Thus, “this” need not be “dead Egypt” or the miracle at the sea but dead Philistines, Edomites, Moabites, Canaanites, or any number of Israel’s historical enemies and any number of historical experiences. The hermeneutics of “This signifies God” allows Israel to interpret all history as the unfolding of divine will, to see the hand of God in historical victories, defeat, exile, and return. It undergirds the philosophy of history that, in my mind, is in evidence throughout the Hebrew Bible, not in the least in the Yahwistic and Deuteronomistic corpora.

D. The Sea Event According to the Priestly Writers

The Priestly writers carry out the final major redaction of the prose account of the Sea Event. This redaction, by virtue of its lateness and its powerful rendering of the event, becomes the canonical depiction of the Sea Event for later biblical and post-biblical traditions, so that the Sea Event for much of the subsequent traditions after P is not the poet’s mytho-historical event or the intellectual miracle of the Yahwist’s

naturalistic rendition but the spectacular Priestly sea splitting and crossing: the Israelites scurry across the floors of the exposed seabed in between towering walls of water as the Egyptians unthinkingly give chase to their own doom. The accomplishment of the Priestly rewriting of the Sea Event, however, is not primarily narrative or visual. The real achievement is theological, the reintroduction and elevation of the theme of creation. On display in the Priestly Sea Event is the power of the creator God to undo creation for the sake of his people.

1. The Priestly Account of the Sea Event

As with J, with the exception of 13:20, we follow Childs' source division for P: 14:1–4, 8, 9aβb, 15–18, 21aαb, 22–23, 26, 27a, 28–29.¹¹⁵

In examining the Priestly Sea Event, we should remember that the Priestly account of Israel's deliverance at the sea includes the textual traditions that predate P. There may well have been an independent Priestly tradition concerning the Sea Event on which the Priestly writers depend for their composition, but the Priestly layer here reads like a redactional composition that transforms received tradition through incisive inclusion of a few narrative elements, such as the dividing and the crossing of the sea, and the introduction and emphasis of new thematic elements, such as the hardening heart motif and the motif of YHWH's glory. As such, I treat the entire complex, Exod 13:17–15:21, as the Priestly version of the Sea Event.

¹¹⁵ Childs, *Exodus*, 220.

The first point about the composite work to note is that the Priestly writers reinforced the structure of J. We noted above that the three sections of the J account of the Sea Event all conclude with human confessions of faith in YHWH. The Priestly writers introduce the same sections with YHWH's direct speeches to Moses, commanding him to perform certain actions and informing him of imminent events (14:1–4, 15–18, 26). These additions introduce Moses as a major actor to the prose account of the Sea Event. Whereas YHWH acts in the realm of history through natural forces in J, in P he chooses to act through a human mediator, Moses. The total effect is the elevation of Moses, though we should note the hint of rebuke in God's words to Moses in 14:15a: "Why do you cry to me?" More than simply confessing trust in YHWH and exhorting the Israelites to do likewise (14:13–14), as he does in J, the Priestly Moses participates in enacting YHWH's salvation. A more robust tradition and understanding of Moses is involved.

A second point to note is YHWH's explicit concern about his glory. Again, each of the three sections in J culminate in human confessions of faith in YHWH. The Yahwist structures his account around human confessions of YHWH's future (Moses in 14:13–14; Moses and the Israelites in 15:13–18), present (the Egyptians in 14:25), and past (Moses and the Israelites in 15:1–12) saving acts. The Priestly writers augment the theme of faith with YHWH's explicit desire to be known and trusted. YHWH repeatedly informs Moses that he hardens Pharaoh's heart so as to create an opportunity to perform miracles at the sea, that he might be glorified and known through them (14:4, 18). The Priestly writers are more interested in forcefully relaying proper knowledge of God than in tracing the subtle hermeneutics of faith.

The active role of Moses and YHWH's desire for glorification lead up to the major Priestly innovation: the splitting (בקע) of the sea, Israel's crossing the Red Sea on dry ground (יבשה), and Egypt's demise in the sea. These Priestly innovations echo the event of cosmic creation and remind us that the God who acts in history at the Sea Event is the same creator God who defeated the sea monster *in illo tempore*. Israel is asked to recognize and to place trust in the creator God – who delivers them from Egypt. Moses' mediatory role as God's proxy on earth allows the transposition of a cosmic event onto the landscape of history. He is a conduit figure. Furthermore, Moses as mediator glorifies God, for the power to command and work through a mediator is the glory of a king and the authority of a creator.

2. The Sea in P and a New Old Myth

As noted above, P is dependent on J for the basic structure of the narrative, but the P version is the product of an original reading of the Song and differs significantly in regard to its attitude toward myth in general and to the sea in particular. In contrast to the Yahwist who naturalized what might have been interpreted mythologically, the Priestly writers make effective use of the mythological elements of the Song nevertheless to produce a historical event. The great innovation of P in this regard is the sea crossing. Halpern attributes this to the misinterpretation of the reference to crossing (עבר), which is properly to be understood as referring to crossing into the Promised Land (Exod 15:13–17), and to the literalization of the term נג (15:8) in the Song.¹¹⁶ In my mind, this is an

¹¹⁶ Halpern, "Doctrine," 49.

example of creative interpretation, not of misinterpretation. In any case, the Priestly writers recast the Sea Event as a sea crossing and as a new act of creation.

We argued above that the Priestly writers were familiar with and capable of playing with the mythic themes of the *Enuma Elish*. Specifically, we argued that the Hebrew תהום in the Priestly Genesis 1 alludes to the depersonalized Babylonian sea deity Tiamat. Thus, we can safely assume that the Priestly writers would have recognized the mythic dimension of the Song at the Sea in which the plural form of תהום appears twice in relation to the sea (15:5, 8) and to see in it an opportunity to resurrect the specter of the chaos monster and to slay it once again as an affirmation of YHWH as creator. Indeed, in rewriting the Sea Event, the Priestly writers allude to the Mesopotamian myth in saying that the sea was split (בִּקַּע; 14:21), even as the carcass of Tiamat was split by Marduk (*Enuma Elish* IV 137).¹¹⁷ The Priestly writers, it is important to note, do not retell the combat myth here. The sea is not Tiamat and poses no threat to YHWH. Rather, through this subtle allusion, the Priestly writers echo the familiar myth and make present the specter of Tiamat, whose carcass Marduk split in order to fashion the firmament and the earth. In sum, they transform the Sea Event into an event reminiscent of the cosmic myth of creation. In their hands, genogony, the birth of the people of Israel, becomes an event analogous to cosmogony.

We should also note a second feature of P's creation account: the importance of boundaries. Separating unlike things and inscribing boundaries between them constitute one of the fundamental activities that characterize God's creative act. And this interest in

¹¹⁷ Concerning this word, Cross writes (*Canaanite Myth*, 135), "The term *bq* 'split,' is used as in Nehemiah 9:11, a word more appropriate to the smiting of the Sea-dragon than to the drying up of the sea."

boundaries and categories is evident throughout P, with its insistence on the distinctions between the clean and the unclean, the holy and the profane, etc. As John J. Collins puts it, “the Priestly writers... like clear and distinct dividing lines.”¹¹⁸ In this light, the boundary between sea and land becomes that much more important in P. For it is not simply a feature within creation but, to risk overstatement, a feature that separates creation and uncreation. Therefore, of all the boundaries that grid the Priestly vision of the cosmos, the one between sea and land must be given pride of place.

The Priestly writers are not alone in this respect. We have already seen that the fear of the sea was common throughout the ancient Near East, as evident in the *Enuma Elish*, the *Baal Cycle*, and elsewhere the Hebrew Bible. The poet of the Song at the Sea, as we saw, represents the common view that “la mer, c’était la mort, car... le monde des morts était matériellement lié avec les abîmes cosmique.”¹¹⁹ The Egyptians who drown in the sea are then swallowed by the netherworld (Exod 15:12). Furthermore, Hans Blumenberg demonstrates that the entire Western tradition viewed the sea in the same way. In much of Western tradition the sea is “a naturally given boundary of the realm of human activities” and the demonized “sphere of the unreckonable and lawless.”¹²⁰ For the Greeks, the Romans, the peoples of Babylon and Ugarit, and for the ancient Israelites, to embark was an act of human insolence against created order, the transgression of a boundary established at creation, and an act of defiant hubris against the uncreated forces

¹¹⁸ John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004) 146.

¹¹⁹ Reymond, *L'eau*, 180.

¹²⁰ Blumenberg, *Shipwreck*, 8.

of chaos that was the sea. The sea was a legitimate object of fear and respect, the place of death and doom.

In this light, the Priestly rewriting of the Sea Event reveals itself as doubly remarkable. Contrary to the expectations dictated by tradition, the Priestly writers depict Moses, a human being, splitting the sea and have the Israelites cross it. If the human potential for exaltation has been figured in the Bible, this is the moment. Israel faces two threats to her life by the sea: Egypt and the sea. Unexpectedly, God commands Moses and Israel to take on the sea, not Egypt. This is not flight but confrontation. Moses stretches his hand over the sea. As an instantiation of God's primordial victory over the sea, the sea before him is split miraculously to expose dry ground. A human being, not a deity, is given authority over the sea.¹²¹ Israel then risks utter destruction and embarks into the midst of the sea with the walls of water looming threatening to her right and left. She transgresses a fundamental boundary of created order.

Egypt follows Israel into the midst of the sea. At this point, Israel is vulnerable to both sources of her demise. However, miraculously, Israel safely crosses the sea and turns back to see what will come of Egypt. While the Egyptians are still in the middle of the sea but after Israel has safely crossed over to the other side, Moses turns around to face the sea and the Egyptians in its midst and stretches out his hand over the sea. The waters return and cover the Egyptians, killing them. From the shore, Israel watches the Egyptians die in the sea.¹²² She has just experienced a double salvation from her

¹²¹ We recall that David too is given authority over the sea in Psalm 89 (v 26).

¹²² In J, the Egyptians are on the seashore, not the Israelites. Though the Priestly Writers do not change the words of the 14:30, by changing the surrounding events, they change

historical enemy, Egypt, and from the primordial enemy to all creation, the sea. She came face to face with adversity she neither imagined nor, throughout the ordeal, believed she could overcome. But she not only survives but triumphs. Israel was aware of only one source of hostility, Egypt, but the sea proved the greater foe. And while Israel defeated and survived her encounter with the sea, her now lesser enemy, Egypt, succumbed to it. On the shore, Israel stands in wonder and recognize in the mundane the transcendent, in dead Egypt the hand of YHWH. So she breaks out into song.

What has happened? Creation happened. God defeats his enemy, Egypt, and creates Israel as his people, a people who have been physically, mentally, and cosmically reconstituted. Physically, they have been removed from the land of slavery and transformed into a liberated people. Mentally, they are a people who can see in the mytho-historical event at the sea the hand of God and a people able to recognize the transcendent God in the immanence of historical figures and events. Cosmically, a new kind of being has been created. The coming into being of the people of Israel is a second event of creation, according to the Priestly writers, for whom the boundaries of creation is undone. In this sense, uncreation also happened. In the process of Israel's creation, that is her redemption, the boundary of created order is undone, if momentarily, and transgressed. I am ready to admit that to see YHWH's willingness to undo cosmic creation for the sake of his people may be an over-reading of the Priestly Sea Event. In my defense, YHWH will again undo creation and allow the flood waters to return when he allows the Jerusalem Temple to be destroyed (Psalm 74), later to announce a recreation (Isaiah 40–48), the reconstruction of the temple as the source of life (Ezekiel

the meaning of this verse. We no longer find Egypt dying on the seashore; we find Israel watching the dying Egyptians from the seashore.

47), and the continuing validity of his kingship (Psalms 93–100). As lord of creation, YHWH can create as well as uncreate.

We conclude with a brief comment on the consequences of pouring old wine into new skin – of making metaphors. The old wine of primordial combat and cosmic creation was familiar to the Priestly writers. The new skin was the historical narrative of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt at the Red Sea. The bringing together of the new and the old results in the paradoxical juxtaposition of creation and uncreation, as just discussed. The splitting of the sea as a simple allusion makes the Sea Event an event comparable to cosmic creation. It repeats a mythic event on the plane of history. But this is repetition with an important difference. The sea that is split in the Sea Event is the carcass of the sea once already split in creation. It is a part of the already created order. Thus, the secondary splitting of the sea has the added meaning of undoing creation. This creation-uncreation dialectic is further complicated by the concomitant event of Israel’s creation and Egypt’s destruction. Uncreation (the split sea) leads to Israel’s salvation, that is, her creation; and recreation (the return of the waters to their rightful place) leads to Egypt’s destruction. Order and chaos intermingle. At the end, pouring old wine into new wine skin makes the wine new again. An old myth becomes a new myth. And the new myth, later when it becomes an old new myth, will be ready to be poured into newer wine skins. The theological crisis brought on by the traumatic events of the exile will be the new wineskin into which the old new myth, not having lost its vitality, will be poured to make yet newer wine still. We now turn to the exilic vintage.

Chapter 6. Sea and Exile

Deutero-Isaiah (Isaiah 40–55) proclaims in a variety of ways the imminent redemption of Israel to the disheartened and doubting Israelites toward the end of their Babylonian exile. The prophet interprets the exile as the just retribution for past sins and even as propitiatory suffering that will usher in an unprecedented period of transformative grace in which YHWH, not the gods of Israel’s Babylonian overlords, will reveal himself as victorious warrior, mighty creator, kinsman redeemer, and undisputed king. The prophet opens with a most exuberant message of hope and grace:

¹“Comfort! Comfort my people!”
says your God.
²“Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
And call out to her!
That her servitude is ended,
That her sin offering is accepted,¹
That she has received from YHWH’s hand
Double for all her sins.” (40:1–2)

The prophet declares that the period of punishment has come to an end and, more importantly, that redemption is at hand (40:1–2). YHWH will destroy his foes who are no foes but inanimate wood, stone, and metal – nothing (40:18–20; 41:21–24; 44:9–20), lead his people through the wilderness on a kingly highway (40:3–5; 49:11; cf. 35:8–10), and feast with them on Mount Zion to reaffirm his covenant faithfulness to his people (55:1–5). Once forgotten, once barren (49:14; 54:1, 7–8), Zion will once again be

¹ עון, which has the usual meaning of “iniquity,” is here a metonym for “the consequence of, punishment for iniquity” or even “sin offering.” This meaning of עון is attested in Lev 26:41, 43: ירצו את-עונם. See also Gen 4:13. See Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile*, 120–21.

overcrowded with the joyous song of the redeemed of YHWH (49:15–21; 51:3, 11; 54:1–3; cf. 35:10) and glorified and raised up as a banner for the nations (49:22–26). YHWH will reign as king (41:21; 43:15; 44:6; 52:7) – as he always has – for he is about to do a new thing... that is a repetition of the old (43:16–21). Deutero-Isaiah, on the main, consoles the disheartened, encourages the doubtful, and announces an imminent and unassailable salvation for Israel.² And this message replicates a modified form of the sea myth pattern of conflict, victory, and goodly consequences.

In this chapter, I will first discuss the historical and literary context of Deutero-Isaiah, providing a context for the more detailed exegetical work to follow. Second, I will demonstrate that Deutero-Isaiah replicates the sea myth pattern, often in the language of Israel's intermediary traditions, such as creation and the exodus.

I. Deutero-Isaiah in Context

² Joseph Blenkinsopp (*Isaiah 40–55: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 19A; New York: Doubleday, 2000] 286) correctly notes that Deutero-Isaiah reproaches his hearers for “their weak faith in need of constant reinforcement (40:27–31), their history of infidelity leading to political disaster (42:18–25; 43:25–28), and a skeptical attitude toward the prophet’s message about Cyrus (45:9–13),” even before the “sudden shift of mood corresponding to the alternation of reassurance with denunciation” in 48: 1–11. Indeed, Blaženka Scheuer (*The Return of YHWH: The Tension between Deliverance and Repentance in Isaiah 40–55* [BZAW 377; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008]) argues that Deutero-Isaiah both announces redemption and calls for repentance throughout. The message of Deutero-Isaiah is not only or merely: “Comfort! Comfort!” However, Scheuer argues that the foundation of the prophet’s message remains one of grace and hope. God’s grace is the motivation for repentance and the result of repentance, the beginning and the end. “Thus the people’s repentance and YHWH’s forgiveness are interrelated. On the one hand, YHWH forgives everyone who seeks him, who returns back to him. YHWH does not forgive because a person returns, but a person is urged to come back to YHWH because YHWH forgives... On the other hand, the experience of forgiveness is obtainable, and the reestablishment of the relationship is possible, only through the return to YHWH” (ibid., 74). See also Arvid S. Kapelrud, “The Main Concern of Second Isaiah,” *VT* 32 (1982) 50–58.

It is no longer necessary within critical scholarship to rehearse in detail the arguments for the exilic/post-exilic setting of Deutero-Isaiah, whatever one thinks of the redactional, literary, or theological unity of the canonical Book of Isaiah.³ The prophet does not hide the fact that he is speaking to the exilic community in Babylon and, in the latter chapters, to a post-exilic community in Israel. The person or, more likely, the group of persons responsible for Deutero-Isaiah thought of themselves as Isaiah's disciples who were uniquely qualified to speak into a new historical circumstance a message of hope informed by, among others, the teachings of Isaiah of Jerusalem (50:4–5, cf. 8:16).⁴ Thus, in this section, we briefly lay out the historical context and the literary shape of Deutero-Isaiah.

³ See Roy F. Melugin, *The Formation of Isaiah 40–55* (BZAW 141; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1976) 175–78; Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 325–30; Ronald E. Clements, “Beyond Tradition-History: Deutero-Isaianic Development of First Isaiah's Themes,” *JSOT* 31 (1985) 95–113; Christopher R. Seitz, “Royal Promises in the Canonical Books of Isaiah and the Psalms,” in his *Word without End: The Old Testament as Abiding Theological Witness* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 1990) 229–46; Hugh G. M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah's Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).

⁴ Rainer Albertz (“Darius in place of Cyrus: The First Edition of Deutero-Isaiah (Isaiah 40.1–52.12) in 521 BCE,” *JSOT* 27.3 [2003] 371–83, here 373, n. 7) points out that the opening command to console YHWH's people is to a plurality, pointing potentially to a prophetic group. He also notes that Isa 50:4–9 may reflect the experience of a prophetic group of disciples, possibly responsible for Deutero-Isaiah. But the evidence is far from conclusive, as Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer (*For the Comfort of Zion: The Geographical and Theological Location of Isaiah 40–55* [VTSupp 139; Leiden: Brill, 2011] 13–32) has shown. She writes, “Given this inconclusive data, it follows that it is even more difficult to speak of ‘the prophet’ or ‘Second Isaiah’ as the author of Isa 40–45, even though he/she may very well have existed. Rather, it is preferable to speak of anonymous (prophetic) author(s) of Isa 40–55 or parts thereof” (ibid., 25). While acknowledging the complexity of the issue, I will refer to the prophet(s) as “Deutero-Isaiah” or simple “the prophet” as a heuristic construct.

A. Historical Context

The issue of the historical context in which Deutero-Isaiah composed and into which he delivered his message is intimately related to the question of the content of the message. But in order not to bog down the discussion unnecessarily, let us first survey the historical circumstances of the Babylonian exilic community and the early postexilic community in Judah among whom Deutero-Isaiah was active before we turn our attention to the issue of literary shape. In this, I follow the recent work by Rainer Albertz, whose historical reconstruction satisfactorily accounts for the major compositional and redactional stages of Deutero-Isaiah.⁵

There were three deportations from Judah to Babylon, first to Tel-abib by the River Chebar and subsequently to other towns, in 597, 587, and 582. In the first deportation of 597, the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar deported Jehoiachin, the son of King Jehoiakim who had rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar and incurred his fury, and members of the Judean upper class. At that time, Nebuchadnezzar appointed Zedekiah vassal king over Judah. A decade later, when Zedekiah rebelled against Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar personally led a military campaign against Jerusalem. The outcome was the utter destruction of Jerusalem, the Temple, and the mass deportation of the Judean population in 587. At that time, with the aim of maintaining control of Judah as a line of defense against Egyptian incursion, Nebuchadnezzar established a satellite government in Mizpah under Gedaliah. A few years later in 582, a faction led by Ishmael ben Nethaniah, who belonged to a collateral line of the royal family, killed Gedaliah. There was a third

⁵ Rainer Albertz *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.* (trans. David Green; SBL 3; Atlanta: SBL, 2003) 45–138, 376–433.

deportation at that time, “probably best understood as a punitive action carried out by Babylon for the murder of Gedaliah.”⁶ The exact number of those deported is a matter of continued debate.⁷ To war, to voluntary migration to Egypt, to deportation to Babylon, and to execution, Judah likely lost about half its population between 600 and 580 B.C.E. The Babylonian golah alone is estimated to have numbered about 20,000, approximately a quarter of the Judean population of 80,000 circa 600. “In truth, the exile meant a severe bloodletting for Judah.”⁸

The political, psychological, and religious trauma suffered by the exilic community cannot be overstated. The exile meant a tremendous rip in the historical, theological, and social fabric of Israel. Nevertheless, “[i]t would appear... that after some initial difficulties the legal and economic situation of the Babylonian golah was far from oppressive... The knowledge that the Babylonian golah at the end of the exile was in a position to make a sizable financial contribution to Jerusalem (Zech 6:10–11; cf. Ezra 2:69; 8:30) and the fact that only a limited number were prepared to return demonstrate that most of the Babylonian golah had found a way to make a good livelihood during their distant exile.”⁹ The Judean deportees, likely joined by Israelites and other Judeans deported earlier by the Assyrians, lived in “various towns grouped together either by family (Ezra 2:59) or occupation.”¹⁰ The organization into family and

⁶ Ibid., 74–75.

⁷ Ibid., 81–90.

⁸ Ibid., 90.

⁹ Ibid., 102.

¹⁰ Ibid., 100.

ethnic groups in dedicated towns allowed the majority of the Babylonian golah not to assimilate, though not a few likely chose to do so.¹¹ They maintained their ethnic and religious identity through various markers, including the ritual circumcision of male infants, the observation of a distinctive dietary code, and the observation of the Sabbath as a day of rest. The exilic community seems to have taken Jeremiah's advice to heart and flourished in the land of their sojourn (Jer 29:4–9). Though this was not easy, they also maintained their faith in YHWH.

Despite relative economic security, it is clear that the exilic community was not all contentment. Their high literary output, ranging from bitter laments to grand and hopeful visions of restoration, testifies to this.¹² The community's economic health provided the opportunity for the learned individuals of the golah (especially from the first forced migration in 597) to give voice to the trauma of forced migration and to the hope of return and restoration. This was no less true toward the end of the exilic period.

The return of the Babylonian golah to Jerusalem marks the end of the exilic period. The historical reconstruction of this period, when exactly the exiled came back to Jerusalem and under what circumstances, remains a topic of continued curiosity and debate. The first possible date of return is associated with the rise of the Persian king Cyrus. He gained control of the Median Empire in the middle of the sixth century and successfully advanced toward Babylon. In 539, he peacefully entered Babylon and was hailed as her liberator. According to Ezra and the Chronicler, the momentous event of Cyrus' overtake of the Neo-Babylonian Empire and his decree authorizing the return of a

¹¹ Ibid., 105–106.

¹² For a recent assessment of the literary output of the exilic period, see Carr, *Formation of the Hebrew Bible*, 225–303; and Schmid, *Old Testament*, 115–39.

group of Israelites to Jerusalem mark the end of the exile and the beginning of the restoration period (Ezra 1:1–4; cf. 6:3–5; 2 Chron 36:22–23). Deutero-Isaiah’s Cyrus oracle (44:24–45:8) is attributable to the optimism of this time period. According to this tradition, it was Cyrus who decreed that the Temple in Jerusalem be rebuilt and sent a group of Judean exiles to Jerusalem to do so.¹³

A second tradition, reflected in Haggai, Zechariah 1–8, and Ezra 6, associates the end of the exilic period more closely with Darius. In 522, while Cambyses, Cyrus’ son, was in Egypt, a certain Gaumata led a successful revolt for the Persian throne. When news of Gaumata’s coup reached Cambyses, he made his way back to Persis but died en route. Gaumata too was assassinated later the same year by a group of conspirators that included Darius. Once enthroned as emperor of Persia, Darius initiated a number of reforms and proved to be an effective ruler. He organized the Persian Empire into twenty satrapies, creating a hierarchical structure of government, and reformed the tax system so as to guarantee “the Persian state a set income and [to provide] his subjects with a degree of legal protection against the state.”¹⁴ Overall, he sought to “strengthen local regimes

¹³ Sara Japhet (“Exile and Restoration in the Book of Chronicles” in *The Crisis of Israelite Religion: Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times* [eds. Bob Beking & Marjo C. A. Korpel; Leiden: Brill, 1999] 33–44) argues that the Chronicler disagrees with the vision of restoration as articulated by the Ezra-Nehemiah tradition. Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles, she argues, should not be regarded as forming a single tradition. Among other details, Japhet’s argument focuses on the canonical placement of Chronicles after Ezra-Nehemiah. The Chronicler placed his work after Ezra-Nehemiah, despite the fact that it deals with events prior to the narrative of Ezra-Nehemiah, ending exactly where Ezra begins, in order to deny the validity of Ezra-Nehemiah’s vision of restoration and to state that the true restoration lies yet in the years to come. On the more limited issue of when the exile ended, however, Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles belong to the same tradition.

¹⁴ Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 119.

and use the resources of the empire to support politically important regions.”¹⁵ Judah was counted among the regions important to the empire, probably as a line of defense against Egypt. Thus in 522/521 Darius appointed Zerubbabel, a Davidide, governor of Judah and Joshua high priest and commissioned them to lead a group back to Jerusalem. One of their task was to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. Thus, in the year 520, the foundation for the Temple was laid in Jerusalem. It might be said that the exile ends in 520, with the enthusiastic support of Darius and with the hard work of rebuilding the Temple begun.¹⁶

Back in Jerusalem, there was initially practical and theological resistance to rebuilding the Temple, leading to a few years’ delay, but prophetic support and rising national zeal assuaged doubts and even aroused enthusiasm.¹⁷ The Second Temple was dedicated in 515. However, Zerubbabel, on whom were laid national hope, was done away with by the Persians. The following story belongs squarely to the postexilic period.

B. Literary Shape of Deutero-Isaiah

Deutero-Isaiah is not clearly marked off as an independent literary unit within the Book of Isaiah. That it is an independent unit, not authored by either the eighth century Isaiah of Jerusalem or by the post-exilic author(s) of Trito-Isaiah, is a hypothesis of critical scholarship that is widely, though not unanimously, accepted. Bernhard Duhm

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 125–28.

¹⁷ Ibid., 128.

was first to divide the Book of Isaiah into Proto-Isaiah (Isaiah 1–39), Deutero-Isaiah (40–55), and Trito-Isaiah (56–66).¹⁸ There exists near consensus concerning the divide between Proto- and Deutero-Isaiah, though the exact nature of the connection, how much Deutero-Isaiah fashioned his own message as a continuation of Proto-Isaiah and what role Deutero-Isaiah had in redacting Proto-Isaiah, remains an active and productive topic of research.¹⁹ More controversial is the divide between Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah. The proximity of the historical circumstances, both potentially having been composed in postexilic Judah, shared compositional technique, common literary style, and other factors indicate that some sort of redactional or compositional unity binds the two parts.²⁰ Nevertheless, the thematic and tonal differences and structural observations justify our treating Deutero-Isaiah as a theological and literary unit distinct from Trito-Isaiah.²¹

Deutero-Isaiah itself can be divided roughly into two sections. Isaiah 40–48 contain oracles that center around the theme of Israel’s deliverance out of Babylon and reflect the hopes and concerns of an exilic, Babylonian community. The focus in Isaiah 49–55 shifts to Zion and reflects the concerns of an expectant late exilic community in Babylon and/or an early postexilic community in Judah. This double focus has fueled the

¹⁸ D. Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja: übersetzt und erklärt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1892) viii–xiv. It was Döderlein (1775) and Eichhorn (1783) who first argued for the independence of Isaiah 40–66 from Isaiah 1–39, and ibn Ezra already in the twelfth century expressed doubt concerning the unity of the Book of Isaiah.

¹⁹ For a review of the various positions on this issue, see Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 48–50.

²⁰ On this, see Benjamin Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) 187–95, and Shalom M. Paul, *Isaiah 40–66: Translation and Commentary* (ECC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012) 5–12.

²¹ See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 69–71.

ongoing debate about the provenance of Deutero-Isaiah and about the date of its composition. Was Deutero-Isaiah composed in Babylon or in Judah?²²

According to Albertz, the answer lies somewhere in the middle. Deutero-Isaiah began his prophetic ministry during Nabonidus' still puzzling ten-year sojourn in Tema when Belshazzar ruled as co-regent in Babylon and, more significantly, on the eve of Cyrus's entrance into Babylon. The prophet's earliest prophecies struck a note of high optimism and declared Cyrus YHWH's anointed. The creator God would use the Persian emperor Cyrus to redeem his chosen people, Israel (Isa 44:24–45:8). However, Cyrus did not fulfill Deutero-Isaiah's high hopes for return. Cyrus was interested in the border regions, including the restoration of their ruined temples, and implemented the Persian policy of (limited) religious tolerance. These facets of Cyrus' imperial policy benefited the Babylonian *golah* and fueled the high optimism of Deutero-Isaiah's prophecies of an imminent return to Judah. However, Cyrus' attention "focused on bringing the border land between Persia/Media and Babylonia back under cultivation" and did not extend south to Judah and Jerusalem.²³ Cyrus' magnanimity toward the YHWH cult was limited to returning the cultic vessels that were taken from the Jerusalem Temple (Ezra 1:7–8; 5:14) and to unfulfilled plans and promises of personnel and financial support for rebuilding the Jerusalem Temple. The foundation for the Temple may have been laid under Cyrus, but the work was not finished until years later (Ezra 5:15–16). The result was a period of disappointment, doubt, and possibly backlash against the Deutero-Isaianic prophetic circle within the exilic community.

²² For a history of scholarship on this issue, see Tiemeyer, *Comfort*, 32–51.

²³ Albertz, *Isaiah in Exile*, 123.

Despite the persecution, Deutero-Isaiah continued to believe in YHWH's imminent salvation and persevered in preaching a message of return from Babylon and the restoration of Jerusalem. He did not first preach, as some have argued, a redemption that was curtailed midway, leaving Israel free but stranded in the desert. From the beginning, exit implied return for the prophet, and return the restoration of Jerusalem (40:1–2; 44:26–28; 52:7–10, 11–12). The prophet made significant updates to his initial oracles in response to the volatile historical circumstances. However, the overall shape of his message remained constant: exit, return, and restoration.

The first major update after the disappointment of Cyrus and the first written edition of Deutero-Isaiah's prophecies, comprised of 40:1–52:12, were made in Babylon during the final years of the exilic period, that is, in the years 522–520.²⁴ The primary update concerned the messianic figure of Cyrus. The prophet either updated old oracles about Cyrus' role in YHWH's redemptive plan or composed new oracles in which Darius, not Cyrus, would play the role of YHWH's agent on the plane of history. This time, the prophet was careful not to mention Darius by name and referred to him by figures. A representative passage is Isa 48:1–16, in which the prophet exhorts his audience to embrace the rule of an unnamed new king, possibly Darius.²⁵ YHWH called him, loves him, and will make his plans a success.

The second major update and the second written edition of Deutero-Isaiah, which brought the collection close to its canonical form, were made in Judah during the early

²⁴ For a detailed argument on this issue, see *ibid.*, 376–425.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 398, 417–18.

years of the postexilic period before 515, when the Second Temple was dedicated.²⁶ The new prophecies focused on Zion and presented a defense of the prophetic message as delays in the fulfillment of the proclaimed redemption spawned new disappointment and doubt. There was another important change. Deutero-Isaiah began to divorce hope for salvation from world political figures like Cyrus and Darius and to place it in the efficacy of God's word and the prophetic community responsible for its communication (see 55:10–11; 54:17). Trito-Isaiah lightly edited Deutero-Isaiah.²⁷

In sum, the initial flowering of Deutero-Isaiah dates back to the eve of Cyrus' peaceful conquest of Babylon. The first edition, Isaiah 40–52*, was composed in Babylon during the early years of Darius' reign. The second edition, which approximates the canonical Deutero-Isaiah (Isaiah 40–55), was completed in Jerusalem before the completion of the Second Temple. In the following section, we will demonstrate the subtle yet profound impact the sea myth pattern had on the formation of Deutero-Isaiah, in particular the first edition.

II. The Sea Myth Pattern and Deutero-Isaiah

We turn now to the impact of the sea myth pattern of conflict and goodly consequences on Deutero-Isaiah's formulation of his message. What we will find is that the various elements of the sea myth pattern is scattered throughout Deutero-Isaiah. We are not dealing with a narrative or systematic presentation of salvific events but with a

²⁶ Ibid., 428–33.

²⁷ One clear indication of Trito-Isaiah's activity in Deutero-Isaiah may be seen in Isa 48:22, a sectarian slogan that is also found in Isa 57:21 and reflects the spirit of Isa 66:24.

collection of prophetic oracles that addresses the various fears and doubts of the exilic community and presents episodic visions of the coming salvation.²⁸ Nevertheless, the vignettes of both past and future events come together to adumbrate a clear thematic arc that moves from chaos to creation, bondage to liberty, Babylon to Zion. The prophet explicitly points to creation and the exodus in formulating his message and implicitly, at a deeper level, to the sea myth. Moving between the old and the new and binding them together in a dialectic of ontology and hermeneutics, Deutero-Isaiah transforms the sea myth pattern to comfort and to encourage a community longing for salvation. We first turn to the dialectic between the old and the new.

A. Metaphoric Dialectic Between the Old and the New

The twin motif of former and latter things occupies a significant portion of the prophetic message of Deutero-Isaiah.²⁹ The prophet takes up the theme as often as he

²⁸ Katie M. Heffelfinger (*I Am Large, I Contain Multitudes: Lyric Cohesion and Conflict in Second Isaiah* [Biblical Interpretation Series 105; Leiden: Brill, 2011]) argues that Deutero-Isaiah may be read as lyric poetry, which she defines as “that subcategory of poetic literature that is characterized by the absence of plot or discursive argument, and thus must overcome the fragmentation produced by its commonly paratactic flow so as to achieve a sense of cohesion through other means.” I agree that story “lies in the background [of Deutero-Isaiah] but is not the central focus of the poem’s expression” (ibid., 45). Rather, the paratactic syntax, not only of individual oracles but of the collection of oracles as a whole, invites the reader to reconstruct a plot, or *muthos*, out of its disjointed elements and to find the meaning in both the individual parts as well as in the totality of the paratactic collection. This, in part, is what we argued exists in the Psalter as a whole, the collection of distinct psalms adumbrating an overarching plot.

²⁹ C. R. North (“The ‘Former Things’ and the ‘New Things’ in Deutero-Isaiah,” in *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy: Presented to Professor Theodore H. Robinson, Litt.D., D.D., D.Th., by the Society for Old Testament Study, on His Sixty-fifth Birthday, August 9th 1946* [ed. H. H. Rowley; Edinburgh: Clark, 1950] 111–126, here 111–15)

takes up the other great themes, exodus and creation, on which below. The motif was productive for the prophet, and he used it in at least three distinct, though related, ways.

First, the prophet used the motif of former and latter things as a theological attack against the impotence of foreign idols and as a defense of YHWH's genuine divinity. He links the ability to foretell what is to happen in the future to divinity and argues that the foreign gods, who have not foretold future events, are no gods and, conversely, that YHWH, who has, alone is God. Isa 41:21–24 is exemplary of the prophet's argument against the divinity of the foreign gods.

²¹ “Set forth your case,” says YHWH,
“Present your strongest arguments,” says the King of Jacob.
²² “Let them present and tell us
That which is to happen.
The former things, do tell what they are
That we might consider.
Or declare to us what is to come
That we might know their outcome.³⁰
²³ Do tell what is to happen hereafter
That we might know that you are gods.
Do good or evil
That we might be terrified and afraid.
Alas, you are less than nothing
And your works nothing at all;
whoever chooses you is an abomination.” (Isa 41:21–24)

The rhetorical setting is that of a trial. Within the forensic context, YHWH and the prophetic “we” directly address the deities of the foreign nations and challenge them to defend their divinity. But, they are not given a chance to speak or act. The assumption is that they cannot, and, in fact, the speakers are not interested in the reply. The mock-

identifies these passages as dealing with the motif: Isa 41:21–29; 42:8–9; 43:9, 16–19; 44:6–8; 45:9–13, 20–21; 46:9–11; 48:3–16.

³⁰ Switching the order of the two hemistich of MT 41:22c.

speech rhetorically addresses the gods but in actuality is directed toward the jury, Israelites who have lost faith in YHWH and have begun to think of the foreign gods, especially Marduk, as the true lords of history. The speech aims to convince the jury that the foreign gods are no gods. The prophet's argument is straightforward: Proof of divinity is in the ability to foretell what will happen and to act accordingly (41:23). Since the foreign gods cannot, they are not gods.

As a complement to the argument against the divinity of idols, Deutero-Isaiah also uses the motif of former and latter things in order to defend YHWH's divinity and the trustworthiness of his redemptive plans. Isa 44:6–8 is a clear example of this.

⁶ Thus says YHWH, the King of Israel,
Her Redeemer, YHWH of Hosts,
“I am the first and I am the last.
Besides me, there is no god.
⁷ Who is like me?
Let them tell and set it before me.
Who has announced from time past things to come?³¹
Let them tell us³² what is to come.
⁸ Do not fear, do not be afraid.
Have I not declared to you from before?
I told and you are my witnesses.
Is there a god beside me?
There is no rock. I know of none. (44:6–8)

In these verses, Deutero-Isaiah directly addresses the jury, the unbelieving Israelites, and imposes on them the burden of proving the divinity of the foreign gods. At the same time, he denies them the ability to do so. Not only is there no evidence to be produced, the jury, he says, are themselves witnesses to YHWH's foretelling: “I told and you are my

³¹ MT of this line is jumbled. So reading: משמיע מעולם אתיות. See Paul, *Isaiah 40–66*, 230.

³² Reading לנו for MT למו. Cf. Targum לנא.

witnesses.” The prophet, at least rhetorically, makes faith in YHWH the only viable option for the Israelites. Von Rad writes, “Deutero-Isaiah puts in bold relief the question of who is the controller of world-history – the Lord of history is he who can allow the future to be told in advance. This is something the gods of the heathen cannot do, and therefore they are ‘nothing.’ In Jahweh’s contest with idols, the power to foretell proves his specific difference from them.”³³ Furthermore, according to the prophet, the Israelites are themselves witnesses to this difference.³⁴ To deny that YHWH is God would be tantamount to denying themselves.

Deutero-Isaiah uses the motif of former and latter things in a second manner to defend his prophetic authority. In Deut 18:20–22, two criteria are provided for determining whether a prophet is a genuine prophet of YHWH.³⁵ First, any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods beside YHWH are, by definition, not YHWH’s prophets and are to be summarily executed (18:20). Second, those who speak in YHWH’s name and so claim to be YHWH’s mediators are subject to a trial: “If a prophet speaks in the name of YHWH but the thing does not happen or come to be, it is a work that YHWH did not speak. The prophet spoke presumptuously” (18:22). Such a prophet, too, is to die. I

³³ Von Rad, *OT Theology*, II:242.

³⁴ It is interesting to note that Deutero-Isaiah does not put forth YHWH’s identity as creator as an explicit argument against the divinity of the idols. Rather, the ability to foretell, for the prophet, is the primary evidence for YHWH’s divinity and against the divinity of foreign gods. Deutero-Isaiah reserves the theme of creation for defining the nature of God’s redemptive powers.

³⁵ Shalom M. Paul (*Isaiah 40–66* [ECC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012] 47) writes, “The influence of Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic literature on the prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah is manifold, encompassing language, style, and ideology.” See *ibid.*, 47–50 and Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 51–55. The overall relationship between Deuteronomy and Deutero-Isaiah permits of the following comparison.

suspect this second criterion is more interested in protecting the sanctity of YHWH's name, making it impossible to associate false prophecy with YHWH, than about identifying false prophets. Nevertheless, it does provide one way of identifying the genuine prophet of YHWH as one who both speaks in the name of YHWH and whose prophecies come true. Deutero-Isaiah uses the motif of former and latter things to defend his prophetic authority against charges of idolatrous and presumptuous prophecy.

If Deutero-Isaiah was accused of idolatrous prophecy, his strong attack on the divinity of foreign gods may be interpreted as a defense against such an accusation: Deutero-Isaiah speaks in the name of YHWH alone, for he alone is God. The charge of idolatrous prophecy, however, seems unlikely. If Deutero-Isaiah was attacked, it was on charge of speaking presumptuously in the name of God. It is against this charge that he would have used the motif of former and latter things to defend his prophetic office. In Isa 42:9, the prophet writes:

⁹ The former things, they have come to pass.
And I am telling you new things;
Before they emerge
I announce [them] to you. (42:9; cf. 48:3–8)

C. R. North argues that the “former things” in Isa 42:9 (and in 48:3) refer to recent events, namely Cyrus’ military victories, of which Deutero-Isaiah correctly foretold (42:1–5).³⁶

Against accusations to the contrary and in support of his new prophetic word, Deutero-Isaiah here points to a past example of genuine prophecy as proof of his prophetic

³⁶ North, “Former Things,” 123–24. Antoon Schoors (“Les choses antérieures et les choses nouvelles dans les oracles Deutéro-Isaïens,” *ETL* 40 [1964] 19–47, here 41) argues against North and others that in Isa 48:3–11, “rien n’indique qu’il s’agit des premières victoires de Cyrus.” He does, however, agree with North that Isa 42:9 refers to Cyrus’ career (*ibid.*, 35–40).

authority. That his prophecy is trustworthy and that he does not speak presumptuously in YHWH's name is demonstrated by the fact that "the former things" came to pass as he had prophesied. Furthermore, the prophet presents past success as grounds for faith in his new prophetic word. Just as YHWH spoke a true word through Deutero-Isaiah in the past, so is he doing again now: "Before they emerge / I announce [them] to you."

In this way, Deutero-Isaiah links his prophetic authority to the divinity of God: YHWH is God because he is able to foretell the future, and Deutero-Isaiah claims to be the mediator of God's word (50:4–5).

¹⁰ As when rain falls, or snow, from the heavens,
it does not return there without satiating the land,

¹¹ Thus is my word that goes forth from my mouth.
It will not return to me empty,
Without accomplishing what I purpose
and succeeding that for which I sent it. (55:10–11)

God is the speaker of this oracle. The word is God's word. But Deutero-Isaiah, who receives and delivers God's word, is also speaking about his own prophetic word. Prophetic speech, he claims, is effective language, able to bring about the things about which it speaks, because it is ultimately God's word. It is widely argued that the prophetic office came under increased scrutiny, doubt, and rejection during the exilic and the post-exilic eras.³⁷ In response, Deutero-Isaiah boldly equates his word to God's word. He thereby wagers his life to defend the veracity of his prophetic office. He, in essence, declares: My prophetic word, you can either trust it as God's word, trustworthy and efficacious, or you can reject the prophet and his word as presumptuous and false. The

³⁷ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel: Revised and Enlarged* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996) 148–61, 194–212.

prophet wagers his life on the trustworthiness of his word of salvation in hope that his contemporaries might believe it and conduct their lives according to its message.

The third way in which Deutero-Isaiah uses the motif of former and latter things is not unrelated to the previous ways but is distinct from them. The prophet uses the motif to recall past events as metaphors for present and future events. As von Rad put it, “the proper significance of the [present and future] event only becomes clear when it is seen within that context of the saving history in which Deutero-Isaiah himself set it.”³⁸ That is to say, the former things, creation and the exodus especially, provide the context in which the full significance of the saving events of today and tomorrow become intelligible. Former things and latter things are brought together for illumination, to illumine the salvific nature of the unfolding events and to enable extrapolation of the events to follow. The old is the hermeneutical key for recognizing the significance and for deciphering the plot of events about to unfold.

An example of this use suffices at this point. We turn to Isa 43:16–21:

¹⁶ Thus says YHWH,
The one who makes a way in the sea
And a path in the powerful waters,
¹⁷ The one who brings out rider³⁹ and horse,
Army and soldier.
Together they lie down no longer to rise.
They are extinguished, quenched like a wick.
¹⁸ Do not remember the former things,
The things of old, do not consider.
¹⁹ I am about to do a new thing.

³⁸ Von Rad, *OT Theology*, II:246.

³⁹ The unpointed רכב can be read as רוכב (“rider”) without mater lectionis. This would require no emendation of the MT. If read in this way, the inverted citation – according to Seidel’s Rule – of Exod 15:1 becomes more explicit. Against reading רכב as רוכב, we note the use of matres lectionis in הנותן and המוציא.

Now it emerges. Do you perceive it?
 Indeed I will make a way in the wilderness,
 Rivers in the desert.
²⁰ The wild beast will honor me,
 The jackal and the ostrich,
 For I provide water in the wilderness,
 Rivers in the desert,
 To give drink to my chosen people,
²¹ A people I created for myself,
 they will recount my praise.

Verses 16–17 allude to YHWH’s deeds of old, namely his victory over Egypt at the Sea Event as recounted in Exodus 14–15. The path in the sea reflects the Priestly account of a split sea, and the phrase “rider and horse” (רכב וסוס) echoes the poet’s “horse and its rider” (סוס ורכבו; Exod 15:1), as does the reference to the army (חיל; cf. Isa 43:17 and Exod 15:4). Note too that verse 21a is almost a direct quotation of Exod 15:13aβ, 16bβ, as we noted above. Allusions to the Sea Event, especially to the Song at the Sea, thus form an *inclusio* around the entire pericope and define the context in which the new thing that now emerges is to be understood. Important to note in this vein is YHWH’s participial epithets: הַנּוֹתֵן, הַמּוֹצִיא (43:16, 17). YHWH is not described as one who once did these things but as one who continues to make a path in the sea and to destroy chariot and horse.⁴⁰ In other words, YHWH’s past deeds, that is history, continue to define him. History is part of the divine character. Thus, not only is the new thing set within a literary, hermeneutical context of the Sea Event, YHWH who is to orchestrate and perform the new thing is the very same God of the Sea Event. Through these clues, on the one hand, the prophet encourages an identification of the new thing with the former things. The new is the old.

⁴⁰ For a helpful discussion of the use of participles in Deutero-Isaiah, see Stuhlmüller, *Creative Redemption*, 48–56.

On the other, against this implicit identification between the old and the new, the prophet explicitly discourages comparison: “Do not remember the former things, / The things of old, do not consider.” This injunction functions in two seemingly paradoxical ways. By repeatedly referring to the former things, the things of old, the prophet ensures that the reader notices the references to the Sea Event and encourages comparison between the Sea Event and the coming salvation. At the same time, having made present the memory of the Sea Event, the injunction emphasizes the incomparableness between the new and the old. The new is not the old. In sum, the injunction rhetorically forbids comparison between the old and the new while at the same time, especially given the other literary features we discussed above, ensuring that comparison takes place. It encourages a dialectical hermeneutics between the old and the new.

How does this hermeneutics work? The prophet’s descriptions of the new thing, from the way in the wilderness to the creation of YHWH’s people, are traditional or adaptations of traditional themes. Nothing is really new because the one who is about to act is the God of old who awakens in the present to do what is in his character to do. At the same time, the incomparability lies precisely in the fact of repetition. The fact of repetition answers two common laments: “How long, O YHWH?” (Ps 89:46) and “Where is your steadfast love of old?” (Ps 89:49). The God of old, the God of fame, is to act now in the present. The newness is in the fact of a new dispensation of familiar grace, fresh rain and not the remembrance of things past. The prophet recalls the past, for the past teaches us the nature of God who is about to act, and he dismisses it because remembrance pales in comparison to present experience. “A remarkable aspect of Deutero-Isaiah’s message is that on the one hand he so depicts the departure of the exiles

from Babylon as to recall the first exodus from Egypt and the miracles which accompanied it; yet he is also aware that Jahweh's new revelation is something which cannot possibly be represented – no one is to imagine that he knew of it and anticipated it on the basis of the earlier events."⁴¹ To put it simply: The old is and is not the new. The old makes it possible to recognize the true nature of the unfolding events: the imminent departure from Babylon is an event of salvation like the exodus from Egypt. It also makes it possible to see beyond the immediate future and extrapolate, on the basis of established historical pattern, the events to follow: Exit precedes the return to Israel, the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple, and the reign of God. But the remembrance of the old and its recognition cannot compare to the fresh experience of God in the here and now. Deutero-Isaiah invites his audience to see the old in the new but at the same time emphasizes the newness of the new, which is that it is a repetition, a reactualization of the old.

B. Creation, Exodus, and the Sea Myth Pattern

The prophet draws on a variety of textual and thematic traditions in order to fashion his message of salvation. The prophet's use of textual traditions is wide-ranging. He draws on the writings of former prophets (including Proto-Isaiah but more extensively from Jeremiah), the psalms, and Pentateuchal traditions.⁴² He alludes, echoes, and interprets them using a variety of techniques to articulate a learned and alluring message

⁴¹ Von Rad, *OT Theology*, II:247.

⁴² For a full treatment of intertextuality in Deutero-Isaiah, see Sommer, *Isaiah 40–66*. See also Paul, *Isaiah 40–66*, 44–59.

of hope and redemption. The result is a text whose depth of theological insight, not the least being his clear articulation of monotheism (45:5, 14, 21–22; 46:9), and literary artistry continue to inspire and awe today.

The traditional themes Deutero-Isaiah draws on are as wide-ranging as his use of textual traditions, but two may be singled out as particularly important: creation and exodus. References to the exodus tradition abound in Deutero-Isaiah, and it is not without reason that Israel's return from the Babylonian exile, in part due to the prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah, is called the second exodus. The prophet repeatedly recalls the first exodus from Egypt, calling them the old or former thing (cf. 43:16–21). What he is doing is offering the exodus from Egypt as the interpretative paradigm, a metaphor, for conceptualizing the imminent salvation and for extrapolating the salvific events beyond the horizon, that is, for recognizing in the imminent exit from Babylon the beginning of a total pattern, which includes the journey through the desert and the eventual settlement in Judah. The entire exodus pattern (the slavery under Egypt, the exodus therefrom, and the entrance into Canaan) is offered as an analogy for the exile in Babylon, the exit therefrom, and the return to Israel. The rhetoric of dismissal, "Remember not the things of old" (43:18), evinces the prophet's desire to present the new thing, the second exodus, as incomparably greater than the first. The experience of the new will replace the memory of the old. In this, Jeremiah's prophecy that YHWH will henceforth be identified with the second and not the first exodus well articulates the spirit of Deutero-Isaiah:

¹⁴ Therefore, days are coming, declares YHWH, when it will no longer be said, "As YHWH lives who brought up the Israelites from the land of Egypt," ¹⁵ but, "As YHWH lives who brought up and led the seed of the

house of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where he had scattered them.” (Jer 16:14–15; 23:7–8)⁴³

Just as YHWH attained a new identity through his actions in the time of the exodus, so too does he attain a renewed identity through his salvific actions in ending the Babylonian exile. YHWH is not (only) the God of the exodus from Egypt. He is (more) the God of the new exodus from Babylon and, importantly for Jeremiah who was forcibly taken to Egypt, from all the lands.

Creation also plays an important role in shaping the prophet’s message of redemption. The creation of the cosmos and the creation of Israel are repeatedly and explicitly attributed to YHWH (40:28; 42:5; 43:1, 7, 15; etc.), and there are references to YHWH’s conflict and victory over the primordial chaos monsters, Sea, Dragon, and Rahab (50:2; 51:9–11). YHWH’s authority and ability to save Israel stem in large part from his power over creation. That is to say, the promised redemption of Israel is “creative redemption.”⁴⁴ Creation, with the exodus, is an analogy for Israel’s experience in history, past, present, and future: The destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, the deportation of YHWH’s people, and their exile in foreign soil are analogous to primordial chaos and require the intervention of a creator God to reestablish order and renew creation. Deutero-Isaiah is not only a prophet of the second exodus but also of the second creation.

The importance of both the exodus and creation for Deutero-Isaiah is undeniable. But is there one that is primary? Norman H. Snaith writes with good reason that the

⁴³ Jeremiah 16 is earlier than Deutero-Isaiah. This makes clear that Deutero-Isaiah’s depiction of return from exile as a second exodus is part of a wider tradition.

⁴⁴ Stuhlmüller, *Creative Redemption*.

exodus tradition “is not merely one of the themes.... It is the prophet’s dominant theme... basically... [his] ONE theme, and all else is subservient to it.”⁴⁵ On the other hand, Carroll Stuhlmueller persuasively argues that redemption in Deutero-Isaiah is to be thought primarily in terms of creation and secondarily, if significantly, in terms of the exodus.⁴⁶ It is “creative redemption” more than it is “redemption after the pattern of the exodus.” Who is correct? Is there a way to adjudicate between these two options?

Some have looked to the portrayal of YHWH as Israel’s kinsman redeemer (גואל) for a solution. David Daube argues that the exodus pattern is based on the legal code, particularly on laws governing slaves and slavery, consequently lifting “the exodus out of the sphere of the accidental, the arbitrary, the mythological and, instead, to link it to the norm of eternal validity.”⁴⁷ YHWH redeems (לגא) Israel from slavery and brings her out (צא) by defeating the enemy, Egypt or Rahab, according to his legal obligation toward his kin, Israel. In passing, Daube states that Deutero-Isaiah depicts redemption in conformity to the exodus pattern.⁴⁸ Indeed, the verbal root לגא is used seventeen times in Deutero-Isaiah, all but twice as an active participle describing YHWH or with YHWH as the subject.⁴⁹ According to Deutero-Isaiah, YHWH acts toward Israel, who is

⁴⁵ Cited in *ibid.*, 59.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 59–94.

⁴⁷ Daube, *Exodus Pattern*, 13.

⁴⁸ Specifically, Daube (*Exodus Pattern*, 28 n.1, 31 n.13) finds that, in Deutero-Isaiah, the verbs לגא (which occurs over twenty times in Isa 40–66) and צא (Isa 49:9; 52:12; 55:12) are used in a way marked by the exodus pattern. Furthermore, he notes that Isa 51:9 identifies Rahab, YHWH’s cosmic foe, with Egypt (*ibid.*, 37).

⁴⁹ In the two exceptions (51:10; 52:3), Israel is the passive subject of redemption, presumably by God.

metaphorically enslaved under Babylon, as a kinsman redeemer should toward his kin and as he had done in the time of the exodus. YHWH is Israel's perfect kinsman redeemer. The force of law defines the way YHWH acts in the time of the exodus and the exile.

Carroll Stuhlmueller directly addresses the relationship between YHWH's figuration as Israel's kinsman redeemer and as creator.⁵⁰ As may be expected from the title of his work, *Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah*, Stuhlmueller privileges the theme of creation and relegates YHWH as kinsman redeemer to a secondary role, that of limiting the universalism implied by creation. For Stuhlmueller, YHWH as Israel's kinsman redeemer renders creative redemption "an act that is *obligatory* and *personal*," as Daube already noted.⁵¹ As a kinsman redeemer, YHWH is bound by law to redeem Israel, and YHWH is so bound because Israel is his people (40:1), his children (43:6; 45:11; 49:15), servant (41:8–10), and wife (54:4–8). However, for Stuhlmueller, the nature of the redemption remains fundamentally creative.

It should be noted that Stuhlmueller's subordination of the figure of YHWH as a kinsman redeemer under the creator YHWH has a theological consequence. Though YHWH's creative redemption initially takes the form of redeeming a family member, Israel, as a consequence of the kinsman redeemer metaphor, the universalism of creation is not ultimately suppressed. Rather, the familial redemption of Israel becomes the means toward the creative redemption of the entire world. He sums it up in this way: "from the new redemption of Israel, to the creation of the entire world of Israel; from the

⁵⁰ Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption*, 105–23.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 123.

creation of the entire world of Israel, to the creation of the entire world *simpliciter*; from the creation of the entire world, to the redemption of this world.”⁵² Couched within the universalism of creation, YHWH’s obligation to a particular people does not remain particular but tends toward the universal. Israel, according to StuhlmueLLer, is instrumental to YHWH’s universal redemptive purposes, which nevertheless has Israel as its first and primary object of salvation.

Martien A. Halvorson-Taylor comes to the opposite conclusion from StuhlmueLLer: YHWH’s kinship, thus his role as Israel’s kinsman redeemer, is primary in determining the nature and scope of YHWH’s salvific actions. It should be noted that Halvorson-Taylor is interested in metaphors for exile and the metaphorization of exile in the Hebrew Bible generally and does not treat Deutero-Isaiah at great length.⁵³ She does, however, focus on the figure of YHWH as a kinsman redeemer in Deutero-Isaiah. She argues that the metaphor, “YHWH is Israel’s kinsman redeemer,” controls the message of

⁵² Ibid., 237.

⁵³ Halvorson-Taylor (*Enduring Exile*, 108) argues that “exile itself can become a metaphor for life before and without the גאָל.” First, she argues that exile is characterized as a condition that necessitates the intervention of a גאָל, such as slavery or the miserable state of a “woman who needs redemption through marriage” (ibid., 118). To use the binary and unidirectional language of I. A. Richards, “any miserable condition that requires a גאָל” is the vehicle for the tenor, “exile.” Second, this relationship is flipped so that “exile” can act as the vehicle for the tenor, “any miserable condition that requires a גאָל.” Halvorson-Taylor finds that this reversal between vehicle and tenor occurs in the post-exilic era when “exile” is a historical memory and “miserable conditions that require a גאָל” are present facts. YHWH remains Israel’s גאָל throughout the contingencies of history. Halvorson-Taylor might have noted that the flipping of the vehicle-tenor relationship is not necessarily a historical development but the actualization of the internal logic and structure of metaphor. To say that “A is B” is also to say that “B is A.” Had she made the link between “exile” and “creation,” she would have noted in addition that primordial chaos is used as a metaphor for exile, and vice versa, in part explaining the concentrated use of the rare word תהו in Deutero-Isaiah (40:17, 23; 41:29; 44:9; 45:18, 19; 49:4; 59:4; cf. 24:10; 29:21; 34:11). The creation-related word תהו is used as a metaphor within Deutero-Isaiah.

Deutero-Isaiah. It is the root metaphor to various secondary metaphors: YHWH “as redeemer from debt slavery (see also, 43:1–7), as redeemer from Egypt, and perhaps in other ways too – for example, as a husband who redeems by marriage (54:1–8).”⁵⁴ For Halvorson-Taylor, YHWH as creator is but one of the several secondary metaphors associated with YHWH the redeemer. In discussing the formula *עם זו גאלת/קניית/יצרת* (respectively, Exod 15:13/Exod 15:16/Isa 43:21), she mentions that *יצר* can be and is used in parallel with *ברא* (Isa 43:1) in Deutero-Isaiah. She does not dwell on that point, however. Rather, she quickly subordinates the creative aspect of the formula under the root metaphor of familial redemption by noting that “the exodus tradition is itself framed in language that mirrors the law of the release of a debt slave.”⁵⁵ That is to say, the Deutero-Isaianic phrase *עם זו תיצר* is a “riff on” the phrase *עם זו קניית*, which has the primary meaning of “the people whom you acquired,” and not a theologically significant rewriting of the latter that makes the creative aspect of the word *קנה* primary. The root metaphor in Deutero-Isaiah as in Exodus is: YHWH is kinsman redeemer, one who delivers his kin from slavery. For Halvorson-Taylor, the creative nuance is a supplementary theme to the theme of legal redemption.

The effort to coordinate the two interpretative paradigms, exodus and creation, brings us to a seeming impasse. We can argue with equal validity that creation or the exodus is the ground metaphor Deutero-Isaiah uses to depict redemption. Affirming the validity of both is an obvious and correct option: both creation and exodus are operative, even centrally so, in Deutero-Isaiah. Yet, a way forward is suggested by Gerhard von

⁵⁴ Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile*, 116–17.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 116.

Rad. Somewhat loosely but nevertheless suggestively, von Rad notes that Deutero-Isaiah considered creation and the exodus, in particular the Sea Event, as equal and equatable to the sea myth. Noting that YHWH is depicted simultaneously as Israel's redeemer (גואל) and creator (יוצר) in Isa 44:24, he states that "for Deutero-Isaiah the creation of the world and the redemption of Israel both exemplify the same divine dispensation, as if that which happened in the beginning of things, and those 'new things' (Isa. 42:9; 48:6) which are now about to happen to Israel, both result from one and the same divine purpose of redemption."⁵⁶ Writing on the depiction of YHWH's battle with primordial chaos monsters in Isa 51:9–10, he writes, "for Deutero-Isaiah the creation does not belong in a category distinct from that of the deliverance of the Red Sea! The prophet maintains with passionate conviction his belief that what appear theologically to be two distinct acts are in fact one and the same act of the universal redemptive purpose of God... the doctrine of creation and the doctrine of redemption are both included in the one picture of the battle with the primeval dragon."⁵⁷ In other words, von Rad subordinates both creation and the exodus under the sea myth pattern.

With von Rad, I propose that Deutero-Isaiah conceives of Israel's return from exile according to the sea myth pattern of battle, victory, and goodly consequences: creation, temple, and kingship.⁵⁸ That the prophet harks back to creation and the exodus,

⁵⁶ Von Rad, "Theological Problem," 57.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 58.

⁵⁸ Here I must note that von Rad (*OT Theology*, II:241) writes: "We thus see in Deutero-Isaiah a remarkable combination of two traditions [the Exodus tradition and the creation tradition] which originally had nothing to do with one another." I disagree. As we've said repeatedly above, both creation and exodus are intimately connected to the sea myth

in particular to the Sea Event, may be explained by the observation that within Israelite tradition these events best exemplify the sea myth pattern. Creation demonstrates the nature of YHWH's power and the scope of his authority. The exodus from Egypt is proof positive that YHWH can, if willing, act in history for the sake of his people. Furthermore, the (legal) language of kinship provides the enduring reason that YHWH might once again act on Israel's behalf as he did in the past. The prophet offers creation and the exodus as arguments for belief that YHWH will act again in the imminent future to redeem Israel, his people, from their bondage under Babylon. He will again defeat the chaos monster, renew creation, rebuild his temple, and reign as king. Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah is a second exodus. It is also creative – familial, sacral, and kingly. In short, the prophet envisions redemption as a faithful reenactment of the sea myth pattern on the plane of history.⁵⁹

In conclusion, it is worth noting that Deutero-Isaiah is unlikely to have thought consciously in terms of the sea myth pattern. Indeed, he is attributed with perhaps the

pattern. Exodus and creation were connected already in the Sea Event – and is again connected in Deutero-Isaiah.

⁵⁹ Ricoeur (*Symbolism of Evil*, 204) writes, “The Exodus, as we have seen, itself became a source of ‘symbolization’ for the whole Hebrew experience of deliverance from sins, which were themselves compared to the servitude in Egypt; it is History, and no longer the drama of creation, that becomes the active center of symbolism.” In his insightful and in many instances brilliant phenomenological examination of the history of the symbolization of evil in Western culture, Paul Ricoeur overstates the decline of the old myth with the rise of the new myth, the decline of the myth of creation at the rise of the mythologization (Ricoeur would call it symbolization) of Israel's historical experience of exodus. As we discussed above, both the old myth of creation and the new myth of the exodus are alive in Deutero-Isaiah and together repeat, thereby reactualize, the sea myth pattern. The old myth is not vanquished and reduced to symbol within the new historical system of symbolization but remains alive along side the new, even as it lends its symbolic power to the historical. Therefore, I cannot agree that there exist a “discontinuity at the level of ‘type’ of myth” (ibid., 203). The old and the new coexist – even if the new shines with brighter vibrancy.

clearest articulation of monotheism in the Hebrew Bible and the ontological denial of foreign deities: YHWH alone is God (45:5, 14, 21–22; 46:9). What is assumed in the following discussion is that Deutero-Isaiah is well versed in Israelite and ancient Near Eastern traditions, that he is a master reader and interpreter of those traditions, and skillfully used both his knowledge and considerable mastery of language and thought to craft a profound and poignant message for his contemporaries. The result is an articulation that remarkably replicates and transforms the familiar sea myth pattern of conflict and goodly consequences. The argument, in short, is that the sea myth pattern was of such prominence within Israelite and general ancient Near Eastern culture that, one, the traditions from which Deutero-Isaiah drew were already informed by it and, two, that the prophet's picture of perfect redemption, in turn, took on the form of the sea myth pattern.

C. The Sea Myth Pattern in Deutero-Isaiah

Having argued for a subterranean impact of the sea myth pattern on the shaping of the message of Deutero-Isaiah, we are now in a position to analyze this impact in detail. Two related points bear emphasis by way of introduction at this point. First, the sea myth pattern undergoes significant temporal dislocation in order to account for the historical circumstances of exile and the prophet's location within the stream of tradition. The prophet assumes and recalls, as we discussed above, YHWH's accomplishments in creation and in the time of the exodus. Thus, creation is not presented as the result of YHWH's present victory over the aquatic foe, and YHWH does not win kingship

subsequent to combat. Rather, YHWH is already creator and king when he begins to redeem Israel from exile. Salvation is creative because the savior is the creator; and YHWH exercises his authority as king of kings and moves world powers for the sake of Israel. What remains a future event is the founding of the temple, the restoration of Zion, as befits the exilic context. That is to say, Deutero-Isaiah uses the sea myth pattern to speak about various themes – combat, creation, kingship, temple – without strict regard for the sequential aspect of the sea myth pattern. In fact, the mythopoetic way of thinking allowed for sequential and temporal flexibility. Nevertheless, Deutero-Isaiah's belatedness, his inheritance of the sea myth tradition in general and Israelite traditions derived from the sea myth (creation and exodus), required that Deutero-Isaiah adapt the "standard" sea myth pattern better to fit his specific location in tradition history.

The temporal disruption to the sea myth pattern is related to the second point of emphasis. We will discover that there exists a significant mismatch between the sea myth pattern, the metaphorical vehicle, and the historical circumstances of Israel's return, the tenor. It is unclear, for instance, which historical event YHWH's triumph over the watery enemy signifies: Is it Cyrus' peaceful entrance into Babylon, the event of his decree to send a company of Israelites back to Judah, or Darius' ascension to the throne and his decree of return? Even if we were able to identify the historical referent with greater certainty, there would still remain a certain impertinence in equating the drama of the sea battle and the Sea Event to either Cyrus' peaceful "conquest" of Babylon or to either royal decree authorizing a company of Israelites to return to Jerusalem.

Nevertheless, as we will see in greater detail below, the issue of temporal dislocation and the issue of metaphorical mismatch do not undermine our thesis that the

sea myth pattern plays an important role in the thought-world of Deutero-Isaiah. The overall sequence of events – conflict followed by goodly consequences – is maintained through the metaphorical equation of the present situation with past conflicts of creation and exodus. The imminent salvation is presented as the culmination of the chain of events set in motion at creation and at the exodus. God’s conflict with the sea began in the distant past, continued throughout history – punctuated by momentary victory – and will finally come to an end in the near future. Present time resembles the protological⁶⁰ times of creation and exodus because it is a continuation and the definitive repetition of those times.

We will also see that the temporal disruption and the mismatch between the metaphorical vehicle of the sea myth pattern and the tenor of history point simultaneously to the weakness and the power of Deutero-Isaiah’s prophecy. The weakness and the power are one, which is the requirement of a hermeneutics of faith more robust than the one required by the Yahwist of the Sea Event. On the one hand, Deutero-Isaiah appeared overbold to his contemporaries in likening what he believed to be Israel’s imminent salvation from exile to the fullness of creation and the spectacular miracle of the exodus. The mismatch demanded a greater wager on the part of the exilic community than many of the prophet’s contemporaries were willing to risk. The result was considerable resistance and eventual opposition to the prophetic message, especially after the initial disappointment of Cyrus (see Isa 45:9–13). On the other hand, the prophet’s boldness, for those who believed in the prophet’s message, was a gift of a vision of reality that

⁶⁰ Levenson (*Sinai*, 103) defines “protological” events as the “great founding acts, which order reality... partaking of the nature of the beginning of things,” to mirror the term “eschatological.”

transcended the evidence of history and unveiled a deeper secret, the divine power responsible not only for past historical events but also for present and future events. The prophetic word itself becomes the hermeneutical key to comprehending history. In fact, it might be proposed that the prophetic word comes to define a reality more real than historical existence for those who believe, thus underlining the schism between historical reality and prophetic vision whose fuller expression we will see blossom as the apocalyptic imagination.

1. Battle and Victory

Battle between the god of order and the aquatic god of chaos marks the crux of the sea myth, when the downward trajectory of the narrative takes a comedic, upward turn to better things. This is the picture we found in the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle*, the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. We also saw that the poet of the Song at the Sea, the Yahwist, and the Priestly writers all transform the battle with the sea into a battle at the sea. In sum, there is no sea myth pattern without an aquatic battle. Thus, it comes as no surprise that we should find YHWH's battle and victory over the sea repeatedly and variously depicted in the oracles of Deutero-Isaiah. In this section, we examine the ways in which Deutero-Isaiah portrays YHWH, his aquatic foe, and the battle.

YHWH

Deutero-Isaiah portrays YHWH, the protagonist who battles and defeats the enemy, as creator, king, and fittingly also as divine warrior. The greatest adjustment to the usual sea myth pattern of battle and goodly consequences are made in order to present YHWH as creator and king before he engages in battle as the divine warrior. This adjustment reflects Deutero-Isaiah's belated relationship to the well-established creation and exodus traditions within Israel. YHWH does not and need not again reestablish himself as creator or king. He is already those things. What he needs to do, in light of the doubt that had been cast on his creative and royal power by the fact of exile, is not to reestablish but to reassert that power. Thus, YHWH exercises his creative and royal power in order to defeat the enemy and redeem Israel.

We have already discussed Deutero-Isaiah's depiction of YHWH as creator and its importance and need briefly to outline the two aspects of YHWH's creative activities. First, Deutero-Isaiah presents YHWH as the creator of the cosmos.⁶¹ He is "the creator of the heavens" and the "former of the earth" (45:18), "the former of light and the creator of darkness," the "maker of weal and the creator of evil" (45:7). The merisms affirm that YHWH created all things and thus holds authority over them. Commentators have rightly seen a polemic against Marduk and his claim as creator and king in the prophet's depiction of YHWH as creator.⁶² That polemic, however, is secondary to the superordinate goal of redemption. The primary importance of the fact that YHWH

⁶¹ See Isa 40:12, 22, 26, 28; 44:24; 45:7, 8, 12, 18; 48:13.

⁶² Stuhlmüller (*Creative Redemption*, 75–82) sees reference to the Akitu festival and the overtaking of its themes in Isa 40:3–5, 9–11; 52:7–10. Scholars also see a polemic against Marduk in the Cyrus oracle (44:24–45:7) in reference to the Cyrus Cylinder in which Marduk is credited for calling Cyrus to Babylon (see Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 248–50). Marduk is also explicitly denounced under the name Bel in Isa 46:1–3.

created the cosmos is as the basis and scope of his redemptive work. Creation founds YHWH's authority as redeemer (see 43:1, 7). And YHWH uses creation as an instrument of salvation:

⁸ Rain, O heavens, from above,
And let the skies flow with righteousness.
Let the earth open that salvation may blossom,
And let it cause righteousness to sprout together.
I YHWH created it. (45:8)

As creator of the cosmos, YHWH has authority to command heaven and earth to bring about righteous salvation.⁶³ Stuhlmüller rightly characterizes Deutero-Isaiah's understanding of salvation as "creative redemption."

Deutero-Isaiah also presents YHWH as the creator of all people who populate his creation and, in particular, of Israel.⁶⁴ The prophet first depicts YHWH as the creator of all the peoples of the earth. He is the giver of "breath" (נשמה) and "spirit" (רוח), that is, life force, to the peoples who walk upon the earth (42:5). In short, he created humanity (45:12). Among the peoples of the earth, YHWH singles out a particular people for favor. YHWH is the "creator of Jacob" and the "former of Israel" (43:1; cf. 43:7, 15), the "maker" and "former" of Jacob, his servant (44:2; cf. 44:21). As we discussed above, Deutero-Isaiah also emphasizes YHWH's special relationship as Israel's kinsman redeemer (גאל). YHWH is creator and redeemer of Israel (43:1; 44:21–22).

⁶³ For further discussion on the relationship between YHWH as the creator of the cosmos and his redemptive purposes, see Stuhlmüller, *Creative Redemption*, 193–208.

⁶⁴ See Isa 42: 5; 43:1, 7, 15; 44:2, 21; 45:9–13.

Deutero-Isaiah places less emphasis on YHWH's kingship in comparison to the motif of creation.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, he relates YHWH's kingship to the two key concepts of creation and salvation: To be the creator of Israel also means that YHWH is Israel's king (43:15), and to be the king of Israel means that he is Israel's redeemer (44:6). Kingship, in addition to creation, informs the shape of redemption in Deutero-Isaiah.

Since YHWH is the creator of all the peoples of the earth, his kingship likewise extends over all the peoples of the earth. As world king, he can command an earthly king to do his bidding (44:24–45:7; 48:12–16; 49:22–23) or strip him of his power (40:23). In Psalms 2 and 89, we saw that YHWH delegates his kingly authority to David and gives David and his descendants authority over foreign nations (2:8–9) and the chaotic sea (89:26). We already explored the ways in which the Psalter addresses the theological crisis brought on by the demise of the Davidic monarchy. The response of Deutero-Isaiah to the crisis is ultimately similar to the response of the Psalter. The prophet asserts the continued viability of YHWH's kingship: YHWH is king (cf. 52:7)! However, Deutero-Isaiah also offers two alternate responses to the question concerning the demise of the Davidic monarchy and the shadow it cast on God's kingship.

The prophet's first answer to the crisis of divine kingship is Cyrus. Deutero-Isaiah likens YHWH or, more specifically, his arm, to a shepherd, a well known ancient Near Eastern metaphor for kings (40:11). Then, in an oracle concerning Cyrus, YHWH calls Cyrus "my shepherd" (44:28). He is also called YHWH's anointed (45:1). In that oracle, YHWH the cosmic shepherd calls and invests Cyrus to be shepherd over world politics, giving him dominion over his foes (45:1–3) and a special mission to restore Zion

⁶⁵ See Isa 40:11, 23; 41:21; 43:15; 44:6; 44:28; 52:7; 55:3.

(44:26–28). However, as important as Cyrus is to God’s plans, it would be an overstatement of his importance to say that he inherits the Davidic covenant. Cyrus is certainly an important figure, but he is far from being the permanent solution. YHWH lifts up and uses Cyrus for the sake of his people Israel for a time and for a specific purpose, just as he used Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 43:10) and Assyria (Isa 10:5–6) for a time and for a specific purpose. Cyrus is less a successor of David and more a special manifestation of YHWH’s cosmic kingship. If Cyrus is special, he is special as the first among equals, first because of the role he plays as the catalyst in initiating the entire process that leads toward fulfilling the promise that the nations will carry the sons and daughters of Israel back to Zion and that kings and queens will serve as their guardians and nurses (49:22–23). Cyrus initiates the process but far from completes it. YHWH has the power to lift up and to tear down world kings and to use the peoples of the earth to punish or to redeem his chosen servant, Israel – because he is king of kings. Cyrus is ultimately just one among many in a series of world powers God uses.

If Deutero-Isaiah imagines that the Davidic covenant is transferred to another entity after 587 B.C.E., then it is not to Cyrus but to the people of Israel as a whole or, as some have contested, to the prophetic group within Israel, the so-called “servants of YHWH” (54:17).⁶⁶ In Isa 55:1–5, YHWH addresses the Israelites:

¹ Hey, all who are thirsty, come to the waters!
Even if you have no money,
Come, buy, and eat.
Come, buy wine
Without money and without price.
² Why do you spend money for what is not bread,

⁶⁶ For the latter view, see Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001) 434–37.

Your earnings on what does not satisfy?
 Listen carefully to me and eat what is good,
 and treat yourself with rich food.
³ Incline your ear, and come to me.
 Listen and be revived.
 I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
 my enduring covenant faithfulness for David.
⁴ As I made him a witness to the peoples,
 a prince and a ruler of peoples,
⁵ so will you summon nations you do not know,
 and nations who do not know you will run to you
 because of YHWH your God,
 the Holy One of Israel who has glorified you.

Much has been written concerning the transfer of the Davidic covenant to the entire or a subset of the people of Israel. This is certainly an important dimension of this passage. But what is often passed over without comment and is of like importance is the fact that the activity of providing rich food and wine within a feasting context is the prerogative of kings (cf. Isa 25:6–8; Est 1:3 Dan 5:1; etc.). What is assumed and is being enacted in this important passage is the kingship of YHWH. He is calling those who are willing to listen and obey him, perhaps through the mediation of his chosen servants, the prophets, to a covenant meal with their king (cf. Exod 24:11). The question of Deutero-Isaiah's relationship to David, especially in relation to Proto-Isaiah, is an important one but ultimately secondary to the claim that YHWH has and continues to reign as king, this dramatically demonstrated through the provision of rich foods gratis (cf. Isa 25:6–8). The invitation to this feast is the extension specifically of kingly grace.

YHWH's kingship is also assumed in the hymn that incites YHWH to go forth to battle like a warrior. In Isa 42:10–12, the prophet exhorts the people to sing to YHWH a new song. The introductory hemistich (שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ; 42:10a) echoes a number of psalms, all of which celebrate YHWH's kingship (33:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1). More

impressively, nearly every phrase in Isa 42:10–12 has an intertext in Psalms 96 and 98, two psalms we examined earlier as belonging to the “YHWH is king” psalm group.⁶⁷ These thematic and textual relationships lead to the conclusion that Isa 42:10–12 belongs to a literary tradition that extols YHWH as king. We might even venture to say that it belongs to the tradition that reaffirms YHWH’s kingship after the demise of the Davidic kingship, as do Psalms 96 and 98.⁶⁸

It is in response to this royal psalm, which commands the peoples sing to YHWH a new song, that YHWH sets forth to battle the foe as the divine warrior:

¹³ YHWH, like a warrior (גבור), goes forth,
Like a man of war, stokes his fury.
He shouts; yea, he screams.
Against his enemies, he prevails (יתגבר). (42:13)

So after a period of patient silence (Isa 42:14–17), YHWH the King rises as a divine warrior to battle the foe. The Lord who sets forth for war is warrior, king, and creator.⁶⁹ Who will stand against him?

⁶⁷ Paul, *Isaiah 40–66*, 192.

⁶⁸ Seitz (“Royal Promises”) too compares the shape of the Psalter and the shape of the Book of Isaiah.

⁶⁹ In earlier traditions concerning YHWH going forth (יצא) as a warrior, he is depicted as doing so from a divine mountain: Seir-Edom (Deut 33:2; Judg 5:4), Sinai (Deut 33:2; Ps 68:8, 18), Paran (Deut 33:2), and possibly from Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:24; Zech 14:2–4). In contrast, YHWH is not explicitly said to go forth from a mountain in Isa 42:13 (cf. Exod 15:3). Rather, within the exilic context of Deutero-Isaiah, he should likely be thought of as going toward a mountain, Jerusalem, which he will (re)conquer and on which he will (re)establish his temple. YHWH is a divine warrior who now goes forth to battle in order to (re)acquire his holy mountain, not one who goes forth from an established seat of power. It is important that this situation is analogous to that of the Sea Event (cf. Exod 15:3, 13–18).

Foe

Now that we have established that YHWH the creator, king, and warrior goes forth to battle, we must identify his enemy. Whom does YHWH fight? There are multiple foes in Deutero-Isaiah, reflecting its complex and multiple theological and historical circumstances. Babylon, unbelieving Israel, Bel, Nebo, other foreign deities, and the persecutors of the servant of YHWH number among God's potential foes. For our purposes, we need not deal with the multiple sources of antagonism against God and his people in Deutero-Isaiah and focus on YHWH's watery enemy.

Just as YHWH's identity has multiple dimensions as creator, king, and warrior, so too does his enemy. In almost every instance the prophet mentions YHWH's watery foe, it appears in a combination of mythic and historical, geographical, and cosmographical guises. For example, the sea in which YHWH makes a path in Isa 43:16 no doubt refers to the geospatial Red Sea of the historical Sea Event (cf. 43:17).⁷⁰ Yet, we cannot divorce that sea and that event from the cosmographical and the mythic. This is true throughout the oracles of Deutero-Isaiah.⁷¹ The prophet fuses into a single identity the chaos monster, the mytho-geographical sea of the Sea Event, and the mytho-historical

Along this line of thought, it is interesting to note that the Priestly writers for the time after the exodus and Ezekiel for the exilic period explicitly and systematically deal with the problem of YHWH's lack of a permanent earthly residence. As a solution, they both imagine a mobile sanctuary. In contrast, Deutero-Isaiah glosses over this difficulty.

⁷⁰ See the earlier discussion of alternate understandings of ים סוף in chapter 5.

⁷¹ See Isa 44:27; 50:2; 51:15; 54:9.

Sea Event. The watery foe in Deutero-Isaiah is mythical, geo-, cosmographical, and historical.

This multidimensionality of the sea is on display perhaps no more clearly and more artistically than in Isa 51:9–11, where the prophet moves from describing the mythic monster to prophesying Israel’s future return to Zion.

⁹ Awake, awake, put on strength, Arm of YHWH.

Awake as in days of old, generations long ago.

Is it not you, the Hewer of Rahab, the Piercer of Dragon?

¹⁰ Is it not you, the Drier of the Sea, the waters of the Great Deep,

The One who makes a path in the depths of the sea for the redeemed to pass over?

¹¹ And the ransomed of YHWH shall return and enter Zion with singing,
and everlasting joy will be upon their heads.

They will obtain joy and gladness,

and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

That YHWH’s foe is a mythic monster is clear from its names: Rahab (רהב) and Dragon (תנין). Rahab is a proper name for the chaos monster, comparable to Leviathan. There seems to be no term cognate with Rahab known from other ancient Near Eastern cultures.⁷² Nevertheless, it is clear from the attestations of the term in the Hebrew Bible that Rahab is a sea monster (see Ps 89:11; Job 9:13; 26:12). This judgment is confirmed by the parallel designation, Dragon, which is a common word for the sea monster and is also used in parallel with Leviathan (Isa 27:1; Ps 74:13–14). Deutero-Isaiah calls upon YHWH or, more specifically, YHWH’s arm, to repeat his acts of old, destroy the sea dragon, Rahab, the personified primordial ocean.⁷³

⁷² An exception may be found in Akkadian “Labbu,” which may be read as “Rebbu” (Klass Spronk, “Rahab רהב,” *DDD* 684–86, here 684).

⁷³ Hendrik Bosman (“Myth Metaphor or Memory? The Allusions to Creation and Exodus in Isaiah 51:9–11 as a Theological Response to Suffering During the Exile,” in *Exile and*

From the mythic monster of verse 9b, the prophet seamlessly moves on to describe the cosmographical aspect of YHWH's enemy in verse 10a., calling the foe Sea (ים) and the Great Deep (תהום רבה). The near perfect parallelism between verses 9b and 10a facilitates the transition from the realm of personalities (Rahab) to the realm of space (Sea). The arm of YHWH who pierces (מהצבת) Rahab, a monster, becomes the one who dries up (מחרבת) the Sea, a cosmographical space.⁷⁴ In Hebrew, only the substitution of ך for ם in the two participial epithets for God's arm differentiates the beginning of the two lines.

The introduction of the theme of drying up prepares the way for the penultimate move from the plane of myth to the plane of history. The arm is next described as one who makes a path in the depths of the sea (ים; cf. Isa 43:16; 44:27). The watery foe has become the Red Sea. That we are now in the realm of geography and history, specifically

Suffering: A Selection of Papers Read at the 50th Anniversary Meeting of the Old Testament Society of South Africa, OTWSA/OTSSA, Pretoria August 2007 [eds. Bob Becking and Dirk Human; Leiden: Brill, 2009] 71–82, here 77) follows Tsumura and Watson and denies the existence of “any combat or chaos” in Isa 51:9–11. Bosman explains the comforting power of the oracle by referencing Israel's “memories of the exodus from Egypt” (ibid., 79). In this way, he identifies an important aspect of Deutero-Isaiah's poetics of comfort. Memory of YHWH's salvific deeds of old is the basis for hope in the present. However, he significantly diminishes its power to comfort by denying any reference to combat – for the fact that YHWH picks up arms against the sea of troubles, which are real and not merely metaphorical, seems to be at the heart of what comforts those in despair. For a reading of Isa 51:9–11 better attuned to its mythological background, see Jeremy Hutton, “Isaiah 51:9–11 and the Rhetorical Appropriation and Subversion of Hostile Theologies” *JBL* 126 (2007) 271–303.

⁷⁴ Peter R. Ackroyd (*Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century B.C.* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968] 129) rightly emphasizes the participial epithets: “The series of participial phrases in vv. 9–10 here – often erroneously translated as if they were equivalent to past tenses – expresses, as is so often the case also in the hymns of the psalter, the attributes of the God whose power is invoked. The sense of the contemporaneity of history is here most obvious. What God does here and now is both what he did in creation – the mythology of creation conflict expresses that – and what he did in the bringing of Israel out of Egypt.”

the Sea Event, is made evident by the purpose of the path: “for the redeemed to pass over (לעבר גאולים).” This phrase echoes the Song at the Sea: “The people whom you redeemed (גאל)... until the people whom you created should pass over (עבר)” (Exod 15:13, 16).

The realization that we are now in the landscape of the Sea Event adds another layer of meaning to the opening lines. Through reverse patterning, the prophet makes Egypt appear in Rahab and Dragon. Rahab and Dragon symbolize Egypt in a number of passages in the Hebrew Bible (Isa 30:7; Ezek 29:3; 32:2). In fact, Rahab was so strongly identified with Egypt that, in Ps 87:4, the name is used as a synonym for Egypt. Rahab, the Dragon, is simultaneously a mythic monster and a historical entity. In sum, Deutero-Isaiah does not sharply distinguish between myth and history or between geography and cosmography. God’s watery foe is a multidimensional monster, simultaneously mythic, historical, geographical, and cosmographical.

The final movement of the oracle is its most daring and showcases the prophet’s high theological and artistic creativity. The oracle moves from the historical past of the Sea Event to the prophetic future in which the exilic community returns to Zion. From our previous discussion of the Song at the Sea, we are aware that the second half of the Song (Exod 15:13–18) looks forward to YHWH leading Israel, the people whom he redeemed and created, toward his sanctuary. So we would be forgiven were we to mistake this sentence: “And the ransomed of YHWH shall return and enter Zion with singing,” as referring to a past event (cf. Isa 35:10).⁷⁵ However, as the tense of the verbs indicates, the prophet here is talking of a future event. Israel will, in the future, return

⁷⁵ For a brief but full presentation of the intertextual relationship between Isaiah 35 and Deutero-Isaiah, see A. T. Olmstead, “II Isaiah and Isaiah, Chapter 35,” *AJSL* 53.4 (1937) 251–53.

and enter Zion upon leaving Babylon – just as they once entered YHWH’s sanctuary upon leaving Egypt. In the short space of three verses, the prophet has moved from the mythic to the historical and from the historical past to the prophetic future, in the process conflating mythic monsters with historical nations, monstrous personalities with geographical spaces. God’s redemptive purpose unfolds simultaneously in three dimensions, in myth, in the historical past, and in the prophetic future.

The short oracle, then, is an impressive display of the prophet’s intellectual and artistic athleticism, a masterpiece of prophetic imagination that is able to see in the concreteness of the present, the Babylonian exile, a typological repetition of a past experience, slavery in Egypt, and extrapolate from the pattern of past redemption the promise of coming salvation. The cord that ties all the disparate times, ideas, and images together, as I have tried to show, is the sea – the sea as monster, the sea as Egypt, the sea as the Red Sea, the sea as the primordial chaos, the sea as the metaphor for past and present woes, the sea as YHWH’s enduring foe.

One final note will be beneficial as an introduction to the next topic. In moving from the historical past of the Sea Event to the prophetic future of Israel’s return to Zion, Deutero-Isaiah elides not only any mention of the historical-cosmic battle between YHWH and his foe that precedes and leads to the end of the Babylonian exile but also the entire history of Israel from the exodus to the exile. He assumes a certain homology between Israel’s sojourn in Egypt and her exile in Babylon that, in part, explains the ellipses. The existence of the gap is a feature of Deutero-Isaiah’s compact artistry, a poetics of compression by analogy. At the same time, it may point to a theological

insight: God initiated his redemptive purposes for Israel in the period of the exodus, but it is only now coming into perfect fruition:

⁶ Lift up your eyes to the heavens,
And look at the earth below.
Though the heavens dissipate like smoke,
the earth wear out like a garment,
And its inhabitants die thus,
My salvation will be forever,
And my victory will not end. (51:6)

Unlike the punctual salvation of the past, the coming salvation, according to the prophet, is salvation that will endure to the end of time.

Battle?

In Deutero-Isaiah, YHWH goes forth into battle like a warrior (43:13). His enduring foe, the sea, is mentioned a number of times (43:16; 44:27; 51:9; etc.). And YHWH is said to manipulate the sea to make a path in it (43:16), to command its waters dry (44:27), to rebuke (50:2), to pierce, to dry, and to stir the sea (51:9–10, 15). However, no actual battle between YHWH and the sea is recounted. To be clear, YHWH's battle with the chaos monster of creation (44:27; 50:2; 51:9–10) and YHWH's triumph over the aquatic forces at the Sea Event (43:16–17; 51:10–11) are mentioned. But the prophet does not identify a present or imminent event that is directly analogous to YHWH's aquatic battle either in creation or in the time of the exodus.

The most direct analogy that Deutero-Isaiah makes between YHWH's battle with the sea and a contemporary historical event is with the calling of Cyrus.

²⁷ The one who says to the Deep, “Be dry;
I will dry up your rivers”;
²⁸ The one who says to Cyrus, “My shepherd;
He shall fulfill all my purposes.” (44:27–28a)

The one who commands the sea is the one who calls Cyrus and ensures his success.

Later in the Cyrus oracle, the prophet clarifies the practical implications of Cyrus’ call to God’s service. God goes before Cyrus to level mountains and to tear down bronze doors and iron bars (Isa 45:2) or, better, so to terrify Cyrus’ enemies that they leave doors and gates unlocked and open for him (45:1). These lines likely refer to Cyrus’ military campaigns and to his peaceful entrance into Babylon as its liberator. However, Cyrus’ military and political successes are not the totality of YHWH’s reason for calling him. God calls Cyrus in order to inaugurate the process of salvation that is to culminate in the restoration of Jerusalem.

To go back, Isa 44:27–28a is flanked by oracles concerning Jerusalem that clarify the nature of Cyrus’ mission:

^{26b} The one who says of Jerusalem, “She shall be inhabited,”
And of the cities of Judah, “They shall be rebuilt,”
And of her deserted places, “I will raise them”;

^{28b} Saying of Jerusalem, “She shall be rebuilt,”
and of the temple, “You shall be founded.” (44:26b, 28b)

On the one hand, the parallel between God commanding the sea dry and God calling Cyrus to his service indicates that the appearance of Cyrus on the world stage is a historical manifestation of God’s battle against the sea. Cyrus is called to participate in God’s ongoing struggle against the aquatic forces of chaos. On the other hand, the saying

concerning Jerusalem adumbrate the horizon of God's total redemptive plan, which is the reoccupation and the restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple. All instances of the sea myth pattern have as one of their goals the erection of a temple for the deity who defeats the sea. This is also the case for the sea myth pattern of Deutero-Isaiah. And Isa 44:26–28 indicates that Cyrus is to contribute to the attainment of that goal.

It is important to note, however, that Cyrus is not called to complete the task. He is called only to begin the process, the series of events that will eventuate in the restoration of Zion. On this issue, Deutero-Isaiah, the Chronicler, and Ezra-Nehemiah agree. For Ezra-Nehemiah, the founding, building, and dedication of the Second Temple are achieved after a period of struggle and controversy. Cyrus began the process by authorizing that a group return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple, but he far from completes it. For the Chronicler, the Cyrus decree lies in the beginning of a process whose completion lies (perpetually) in the future. Deutero-Isaiah also sees the return to Zion and the restoration of the Temple as a future event. He asserts in strong terms God's call of Cyrus as the beginning of the salvation to come. But he does not anchor his hopes on Cyrus alone. Thus when Cyrus does not fulfill the promise of restoration, he is able to speak of a new king, whom YHWH loves, who will continue the work (48:1–16), and of a bevy of kings and queens who will complete the task (49:22–23). For the prophet, salvation for Israel was certain because God the creator and king guaranteed it. What remained unclear was the exact way God would bring it about. It was clear, however, that it would be a process and not a singular event.

I said above that Deutero-Isaiah moves from the historical past of the Sea Event to the prophetic future of Israel's return to Zion or even from cosmogony to eschatology. In

other words, the prophet sees the intervening time from creation to the restoration of Zion, the time from exodus to the dedication of the Temple, as a continuous time in which God the creator unceasingly battles the aquatic forces of chaos. However, the time is not completely homogeneous but is punctuated by repetitions and manifestations of God's ongoing battle and victory over the sea. God's battle and victory in the time of creation constitutes the paradigmatic model for all subsequent victories. And that victory is enacted from time to time on the plane of history. According to Deutero-Isaiah, the Sea Event was a critical repetition of God's battle and victory over the sea in the past. However, a more perfect repetition of the battle and victory, the prophet claims, is about to occur. This time, the redeemed of YHWH will not have to hurry (Isa 52:12; cf. Exod 12:11). What more? God's victory and his salvation will not be for a time, ending with the demise of the Davidic kingdom, but will be forever (Isa 51:6). Salvation will be more robust and more enduring certainly than the threat of the sea and even more so than creation itself (51:6). And the restoration of Zion, Deutero-Isaiah claims, encapsulates the beginning of this everlasting victory. The prophet believed that he lived at the dawn of an everlasting salvation that would outlast even the heavens and the earth.

2. Goodly Consequences: The Temple, Creation, and Kingship

In our earlier discussions about the sea myth pattern, we found that triumph over the watery foe leads to three goodly consequences: creation, kingship, and temple. However, we have seen that Deutero-Isaiah adapts the "standard" sea myth pattern to reflect his own theology and his location in world history and tradition history. Deutero-

Isaiah assumes and celebrates YHWH's creative activities and kingly authority as the result of God's past and continued mastery over the sea. That is, what he inherits in Israel's rich tradition concerning creation and exodus, he cherishes and claims as relevant for his present exilic context. At the same time, as a member of the exilic community, the prophet acknowledges the destruction of Zion and makes the restoration of Zion and the Temple the one future goal of the imminent salvation. But this does not signal a total reworking of the sea myth pattern. We should remember that Zion was and continues to signify a place of vital cosmic, political, and religious significance.⁷⁶ Thus, when Deutero-Isaiah makes Zion the goal of the process of salvation God begins by calling Cyrus to his service, he has more than the rebuilding of the temple building or the repopulation of the Jerusalem in mind. For the prophet, the restoration of Zion meant not only the restoration of Israel's religious center but also the restoration of the foundation of the cosmos and the seat of YHWH's worldwide kingship.

We have already seen that Deutero-Isaiah makes the return to and the restoration of Zion the goal of salvation in a number of ways (see 44:26–28; 51:9–11), and we need not repeat that discussion. The task that remains is to lay bare the pluri-signification of Zion as a religious, cosmic, and royal center.

First, the restoration of Zion has at its center the restoration of the Temple as a religious center. This goal is clear in the oracle concerning Cyrus' call we examined above. The series of prophecies concerning Jerusalem in that passage (44:26–28) culminates in the pronouncement that the foundation of the Temple shall be laid again (44:28bβ). Rebuilding the Temple is the ultimate goal of resettling and restoring

⁷⁶ Levenson, *Sinai*, 89–184.

Jerusalem. In this light, it is significant that the Temple is not mentioned explicitly elsewhere in Deutero-Isaiah. The reason that the Temple is not again mentioned is not for reason of its decreased importance but because of an increase. Zion itself, in the prophet's mind, becomes a temple-like entity:

¹ Awake, awake! Put on your strength, Zion!
Put on garments of your beauty,
Jerusalem, the Holy City.
For the uncircumcised and the unclean
shall not enter you again. (52:1)

Shalom M. Paul, somewhat over-enthusiastically, writes concerning this passage: “The prophet introduces a revolutionary theological innovation in this chapter: The holy area, which until this time was restricted to the Temple itself, is now expanded to include the entire city. Jerusalem becomes a temple city.”⁷⁷ I would go further and say that all of Israel becomes holy land. Zion is most often used in parallel with Jerusalem (Isa 40:9; 41:27; and 52:1, 8–9), but Deutero-Isaiah also uses it as a synonym for Israel (46:13). According to the prophet, the holiness of the Temple, once it is restored, will radiate outward to infect Jerusalem and the entire land of Israel, transforming all of Zion into a sanctuary. Isa 52:1 also indicates that those who enter Zion must be holy. The people of Zion are a holy people, “a kingdom of priests” (Exod 19:6). In fact, Deutero-Isaiah uses Zion and Jerusalem not only to refer to a physical location but also to the people of Israel (40:1–2; 49:14; 51:3 [cf. 52:9], 17–23). Zion is a cipher that refers to the Temple,

⁷⁷ Paul, *Isaiah 40–66*, 383. The fluidity between Temple and city, and even the entire land of Israel, is not “a revolutionary theological innovation” on the part of Deutero-Isaiah and likely goes back to P.

Jerusalem, the land of Israel, and the people of Israel. Thus, to restore Zion is to restore not only a place but also a people.

We know from our earlier discussion that the temple is a “miniature cosmion” that reflects the three-decker architecture of the cosmos. We also found a commonality between the Garden of Eden and Zion in Gihon, the primordial and sacred river of life. Furthermore, we also noted that the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple specifically and the exile generally was registered as the undoing of creation in reference to Psalm 74. In light of these connection between creation, on the one hand, and Zion and the Temple, on the other, and given the heavy emphasis on God as creator in Deutero-Isaiah, we would do well to interpret the restoration of Zion as having a creative aspect. The Temple and Zion was not to be only the religious center of postexilic Israel but also the center of the cosmos. The restoration of Zion reverses the powers of chaos that were unleashed and now inundate the world after 587.⁷⁸

Deutero-Isaiah most explicitly points to the cosmic significance of Zion’s restoration in Isa 51:3:

³ Truly YHWH comforts Zion,
Comforts all her ruins.
And he will make⁷⁹ her wilderness as Eden,
And her desert as the Garden of YHWH.

⁷⁸ Deutero-Isaiah refers to the waters of Noah, and God promises not to allow the primordial waters again to cover the earth and destroy its inhabitants (Isa 54:9–10). This imagery indicates that the prophet thought of the experience of exile as comparable to the experience of the destructive waters of Noah. The promise is that the destruction wrought by the exile will not be total because his covenantal faithfulness for Israel is more immovable, more trustworthy, than the mountains. God the creator remains in control and will work to redeem Israel.

⁷⁹ Reading וישים without *wayiqtol* with Targum, LXX, and Vulgate. See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 324, and *BHS* apparatus ad loc.

Gladness and joy will be found in her,
Thanksgiving and the sound of song.

Mention of the “wilderness” and the “desert” connects this passage to the mission of the bearer of good news (40:3), and “gladness” and “joy” are said to be what overtake “sorrow” and “sighing” when the ransomed of YHWH enter Zion (51:11; cf. Jer 31:13; 33:11). The good news is that Zion, which has lain desolate since the beginning of the exile, will now be transformed into a lush garden with the return of God’s people, Israel. And the transformation of Zion into Eden signals a new beginning, a new creation. Creation that has lain in disarray with the destruction of the Temple and the desolation of Zion will, with Zion, be restored.

Finally, the restoration of Zion also means the restoration of God’s kingship. We stated above that Deutero-Isaiah assumes the continued viability of YHWH’s kingship. At the same time, he no doubt felt the difficulty of claiming that YHWH is king when he is without an earthly temple and when his people were scattered abroad. For both Marduk and for Baal, the erection of their temples confirmed their kingship. Though Deutero-Isaiah did not bind YHWH’s kingship to the existence of an earthly temple, he could not dismiss its importance as a visible sign of an invisible fact. The restoration of the temple was a great cause for celebration. Thus, while the prophet refers directly to YHWH’s kingship sparingly (41:21; 43:15; 44:6; 52:7), preferring to focus on his identity as creator, he does not hide his elation at the thought of the restored Zion and its implications for YHWH’s kingship. In an oracle that looks forward to a restored Zion, Deutero-Isaiah proclaims directly to Zion, “Your God is king!” (52:7b). This utterance echoes the “YHWH is king” psalms (Ps 93:1; 95:3; 96:10; 97:1; 98:6; 99:1) and resounds

with unfettered joy and gladness. When Zion – the Temple, Jerusalem, the land of Israel, and the people of Israel – is restored, only then is the fullness of God’s kingship evident in the cosmos. Only then does YHWH truly reign. Thus, when Zion has been restored, it is then that God invites his people to a feast, to celebrate God’s glory as king and to renew his bond of covenant faithfulness with his people Israel (55:1–5; cf. 25:6–8).

In sum, the goodly consequences of YHWH’s combat and victory over the watery foe in Deutero-Isaiah are the familiar triumvirate of creation, kingship, and temple. Deutero-Isaiah has had to adapt the sea myth pattern in order to make it speak an appropriate message into his exilic context. But he does not veer dramatically off course. Rather, he uses the Israelite traditions he has inherited and the traditions of his foreign context to enrich and to enliven his message. The God of old, the God of fame, is active today. The miraculous deeds foreigners attribute to Marduk are actually the work of YHWH, the creator, king, and redeemer of Israel. He is careful, at the same time, not to overemphasize the past or the foreign traditions of his exilic neighbors. He draws from their waters but does not allow them to overshadow the greatness of the new thing God is now in the process of doing... which is a repetition, a reactualization of the old.

The Babylonian exile marks the nadir of Israelite history. But Deutero-Isaiah, far from despairing, recognizes in it an analogy to the exodus and creation and finds great reason for hope. He looks back to the beginning of Israel’s history as a people and finds that Israel, then as now, lived under foreign rule. He then posits that the God who brought Israel out of Egypt and led them to Zion will again act to redeem his people out of Babylon and lead them to Zion. The God of the exodus is the God of the exile, and

there is great reason for hope in that. Furthermore, the prophet recognizes in creation an even deeper pattern of the ways of God, a pattern he sees at work in the exodus and also in the present. For Deutero-Isaiah, the God who is now at work to deliver Israel is the creator God. He has not abandoned his people. Far from it, he is even now battling the forces of chaos that threaten his creation and his people.

In this way, Deutero-Isaiah discovers in history and in creation a coordinated analogy, a pattern, for deciphering contemporary events. The discovery of this hermeneutical key opens for the prophet a window onto a superordinate reality that enables him to see in present historical events a glorious future about to unfold. This future is not outside historical existence. Deutero-Isaiah “presented to Israel a real future into which it could move and find itself as well as Yahweh.”⁸⁰ First through Cyrus, then through Darius, and through other chosen historical servants, God is at work to defeat his enduring foe, made manifest in nations, idols, individuals, and even in the landscape. When salvation does not come in all its fullness as soon as or in the form hoped for, the prophet and his disciples do not fault God for the delay. God’s word, like the rain and the snow, will accomplish that for which it was sent (55:8–10). The delay is not a sign of divine unfaithfulness but the effect of human unfaithfulness.⁸¹ Despite the delay, despite even persecution, the prophet and his disciples hold on to their vision of a superordinate reality and hold on, trembling, to God’s word (Isa 66:2, 5; cf. Ezra 9:4; 10:3). In their eyes, though the heavens dissipate and the earth wears out, though the watery foe persist

⁸⁰ John L. McKenzie, *Second Isaiah* (AB 20; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968) lvii.

⁸¹ W. A. M. Beuken, “The Main Theme of Trito-Isaiah: ‘The Servants of YHWH,’” *JSOT* 47 (1990) 67–87.

in its evil ways, God's righteous salvation will be accomplished, and then it will endure forever (51:6).

Chapter 7. Sea and Eschaton

The sea appears in biblical speculations about the eschaton in the so-called Isaiah Apocalypse (Isaiah 24–27) and in the apocalyptic vision of Daniel 7. The eschaton, as depicted in these visions, is not a time outside history. History continues into the eschaton. However, history is represented symbolically in these visions and as dependent on a superordinate, divine reality in which human beings play a minimal role. Divine and cosmic agents engage in world-determinative struggles in an otherworldly context so that historical existence is represented as determined by cosmic events outside human control. We should remember, however, the symbolic and metaphorical nature of these visions. We can neither totally separate history from the mythic, otherworldly events recounted in the apocalyptic visions nor so utterly equate the two so as to make this-worldly existence a mathematical transposition of otherworldly events. The two dimensions of reality are related, not mathematically, but metaphorically.

What we discover in these visions, then, is a frank acknowledgment of the vicissitudes of historical existence, a history riddled with defeat and subjugation for the Israelites. At the same time, the visions see the eschaton as the coming of a certain and permanent kingdom of God in which God and his people reign over an everlasting kingdom. Present disorder is a prelude to coming redemption and recreation, and as such a part of a pattern that makes order of disorderly reality. The sea and its monsters will be defeated and the goodly consequences of divine victory once again become cosmic facts according to a primordial and historied pattern of God's triumph over the chaos sea.

In this section, we will first examine the role the sea plays in the eschatological imagination of the so-called Isaiah Apocalypse. We will find that the sea appears possibly as God's instrument of judgment and as God's enduring foe. Second, we will examine the "great sea" and the four beasts that are said to rise from there in Daniel 7. In each instance, we will find the sea myth pattern preserved and transformed in portraying the troubles of the present and in giving expression to hope for the future.

I. Isaiah Apocalypse

Isaiah 24–27, sometimes called the Isaiah Apocalypse, is not an apocalypse, based on Klaus Koch and John J. Collins's work on the thorny issue of definitions.¹ To cite Collins' more recent definition in full, apocalypse is "a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality that is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world."² Decisively for Collins, Isaiah 24–27 lack an element of "a revelation mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient" and so are not to be labeled an apocalypse. Koch believes that they also lack key formal literary characteristics as well

¹ Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic: A Polemical Work on a Neglected Area of Biblical Studies and Its Damaging Effects on Theology and Philosophy* (trans. Margaret Kohl; SBT; London: SCM, 1972), 18–35; John J. Collins, "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre," *Semeia* 14 (1979) 1–20.

² Collins, "Morphology," 9.

as some defining themes.³ However, we do find in these chapters an apocalyptic eschatology in which YHWH defeats the enemy, is enthroned, and works salvation for Israel and for all nations. This brings Isaiah 24–27 into the ideological sphere shared with full blown apocalyptic literature such as Daniel 7 and justifies our studying them together.⁴

Though it is a not apocalypse, Isaiah 24–27 form a distinct literary unit within the Book of Isaiah. Nevertheless, the oracles against the nations (Isaiah 13–23), which the

³ Of the six formal literary characteristics Koch (*Rediscovery*, 24–28) names (*i.* discourse cycle, *ii.* spiritual turmoil, *iii.* paraenetic discourse, *iv.* pseudonymity, *v.* mythical images rich in symbolism, and *vi.* composite character), Isaiah 24–27 lack a discourse cycle. Of the eight themes he identifies as characteristic of apocalypse (*i.* urgent expectation of the impending overthrow of all earthly conditions in the immediate future, *ii.* the end depicted as a vast cosmic catastrophe, *iii.* the time of this world divided into fixed segments, *iv.* determinative role of angels and demons in the course of history, *v.* paradisaic salvation beyond the catastrophe, tending toward universalism, *vi.* a royal act of God that inaugurates the transition from disaster to redemption, with the result that the kingdom of God becomes visible on earth, *vii.* a mediator with royal functions, and *viii.* the catchword glory), Isaiah 24–27 lack themes *iii.*, *iv.*, *vii.*, and *viii.* (*ibid.*, 28–33).

⁴ In this, I follow Otto Plöger (*Theocracy and Eschatology* [trans. S. Rudman; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968] 53–78), Bernhard Anderson (“The Slaying of the Fleeing, Twisting Serpent: Isaiah 27:1 in Context” in his *From Creation to New Creation* [Old Testament Perspectives; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994] 195–206), Paul D. Hanson (*The Dawn of Apocalyptic* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975] 313–15), John J. Collins (“The Jewish Apocalypses,” *Semeia* 14 [1979] 21–59, esp. 29; *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* [2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 23–25), and William R. Millar (*Isaiah 24–27 and the Origin of Apocalypse* [HSM 11; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1976] 103–120). See also Neil O. Skjoldal, “The Function of Isaiah 24–27,” *JETS* 36 (1993) 163–67, here 72, for an outline of the scholarly positions on the relationship between Isaiah 24–27 to apocalyptic. Christopher Rowland (*The Open Book: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* [New York: Crossroad, 1982] 48) argues that interest in eschatology is a prominent but not a necessary feature of apocalyptic literature. He (*ibid.*, 198) argues, therefore, that Isaiah 24–27 should not be designated “an important link in the chain which connects the apocalypses with prophecy.” Rowland’s point is well worth keeping in mind, especially his positive agenda to turn our attention to other features of apocalyptic literature. However, I ultimately agree with Collins when he makes a vision of “eschatological salvation” a constitutive element of apocalypse and with Hanson (*Dawn*, 8) that “apocalyptic eschatology constitutes the heart of the major apocalyptic works.”

Apocalypse follows, provide an important context in which to read and interpret the Apocalypse, as we will see in greater detail below. Unlike the oracles, however, the Apocalypse contains no historical referent by which we might determine the date of its composition with any level of confidence. It likely hails from the post-exilic era, but there are few grounds on which to anchor a more precise date. Rather, the Apocalypse speaks of an eschatological event of cosmic significance in symbolic language, informed in part by Canaanite mythology (see Isa 25:6–8; 27:1) and biblical tradition (see 24:18b; 26:20a; 27:2–6; cf. Gen 7:11b; 7:16b; Isa 5:1–7). Biblical and mythic traditions about the sea, as we will now see, play an important role in the eschatological vision of the so-called Isaiah Apocalypse.

A. Waters of Noah

Isa 54:9 recalls God’s promise that “the waters of Noah will not again go over the earth” (cf. Gen 9:9–17). Possibly because of this tradition concerning God’s promise that he will not again destroy the earth by means of a flood, the author of the Isaiah Apocalypse does not explicitly mention the Noahide flood. However, an argument can be made that the Noahide flood plays a role in the eschatological prophet’s conceptualization of the worldwide judgment pictured in Isaiah 24–27.

A likely allusion to the Noahide flood can be found in Isa 24:18b, which echoes Gen 7:11b.⁵ Compare:

⁵ John Day (*God’s Conflict*, 145–46) notes that Isa 24:8b–19 echoes *KTU* 1.4 VII 25–35 where Baal’s theophany through the windows of his newly constructed temple is met with trembling on earth. The fact that the Isaiah passage does not describe a theophany

כִּי־אֲרָאֵבֶת מִמְרוֹם נִפְתָּחוּ
וַיִּרְעָשׂוּ מוֹסְדֵי אָרֶץ

For the windows of heaven are opened,
And the foundations of earth tremble.
(Isa 24:18b)

בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה נִבְקְעוּ כָּל־מַעְיֵנֵת תְּהוֹם רַבָּה
וְאֲרָבַת הַשָּׁמַיִם נִפְתָּחוּ

On that day, all the fountains of the great
deep burst forth,
And the windows of the heavens were
opened.
(Gen 7:11b)

The intertextual relationship between Isa 24:18b α and Gen 7:11b β is patent. In addition, it might be argued that Isa 24:18b β is a rewritten form of Gen 7:11b α . Both hemistiches have to do with what is found under the earth and suggest violent movement. The Isaianic author may have shortened the source material from Genesis for poetic reasons. If this is correct, then Isa 24:18b is an inverted citation of Gen 7:11b according to Seidel's law, and what is being depicted in the Isaiah Apocalypse may be the waters above the earth and possibly also the waters below the earth being let loose to inundate the earth in a worldwide judgment analogous to the Noahide flood. However, it should be noted that, even if the flood is in view, it is one of several metaphors for punishment the eschatological prophet uses and Genesis 7 only one of his intertexts. Isa 24:17–18a, which immediately precede the passage under consideration, are an apparent reuse of Jer 48:43–44 that depict the destruction in non-aquatic terms. The flood imagery is climactic and fitting to the context because it portrays a worldwide destruction. But it is not the only form the destruction takes.

weakens this parallel. In addition, Baal's theophany inaugurates his fructifying kingship, even if it initially causes terror among his enemies. In contrast, the Isaiah passage describes a scene of cosmic destruction, though YHWH's kingship is in view (Isa 24:20–23).

There is another possible allusion to the Noahide flood narrative in these chapters. In Isa 26:20–21, God instructs his people to hide themselves until his anger should pass and the world rid of the bloodshed and its iniquitous inhabitants who have polluted it. The instruction for God’s differentiated and favored people to hide to avoid destruction, to many scholars, echo both the Passover and the Noahide flood narrative.⁶ The verbal and thematic echo of the flood narrative is particularly strong. Just as God instructs Noah to enter (בוא) the Ark (Gen 6:18, 19, 20; 7:1, 9, 13, 15, 16), so too does God instruct his people to enter (בוא) their rooms and to hide there (Isa 26:20aα). And just as God closed (סגר) the door of Noah’s Ark behind Noah after him (בעדו) (Gen 7:16b), so too does he command his people to close (סגר) the door behind them (בעדך) (Isa 26:20aβ). If God’s eschatological judgment was imagined to take the form of a flood, comparable to the one God unleashed during the time of Noah, then God here shows particular favor to his people and provides them a safe haven. However, it is not Noah’s Ark they are instructed to enter but their rooms, more reminiscent of the Passover narrative than the flood. The point that needs to be repeated, in this light, is that the flood imagery is but one of the metaphors employed by the author to figure destruction. The Isaianic author activates the image and memory of the flood in order to communicate the cosmic scope of God’s judgment. However, he does not say that judgment will in fact take the form of a flood, lest he portray God as reneging on his “everlasting covenant” not to destroy the earth by means of the flood (Gen 9:8–17).⁷

⁶ See Donald C. Polaski, *Authorizing an End: The Isaiah Apocalypse and Intertextuality* (Biblical Interpretation Series 50; Leiden: Brill, 2001) 232.

⁷ Later apocalyptic writers, in particular the writer of the Book of Watchers (*1 Enoch* 1–36), find an ingenious way to avoid this theological impasse to using the Noahide flood

In light of the observation that the Apocalypse may allude to the Noahide flood in 24:18b and 26:20–21, an allusion to the Noahide covenant in Isa 24:5 (cf. Gen 9:16) appears possible.

⁵ And the earth is polluted under its inhabitants,
For they transgressed laws and violated statutes,
Broke the everlasting covenant. (Isa 24:5)

Scholars have proposed a variety of traditions as the referent to the “eternal covenant” (ברית עולם), including the Noahide covenant, the Mosaic covenant, the Davidic covenant, and a combination of these traditions.⁸ That is to say, the Noahide covenant is one possible interpretive option among others.

In reference to Isa 24:5 where breaking the “everlasting covenant” is the reason for divine judgment and punishment, Polaski notes that “there is no instance in the Hebrew Bible of the Noachic covenant ever being used to judge humanity.”⁹ Indeed, the covenant God makes with Noah in Gen 9:8–17 reads like a unilateral divine promise not again to destroy the world by means of a flood. How do the inhabitants of earth “break”

as an image of a worldwide judgment. They identify Enoch, an antediluvian figure, as the visionary of a future judgment by water, which allows them to present the eschatological judgment as a flood (cf. 1 Enoch 10:2).

⁸ The Noahide covenant is called an “eternal covenant” in Gen 9:16, as is the Davidic covenant in 2 Sam 23:5 and possibly in Isa 55:3. The Mosaic covenant is not called an “eternal covenant,” though the Sabbath is (Exod 37:16; Lev 24:8). In the prophetic literature, a new “eternal covenant” is mentioned several times (Isa 61:8; Jer 32:40; 50:5; Ezek 16:60; 37:26). The Abrahamic covenant is also referred to as an “eternal covenant” (Gen 17:7, 13, 19; Ps 105:10=1 Chr 16:17). For a review of the various positions concerning the “eternal covenant” in Isaiah 24, see Polaski, *Authorizing an End*, 94–101. Polaski (*ibid.*, 101–45), quite rightly in my view, goes on to argue for a polyvalent and multi-referential use of ברית עולם in Isaiah 24.

⁹ Polaski, *Isaiah Apocalypse*, 97.

such a covenant? Indeed, as the basis for judgment, the Mosaic covenant with its laws (תורה) and statute (חק) seems to be the better interpretive option for the “eternal covenant.”¹⁰ Jonathan Klawan’s work on the conception of impurity in the Hebrew Bible is helpful here.

Jonathan Klawans argues that there is a definite and clear distinction between “ritual” and “moral” impurity. He identifies three characteristics of ritual impurity: “(1) The sources of ritual impurity are generally natural and more or less unavoidable. (2) It is not sinful to contract these impurities. And (3) these impurities convey an impermanent contagion.”¹¹ He identifies four contrastive characteristics of moral impurity: “(1) ...moral impurity is a direct consequence of grave sin. (2) ...there is no contact-contagion associated with moral impurity... (3) ...moral impurity leads to a long-lasting, if not permanent, degradation of the sinner[, the sanctuary,] and, eventually, of the land of Israel. (4) ...moral purity is achieved by punishment, atonement, or, best of all, by refraining from committing morally impure acts in the first place.”¹² Among the grave sins that can cause moral impurity are sexual sins, idolatry, bloodshed, and murder. It is important that purifying punishment takes the ultimate form of the exile of all the residents from the defiled land.¹³

¹⁰ See Dan G. Johnson, *From Chaos to Restoration: An Integrative Reading of Isaiah 24–27* (JSOTSupp 61; Sheffield: JSOT, 1988) 27–29.

¹¹ Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 23.

¹² *Ibid.*, 26, 28.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 27–29.

Klawans notes that “Isaiah 24 is related to the idea of moral defilement,” citing the shared language between Isa 24:5 and the Holiness Code: “And the earth is polluted” (זָרָאוּ חַנְפָּה).¹⁴ The implication is that the inhabitants of earth, by committing grave sins, have incurred moral impurity through sin and have defiled the earth. The envisioned worldwide punishment is the result of the moral impurity of the peoples and the defilement of the whole earth. As the reference to the Holiness Code indicates, the “eternal covenant” which the inhabitants break is the Mosaic covenant.

Now, this line of interpretation, among other issues, runs into difficulty in regard to the scope of the Mosaic covenant. The Mosaic covenant describes YHWH’s special relationship with Israel and is not applicable to all the inhabitants of earth. It is possible to understand “the earth” (הָאָרֶץ) as referring only to the land of Israel. Then, “its inhabitants” would refer to the Israelites. However, the worldwide focus of the Isaiah Apocalypse in general makes problematic a limited understanding of “the earth” and in turn the understanding of the “eternal covenant” as the Mosaic covenant.¹⁵ It is in light of this observation that the Noahide covenant, which describes YHWH’s relationship with all of creation, human beings (Gen 9:9), living beings (9:10), and the earth (Gen 9:13), rises as a more likely candidate for the “eternal covenant.”

Interpreting the “eternal covenant” as referring to the Noahide covenant is not without its problems, however. As noted above, how can you break the Noahide covenant, which appears to be a unilateral divine promise and which, in any case, is described as being eternal? In an effort to cast the Noahide as conditional, thus not

¹⁴ Ibid., 55.

¹⁵ See Johnson, *Chaos*, 25–26.

impervious to being broken, Kaiser notes that God communicates the injunction against bloodshed to Noah in the context of covenant making (Gen 9:1–6). He also notes that bloodshed, as Klawans has shown, can defile the land with reference to Num 35:33:¹⁶

³³ You shall not pollute the land in which you live; for blood pollutes the land, and no expiation can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed is in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it.

Kaiser's argument is that the Noahide covenant which forbids bloodshed (Gen 9:1–7) was violated by the inhabitants of the earth (Isa 24:5b; cf. Isa 26:21), causing the earth to be polluted (Num 35:33; Isa 24:5a). The worldwide judgment (Isa 24:1, 6, etc.) is the purifying punishment for the pollution of the entire earth by the sins of the inhabitants of the entire earth.

At the end, it is not possible to specify with confidence the referent of the “eternal covenant.” Perhaps, the writer purposefully obfuscated the traditional referent of the “eternal covenant,” even as he obfuscated any historical reference in the Apocalypse. As Levenson has noted, it may be best to refrain from specifying what has been left unspecified.¹⁷ It is nevertheless tempting, in light of the suggestive allusions to the Noahide tradition in the rest of the Apocalypse, to entertain the possibility that the Noahide covenant constitutes one element of the covenantal traditions at play in Isa 24:5 and that its breaking provides the justification for the apocalyptic writer to suggest that God breaks the promise to not destroy the earth by means of a flood ever again.

¹⁶ Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39: A Commentary* (trans. R. A. Wilson; London: SCM, 1974) 183.

¹⁷ Levenson (*Creation*, 28) proposes that ברית עולם in Isa 24:5 might better be translated “ancient covenant” to avoid association with any specific covenantal tradition, including that of Noah.

In sum, the Isaiah Apocalypse may be understood to reactivate, in a variety of ways, the Noahide tradition in order to justify the coming worldwide judgment and to portray the scope of the destruction. However, the Noahide covenant is not specified as the only or even the primary cause of the destruction, and the destructive force is not allowed explicitly to take the form of the flood. The Noahide covenant comfortably remains in force, and the waters of Noah safely, if threateningly, remain behind the dam, forbidden to become the literal waters of judgment.

B. Leviathan, the Dragon in the Sea

What is assumed in the veiled depiction of the waters of judgment as the waters of Noah is God's mastery over the cosmos, including the primordial seas. God's eschatological judgment will be like the unleashing of the chaos waters above and below the earth, waters whose boundary God graciously inscribed and has maintained for the sake of his creation. It is interesting, in light of this veiled but familiar claim of God's mastery over the waters, that in Isa 27:1 the sea dragon, Leviathan, appears as God's enemy.

¹ On that day YHWH will punish,
With his cruel and great and strong sword,
Leviathan the Fleeing Serpent,
Leviathan the Twisting Serpent;
He will kill the Dragon that is in the sea. (Isaiah 27:1)

We already dealt with Leviathan in discussing the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle* (e.g., *KTU* 1.5 I 1–3) and as it appears in other parts of the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Pss 74: 13–14; 104:25–26; cf.

Gen 1:21; Isa 51:9–11). But who or what is Leviathan in the eschatological context of Isaiah 24–27?

In this section, I will argue that Leviathan in Isa 27:1 is multidimensional, simultaneously mythical, political, and creaturely, each dimension heightening some features of Leviathan and at the same time limiting others. This multi-dimensionality of Leviathan does not, as some have contested, result in “[t]he amalgamation of mutually incompatible meanings embodied... in one monstrous name, such as Leviathan,” that is “beyond sorting out or resolving.”¹⁸ Rather, I argue that it is an effective deployment of metaphor as a tool for theological integration and innovation.

1. Mythological Leviathan

The Ugaritic evidence, some of which we already reviewed above, firmly establishes the mythological dimension of Leviathan in Isa 27:1. Furthermore, it also suggests that we have one Leviathan, not two, in the verse. In fact, I will argue that we have one entity Leviathan-Dragon in Isa 27:1.

That Leviathan (לוייתן) in Isa 27:1 is a mythological entity is virtually guaranteed by the contexts in which Ugaritic cognates of Leviathan’s epithets, “Fleeing Serpent” (נחש ברה) and “Twisting Serpent” (נחש עקלתון), are found in the *Baal Cycle*.¹⁹ In *KTU* 1.5 1–3 (// 27–30), both epithets describe the chaos monster Litan whom Mot says Baal defeated, as we discussed above.

¹⁸ Timothy K. Beal, *Religion and Its Monsters* (New York: Routledge, 2002) 57.

¹⁹ For detailed discussions of the Ugaritic epithets, see Rahmouni, *Divine Epithets*, 142–46.

When you [Baal] struck down Litan the Fleeing Serpent, *ktmḥṣ.ltn.bṭn.brḥ*
 Annihilated the Twisting Serpent, *tkly.bṭn.‘qltn*
 The Powerful One with Seven Heads.²⁰ *šlyṭ.d.šb ‘t.r’ašm*

One might contend that Litan and Tunnan are natural creatures, since they are described as serpents (*baṭnu*). Indeed, the Ugaritic word *baṭnu*, like the Hebrew word שָׂנַי, usually denotes a natural snake.²¹ However, *baṭnu* clearly refers to mythological dragons in *KTU* 1.5 1–3. And, in the Hebrew Bible, in addition to in Isa 27:1, שָׂנַי refers to a mythological entity in Amos 9:3b: “Though they hide from my sight at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent (שָׂנַי) to bite them.”²² Now, whether Isa 27:1 is “almost a direct quote” from Ugaritic mythology, as some have argued,²³ or reflects a common Canaanite tradition concerning the chaos monster, we can say with confidence that Leviathan in Isa 27:1 is a mythological monster and evokes a mythological frame of

²⁰ Adopted from Smith’s “The Baal Cycle,” 141.

²¹ Smith and Pitard, *UBC II*, 249; Rahmouni, *Divine Epithets*, 142–43.

²² Hans Walter Wolff (*A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos* [trans. Walderman Janzen, S. Dean McBride, Jr., and Charles A. Muenchow; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977] 341), Francis I. Anderson and David Noel Freedman (*Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 24A; New York: Doubleday, 1989] 838), and Shalom M. Paul (*A Commentary on the Book of Amos* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991] 278–79) all identify the serpent at the sea floor with the mythological dragon, duly noting its transformation into an obedient servant of YHWH (pace Uehlinger, “Leviathan,” 514). LXX translates שָׂנַי in Amos 9:3 as δράκων. See also Exod 7:17 (cf. 7:9–11); Jon 2:1, 11.

²³ Millar, *Isaiah 24–27*, 55. We do not find a direct parallel to the Ugaritic epithet “the Powerful One with Seven Heads” in Isa 27:1 or anywhere else in the Hebrew Bible. However, we do find references to the multiple heads of Leviathan and Dragon in Ps 74:13–14.

reference. The depiction of the cosmic foe as a serpentine dragon was common throughout the Near East, and this was apparently also the case in Ugarit and Israel.²⁴

The Ugaritic evidence also suggests that we are dealing in Isa 27:1 with one Leviathan, not two. Just as the epithets, “the Fleeing Serpent,” “the Twisting Serpent,” and “the Powerful One with Seven Heads,” are in synonymous parallelism with and describe the one Litan in the *Baal Cycle* (1.5 I 1–3 // 27–30), so too do the epithets, “the Fleeing Serpent” and “the Twisting Serpent,” describe the one Leviathan in Isaiah. In *KTU* 1.5 I 1–3, Mot is not saying that Baal defeated four separate monsters: Litan, the Fleeing Serpent, the Twisting Serpent, and the Powerful One with Seven Heads. Baal defeated one foe, Litan. Likewise, Isaiah prophesies that YHWH will defeat the one Leviathan, not two differentiated Leviathans. We can take this one step further. The Dragon (התנין), mentioned in the latter half of the verse, describes Leviathan and does not refer to an independent monster. If this is true, as I argue below in more detail, we do not have three monsters but one in Isa 27:1, Leviathan-Dragon.²⁵

In *KTU* 1.3 III 38–42, as we discussed above, Tunnan, the Ugaritic word cognate with Hebrew תנין, is described by the same epithets ascribed to Litan, suggesting that in Ugarit, Tunnan and Litan could be thought of as the same monster. Both Litan and Tunnan are “the Twisty Serpent” and “the Powerful One with Seven Heads” (cf. *KTU* 1.3 III 38–42 and 1.5 I 1–3). They are the same many-headed serpentine monster of chaos in Ugarit.

²⁴ Smith and Pitard, *UBC II*, 249–50.

²⁵ See Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39*, 222 n. f and g.

In the Hebrew Bible, we find a like identification of Leviathan and Dragon in Ps 74:13b–14a:

^{13b} You broke the heads of Dragon upon the waters;
^{14a} You crushed the heads of Leviathan.

Just as Litan and Tunnan in the *Baal Cycle* are said to have seven heads, the Psalm says that both Leviathan and Dragon have multiple heads, though without specifying how many. The synonymous parallelism between Leviathan and Dragon demonstrates that they too are the same many-headed monster of chaos in the Psalm. The Ugaritic and biblical evidence, then, gives us reason to believe that the Dragon in Isa 27:1b is none other than Leviathan mentioned just above. God does not punish Leviathan and kill the Dragon. He kills Leviathan-Dragon as its punishment.

Now, in proposing a strong mythic dimension to Leviathan's identity, I am mindful of the other aspects of its identity. Hermann Gunkel, while recognizing the (Babylonian) mythological background of the verse, downplays its mythic origin and emphasizes its political referents. Leviathan and the Dragon are, for him, "code words" for three present world empires.²⁶ Interest in the historical referent of these monsters in Gunkel and in much of the history of research on this verse, as we will see below, was not unfounded. But the historical has been overemphasized at the cost of overlooking the mythological background. Myth is not a thin veneer that hides an essentially political referent but lies at the core of how we are to interpret Leviathan. That is to say, Leviathan is not merely a "code word" to be decoded and, once translated into its historical referent, put aside as a distraction or an ornament. The author of Isa 27:1 was

²⁶ Gunkel, *Creation*, 30.

not obfuscating a historical referent in using mythological language but saying something substantial about how he understood the historical-political situation. Judah's historical enemies were not only like Leviathan; they were Leviathan. Their hostility against the Temple, Jerusalem, or the people of God were understood as being homologous to the chaos-inducing actions of YHWH's cosmic, aquatic foe. YHWH's cosmic nemesis was again present in the world powers.²⁷ This called for and required divine action, for no human power would be capable of subduing Leviathan-Dragon (cf. Job 40). Without taking seriously the mythological dimension of Leviathan, we cannot fully appreciate the theological urgency with which the prophet calls for and promises divine action in history.

2. *Political Leviathan*

Gunkel wrote that "it is now clear that [Isa 27:1] enumerates not two but rather three monsters" that correspond to "three worldly powers."²⁸ Gunkel does not specify

²⁷ I cite Collins on this issue: "Biblical scholarship in general has suffered from a preoccupation with the referential aspects of language and with the factual information that can be extracted from a text. Such an attitude is especially detrimental to the study of poetic and mythological material, which is expressive language, articulating feelings and attitudes rather than describing reality in an objective way. The apocalyptic literature provides a rather clear example of language that is expressive rather than referential, symbolic rather than factual" (*Apocalyptic*, 17). I agree with Collins that mythological language does not occupy itself with "describing reality in an objective way." However, I would argue that it nevertheless retains the referential function common to all language, only it does not point to the historical reality of scholarly reconstruction but to the poetic reality of its own construction. For a thorough treatment of this aspect of poetic, metaphoric language, see Ricoeur, *Metaphor*, especially "Study 3. Metaphor and the Semantics of Discourse" (ibid., 44–64) and "Study 7. Metaphor and Reference" (ibid., 216–256). For a briefer treatment, see Harshav, "Poetic Metaphor and Frames of Reference"; or "Fictionality and Fields of Reference."

²⁸ Gunkel, *Creation*, 31.

which worldly powers the monsters represent, but there is a long list of commentators who have tried to identify specific world powers behind the monsters. This tradition goes back at least as far as the Targums:

In that time, the LORD with his great and strong and hard sword will punish the king who exalts himself like Pharaoh the first king, and the king who prides himself like Sennacherib the second king, and he will slay the king who is strong as the dragon that is in the sea.²⁹

The Targum translators, in emphasizing the political identity of Leviathan, almost completely erase the mythological background of the verse, as do many modern commentators.

There are good contextual reasons that interpretations of Leviathan-Dragon have tended so emphatically toward the political. First, to begin with the broader textual context, the connection between Isaiah 24–27 and the oracles against the nations in chapters 13–23 encourages a political reading of Leviathan. Common introductory formulae,³⁰ reuse of certain imagery,³¹ shared themes,³² and the general frame of reference in which YHWH stands as ultimate judge and ruler over international affairs firmly establish the link between chapters 24–27 and the preceding oracles.³³

²⁹ Bruce D. Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum: Introduction, Translation, Apparatus and Notes* (ArBib 11; Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1987) 52.

³⁰ For example, “on that day” (ביום ההוא) appears fifteen times in Isaiah 13–23 and seven times in chapters 24–27, four times in chapter 27 alone.

³¹ Cf. Isa17:6a and 24:13; 21:2 and 24:16b.

³² Cf. Isaiah 13–14 and 24–27 on the theme of world judgment; see Christopher R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39* (Interpretation; Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1993), 175.

³³ Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 446.

Commentators have also pointed to textual and thematic links between Isaiah 24–27 and other sections of Isaiah and other biblical books,³⁴ noting that alluding, echoing, and citing earlier texts and traditions played an important role in the composition of these chapters. The result is a richly intertextual text.³⁵ Prominence, however, should be given to the relationship between these chapters and the preceding oracles against the nations. Chapters 24–27 serve as an apt conclusion to them and, as Blenkinsopp notes, “27:1 admirably encapsulates the essence of the ‘message’ conveyed in a variety of ways in chs. 13–27,” which is that YHWH reigns as king over the nations and will judge them in time.³⁶ It is no wonder, then, that commentators have seen specific nations in Leviathan-Dragon.

The second reason that Leviathan-Dragon has largely been regarded as a political being can be found within Isaiah 24–27. Opinions vary widely concerning the literary

³⁴ See John Day, “A Case of Inner Scriptural Interpretation: the Dependence of Isaiah XXVI. 13–XXVII. 11 on Hosea XIII. 4–XIV. 10 (Eng. 9) and Its Relevance to Some Theories of the Redaction of the ‘Isaiah Apocalypse,’” *JTS* 31 (1980) 309–319; Marvin A. Sweeney, “Textual Citation in Isaiah 24–27: Toward a Redactional Function of Chapters 24–27 in the Book of Isaiah,” *JBL* 107 (1988) 39–52; Childs, *Isaiah*, 171–74; and Todd Hibbard, *Intertextuality in Isaiah 24–27: The Reuse and Evocation of Earlier Texts and Traditions* (FAT 2.16; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006). The reinterpretation of the Song of the Vineyard from Isa 5:1–7 in 27:2–6 is an obvious example of intra-Isaianic intertextuality. Commentators see references to the flood narrative and to the Noahide covenant (Gen 9:16) in 24:5 and 26:20–21; see Polaski, *Isaiah Apocalypse*, 97–98; Hibbard, *Intertextuality*, 161–62.

³⁵ “These four chapters reveal an interrelationship with other texts in Isaiah, with other portions of the Hebrew Bible, as well as possible connections with the corpus of Canaanite mythology” (Hibbard, *Intertextuality*, 2–3). For a judicious discussion of the terms “allusion,” “echo,” and “intertextuality,” see Sommer, *Isaiah 40–66*, 6–31.

³⁶ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 372.

relationship between 27:1 and its immediate context.³⁷ However, there is no doubt that 27:1 echoes and is intimately related to 24:21. The introductory formula, “on that day” (ביום ההוא), and the thematic root פקד each appear seven times in Isaiah 24–27. They occur together two times in 24:21 and 27:1 in identical wording: “(And it will come to pass) on that day that YHWH will punish... (... [ויהיה] ביום ההוא יפקד יהוה על...). In fact, Isa 27:1a and 24:21a are identical apart from the named object of God’s punishment.³⁸ This data has been interpreted in different ways. Johannes Lindblom argues that 27:1 is

³⁷ Childs (*Isaiah*, 575) writes that 27:1 is “a discrete unit, both in form and content, and separated from what precedes and follows.” See also Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27* (tr. Thomas H. Trapp; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 575. Others recognize lexical and thematic links between the verse and the rest of the Isaiah Apocalypse. For example, the introductory phrase ביום ההוא is also found in 24:21; 25:9; 26:1; 27:2, 12, and 13; the thematic root פקד in 24:21, 22; 26:14, 16, 21; and 27:3; and הרג in 26:21 and 27:7. However, scholars do not agree on their significance for a variety of issues, from the date of composition to its place in the overall structure of the Isaiah Apocalypse. Opinions concerning the date of composition of 27:1 and its literary relationship to the rest of the Isaiah Apocalypse vary greatly. Many commentators and exegetes favor a late date for the verse; so Johannes Lindblom (*Die Jesaja-Apokalypse: Jes. 24–27* [Lund: G. W. K. Gleerup, 1938]), Plöger (*Theocracy*), and Wildberger (*Isaiah 13–27*). But others argue that the verse is early, even if its integration into its current literary context happened later; see, e.g., Marvin Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–38: With an Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (FOTL 16; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 285. In regard to its immediate literary context, the greater number of scholars read the verse with the preceding exhortation to the eschatological community to hide (26:20–21); so Hibbard (*Intertextuality*). But a few read it with the reinterpretation of the song of the vineyard (27:2–6). Some regard it as an independent unit; see n. 1. Opinions concerning the relationship of the verse to the larger context of Isaiah 24–27 also vary. For example, Otto Plöger (*Theocracy*, 75) considers the verse, along with the rest of chapter 27, a late addition. Johannes Lindblom (*Jesaja-Apokalypse*, 52–53) considers it late but related to material found elsewhere in the Isaiah Apocalypse (e.g., 24:21–23).

³⁸ This observation leaves out Isa 27:1b and indicates that this half verse is a purposeful addition meant to qualify the identity of Leviathan in Isa 27:1a. If the twice repeated Leviathan in Isa 27:1a stands for the “kings of the earth” and the “host of heaven,” the phrase “the Dragon that is in the sea” modifies Leviathan and its antecedents. As I argue below, 27:1b domesticates Leviathan by distinguishing it from the sea. It may be a subtle claim that Leviathan and the earthly and cosmic powers it represents are YHWH’s created subordinates.

related to 24:21–23 because both are in prose and refer to the judgment of kings in contrast to the poetic eschatological songs that talk of judgment of the entire earth.³⁹ For Lindblom, these verses are late additions to the earlier series of eschatological and thanksgiving songs.⁴⁰ Otto Plöger writes that 24:21–23 belong to the original eschatological layer of the Isaiah Apocalypse, which concluded with 26:20–21. He argues, therefore, that all of chapter 27, including verse 1, is “a collection of certain ‘eschatologoumen,’ added at a later date, dedicated to the theme ‘re-unification,’ and appended as a supplement.”⁴¹ He also notes that the introductory formula “on that day” (ביום ההוא) appears with greater frequency in chapter 27 (4x, possibly 5x with 27:6) than in chapters 24–26 (3x) and carries in chapter 27 a specific eschatological significance. Twice in chapters 24–26 (in 25:9 and 26:1), the formula is a “verbose addition” with no eschatological meaning.⁴² Plöger does, however, recognize that the formula “on that day” is used in a significant, eschatological way in 24:21 and 27:1.

Taking Lindblom and Plöger together, without getting into the complex issue of the redaction history of Isaiah 24–27, we are justified in linking 24:21 and 27:21. Even if 27:1 is a late addition, which is far from certain, we can at minimum say that it mimics and interprets 24:21. So whether 27:1 belongs to the same compositional layer as 24:21 or to a later redactional layer, their close relationship dictates that we see the “host of

³⁹ Lindblom, *Jesaja-Apokalypse*, 52–53. That 27:1 is in prose is debatable. Millar (*Isaiah 24–27*, 55 n. 3), for example, deletes the second לִיִּתֵן as dittography to create even parallel lines.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 62–63.

⁴¹ Plöger, *Theocracy*, 75.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 71.

heaven” (צבא המרום) and the “kings of earth” (מלכי האדמה) in Leviathan. These parallels, especially the link between the kings of the earth and Leviathan, likely encouraged the translators of the Targum to replace the Leviathans in 27:1a with names of actual kings and later commentators to look for historical clues that might enable them to identify specific kings or world powers behind the mythological monsters. Leviathan, without a doubt, has a political, this-worldly dimension.

Before coming to our final reason for reading Leviathan politically, we should note that the parallel between 24:21 and 27:1 equates Leviathan not only to the “kings of earth” but also to the “host of heaven.” The exact identity of the “host of heaven” is difficult to ascertain. In the present context, they likely refer to angels of nations, akin to what we find in the Book of Daniel.⁴³ In any case, in light of this parallel, we note that Leviathan’s identity cannot be restricted to the realm of earthly politics. It also has an explicit heavenly referent.

I do not want to insist on the third point, but commentators have seen a mingling of mythic and political themes within 27:1 itself. Hans Wildberger notes that, when fighting chaos monsters, YHWH’s arm is usually mentioned (Isa 51:9; Pss 77:16f.; 89:11, 14; etc.). His sword, by contrast, “is mentioned primarily in prophecies against the nations (Isa 34:5f.; Jer 47:6; 48:10; Zeph 2:12; Ezek 32:10)” and in prophetic threats

⁴³ Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 506. For a treatment of the question of the identity of deities with celestial bodies in Mesopotamia, see Francesca Rochberg, “The Heavens and the Gods in Ancient Mesopotamia: The View from a Polytheistic Cosmology” in her *In the Path of the Moon: Babylonian Celestial Divination and Its Legacy* (Studies in Ancient Magic and Divination 6; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 317–38.

against Israel (Deut 28:22; Ezek 21:8ff.; Amos 9:1; 1 Chr 21:12).⁴⁴ YHWH's sword, which could be a mythic motif akin to the weapons Kothar-wa-Hasis crafts for Baal, is a concrete, this-worldly means of punishment, often appearing as a metonym for war with pestilence, famine, and wild beasts.⁴⁵ This indicates that the theme of YHWH's sword belongs to traditions concerning YHWH's activity in the realm of world politics. What we might conclude from this is that, in Isa 27:1, a political theme (the sword of YHWH) has been brought into a mythological context (Leviathan-Dragon), thereby transferring to Leviathan-Dragon a political dimension.

These three observations together make it clear that the long tradition of trying to identify the world powers that stand behind Leviathan-Dragon was not misguided. Franz Delitzsch, for example, confidently asserts: "Without doubt the three animals are emblems of three world-powers."⁴⁶ He equates the Dragon to Egypt, citing passages where this identity is more or less secure (Isa 51:9; Ps 74:13; Ezek 29:3; 32:2).⁴⁷ Then, he identifies "Leviathan the fugitive serpent" with Assyria because the Tigris has "swift course and terrible rapids" as if fleeing; and "Leviathan the crooked serpent" with

⁴⁴ Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 578. Kaiser (*Isaiah 13–39*, 223 n. a) writes that the conception of the sword of YHWH becomes prominent in the late period; cf. Ps 17:13; Deut 32:41–42; Ezek 21:8–10; 30:24–25; 32:10; Jer 50:35–37; Isa 31:8; 34:5; 66:16.

⁴⁵ While the sword may indeed be a mythic theme, it is often numbered with pestilence, famine, or wild beasts as God's this-worldly instrument for punishing this-worldly rebels and foes (Jer 21:9; 24:10; 38:2; Ezek 6:11; 7:15; 12:16; 14: 12, 17, 21; 2 Chr 20:9; etc.).

⁴⁶ Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 424.

⁴⁷ One might mention Jer 51:34 where the king of Babylon is likened to תנין.

Babylon because the Euphrates “winds much” and “is labyrinthine in its motions.”⁴⁸

Examples such as this, though not all as ingenious, can be multiplied.⁴⁹

Despite this long tradition and the contextual reasons for identifying specific world powers with Leviathan, there are equally convincing reasons that give us pause. First, while the Dragon is elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible identified with Egypt (Ezek 29:3; 32:2) and Babylon (Jer 51:34), as is Rahab (Ps 87:4), Leviathan, the central figure in Isa 27:1, is never identified with a world power.⁵⁰ This, of course, does not mean that Leviathan could never be identified with a world power, but it makes it less likely that it is in Isa 27:1. Second, our investigation of the mythological nature of Leviathan has demonstrated that we have in this verse one, and not three, monsters. If 27:1 “encapsulates the essence of the ‘message’ conveyed... in chs. 13–27,” it does so by painting a typical picture of the ways of YHWH in the world where Leviathan is an archetypal figure that stands for all powers, earthly and heavenly, that oppose YHWH’s will, not by singling out three specific nations. In this, the Targum translators are right to name Pharaoh and Sennacherib as archetypically evil kings, not as specific identities of Leviathan. Finally, the strong mythological nature of Leviathan advises against restricting Leviathan’s identity to the realm of world politics. The writers of this section may have had in mind specific kings and nations when they wrote these verses. But they deemed it more critical to portray a typical, or even a typological, way in which YHWH

⁴⁸ Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, 425. Delitzsch wrote before the discovery of Ras Shamra in 1929 and so was not aware of the Ugaritic parallels to these epithets.

⁴⁹ See Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 576–77.

⁵⁰ לִיָּתוֹן appears five times in the Hebrew Bible in Isa 27:1; Ps 74:14; 104:26; Job 3:8; and 40:25.

deals with forces of evil than to preserve historical specificity.⁵¹ In drawing on myth to write about present political situations, they established a pattern that is relevant for all times, not only for a specific time.

This claim that myth provides a pattern for all time, not only for specific historical events as the exodus or the exile, requires justification. Patterns of events are important for full-blown apocalyptic literatures, especially to those that Collins calls “historical” apocalypses and that contain a review of history.⁵² Carol A. Newsom, on the significance of discerning patterns in apocalyptic reviews of history, writes, “If an apocalyptic sage could demonstrate the existence of a repeated pattern in the history of Israel or in the rise and fall of world empires, then that sage could examine the events of the present for similar features... the discovery of a pattern in human history gave the apocalyptic seer an important predictive tool... [to] predict to some extent what the immediate future would hold.”⁵³ In certain cases, the pattern repeated in history might have its roots in primordial, cosmic events.⁵⁴ For example, in Daniel’s vision “the beasts which represent the empires are seen to rise up out of a turbulent sea. For Israelites thought the sea was the symbol of the primordial chaos which the creator God had to defeat before the world

⁵¹ “This theological intention also accounts for the inability of the interpreter to find one specific historical setting, since the focus consistently falls on a typology of God’s eternal purpose for his people that transcends one single historical moment in Israel’s experience” (Childs, *Isaiah*, 196).

⁵² Collins, *Apocalyptic*, 6. Examples of historical apocalypses include: Daniel 7–12, the Animal Apocalypse, the Apocalypse of Weeks, Jubilees 23, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, and the Apocalypse of Abraham. The review of history often takes the form of *vaticinium ex eventu*. See the chart in Collins, “Jewish Apocalypses,” 28.

⁵³ Newsom, “Past as Revelation,” 43.

⁵⁴ See Collins, “Jewish Apocalypse,” 28.

could come into being... To represent the world empires as emerging from the turbulent sea is then to identify their violence and greediness, their insatiable desire to grow larger and more powerful as eruptions of the [I would add, cosmic] force of chaos into history.”⁵⁵ Correspondingly, their defeat would be a reenactment of God’s primordial triumph over the chaos sea. Present world crises repeat, at some level, the cosmic conflict between YHWH and the watery forces of chaos. Daniel looked to myth to discern a pattern for history; and he found repeated in history a mythic pattern of cosmic rebellion against God, battle, and God’s victory. The apocalyptic imagination of the authors of Daniel, and of 1 Enoch and others, sought to place the local, present events within the context of a global, universal history, not in order to relativize their significance, but actually to imbue them with cosmic significance.⁵⁶ For when present, local events are shown to participate in a universal pattern that is repeated throughout

⁵⁵ Newsom, “Past as Revelation,” 47–48. More on Daniel below.

⁵⁶ Anthea Portier-Young, quoting Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, writes that “the ‘local’ is insufficient to combat a global empire. Empire ‘can be effectively contested only on its own level of generality’” (*Apocalypse Against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011], 304). She argues that the claims to power and authority made by global powers, such as the Seleucids, can be resisted “only when the local is joined to the universal” (ibid.). Thus, embedding the local within the universal is constitutive of apocalypse as resistance literature. Two tactics for accomplishing this integration, in accord with Collins’ definition of apocalypse, are available to the apocalyptic writer, one spatial and the other temporal. The temporal tactic is to assert a unity within history from the beginning of time to the end of time and to place one authority, YHWH for the Jewish writers, over all history. The spatial tactic is to claim a unity of space and claim it as the dominion of one supreme authority. It is not certain whether the belief in the unity of space and time is a consequence of the belief in an almighty god, whether monotheistic or not (so Jonathan Goldstein, *Peoples of an Almighty God: Competing Religions in the Ancient World* [ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 2002]), or vice versa. I imagine the two forces, the apocalyptic need to assert unity in space and time and the belief in an almighty god, reinforced and externalized the internal assumptions of apocalypse and the belief in an almighty god, providing for ancient Judaism an undeniable monotheistic impulse and thrust.

history and is rooted in a primordial, mythic event, the present and the imminent future take on world-determinative significance that has the potential to usher in an era of cosmic judgment, vindication, and transformation. This constitutes an important part of the apocalyptic eschatology where *Endzeit gleich Urzeit*.⁵⁷ And this is the reason for the interest of apocalyptic writers in history and in cosmogony.

As we noted above, Isaiah 24–27 aptly concludes the larger section, Isaiah 13–27, which includes the oracles against the nations (chapters 13–23). Unlike historical apocalypses, Isaiah 13–27 does not contain a review of history, but it does demonstrate a historical interest. The oracles against the nations, which have a history of development independent of Isaiah 24–27, establish a pattern of how God deals with historical-political entities: Individual nations are rebuked, judgment pronounced, and punishment foretold.⁵⁸ The interest of these oracles falls squarely on this worldly powers and foes, and the assumption is that YHWH reigns as king over them. Now, the placement of Isaiah 24–27, which eschews reference to historical enemies of Israel and YHWH,⁵⁹ transforms the rhetorical function of the oracles against the nations. They become, by virtue of the repeated pattern of divine judgment, anticipations and confirmations of what

⁵⁷ Cf. Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos*. For a brief discussion and defense of apocalyptic eschatology as a constitutive element of apocalypse, see Collins, *Apocalyptic*, 11–12. “All the apocalypses,” Collins (*ibid.*, 11) writes, “involve a transcendent eschatology that looks for retribution beyond the bounds of history.”

⁵⁸ Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 1–2. An indicative passage of the history of development is found in Isa 16:13–14, where the prophet or a later redactor updates the oracle against Moab. The oracle against Babylon (Isaiah 13) likely reflects a complex history of development from what was likely originally an oracle against Assyria (Goldstein, *Almighty God*, 83–91).

⁵⁹ The one exception is Moab (25:10b–12). Egypt and Assyria are mentioned in 27:12–13 as the land of Israel’s exile and not as her enemy.

will happen on a worldwide scale at an eschatological event: YHWH will judge and punish all forces opposed to him and his people Israel. In Jerome's words, "After individual nations each have been reprov'd... now, a prophetic sermon describes what is going to be revealed to the whole world at the end of time; this is no longer prophesied about individual nations, one at a time, but about all nations, as if they formed one large group."⁶⁰ Isaiah 24–27, as an apocalyptic vision about the eschaton, repeats and affirms the claims made in Isaiah 13–23, that YHWH reigns as king over historical and cosmic forces. And the crowning jewel of the so-called Isaiah Apocalypse is the vision of his foretold triumph over Leviathan in repetition of his primordial battle. That is to say, the repetition of primordial myth in the end times reveals that myth contains a pattern for interpreting past, present, and future history. The redactional unity of Isaiah 13–23 and 24–27 foreshadows the logic of historical apocalypses in which eschatological hope rests on a final repetition of a primordial and historical pattern of events.

3. *Creaturely Leviathan*

We turn, finally, to the creaturely dimension of Leviathan, the aspect that assumes and builds on the belief that YHWH is creator. The fact that the word נחש usually refers to a natural snake does not contribute to the argument that Leviathan here may be viewed as a creature. The crux of the argument lies in how we understand the phrase, "the Dragon that is in the sea (הַתַּנִּין אֲשֶׁר בַּיָּם)." We saw above that, in *KTU* 1.3 III 38–42, Yamm, Nahar, and Tunnan can be understood to refer to one entity. However, in *Isa* 27:1,

⁶⁰ Cited in Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 446.

Leviathan-Dragon resists equation to sea because of the simple fact that the Dragon is pictured as being in the sea, thus distinct from it. This introduces a number of interpretative options.

The sea in Isa 27:1 is spatial. This, however, does not guarantee that the sea is devoid of mythological overtones. For example, the sea out of which monsters come out in Daniel 7, as we will see in greater detail, and Revelation 13 most certainly is not simply a geographical body of water. In the *Baal Cycle*, the body of water, sea, can be conflated with the deity Yamm. In *KTU* 1.4 II 34–36, Athirat commands her attendant, Fisher of Lady Athirat of the Sea (*daggayu rabbati 'atirati yammi*),⁶¹ to cast the net

Into the Beloved of El, [Sea],	<i>b added. 'il.x[]</i>
Into Divine Sea [],	<i>bym 'il.d[]</i>
[R]iver, the God [] ⁶²	<i>[n]hr. 'il.y[]</i>

Smith and Pitard note that “we may have here a remarkable blending of the mythic deity Yamm with a naturalistic depiction of the sea. Such an interpretation appears to be reasonable and illustrates the fluidity with which gods may be depicted in mythological narrative.”⁶³ In light of these observations, we cannot discount the possibility that the sea in Isa 27:1 may represent deified nature or even a deity. All that we can say is that the eschatological prophet sought to mark a distinction between the sea and the Leviathan-

⁶¹ For a discussion of “Fisher of Lady Athirat” (also known as Qudš-wa-Amrar; see *KTU* 1.3 VI 9–11), his name, and his relationship with Athirat, see Smith and Pitard, *UBC II*, 376–78, 451–52; Rahmouni, *Divine Epithets*, 150–53,

⁶² Smith and Pitard, *UBC II*, 435.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 453.

Dragon. With this in mind, we turn to biblical passages where we find sea monsters depicted as being in the sea.

In Amos 9:3, we find a serpent (נחש) that lives at the bottom of the sea (רקעבק הים). The serpent is clearly a mythological entity, but it poses no threat to God's power and actually stands ready at his command: "there I will command the serpent to bite them" (Amos 9:3b). The great fish in Jonah is a later reflex of the same motif (Jon 2:1, 11). Thus, the Dragon that is in the sea may be understood as a mythological being that is subordinate to YHWH.

Ezek 29:3 and 32:2, in a mocking tone, describe Pharaoh as "the Great Dragon (התנין הגדול) crouching in the midst of his River (יאריו)" and as "the Dragon in the seas (וינתה בימים)."⁶⁴ These parallel verses favor a political understanding of the Dragon and are the reason that most commentators see a reference to Egypt in Isa 27:1.

In Gen 1:21, as we saw above, we learn that God created the great dragons (התנינים) along with other creatures that swarm in the water. Furthermore, Psalm 104, which reflects a mythological understanding of the sea in the opening verses (104:1–9, esp. 6–9), nevertheless speak of Leviathan, in the sea among small and big creatures and pelagic ships, as having been created by God for God to play with it (104: 25–26):

²⁵ Yonder is the sea, awesome and vast,
There are creeping things without number,

⁶⁴ The MT of 32:2 reads תנינים. But we should follow 2 MSS and read תנין. Moshe Greenberg (*Ezekiel 21–37* [AB 22A; New York: Doubleday, 1997] 601) explains the form: "perhaps resulting from a misconstrual of *-n* as an Aramaic plural ending and its 'correction' to Hebrew *-m*." In any case, in light of the similar contexts of Ezek 29:3 and 32:2, we are likely correct in seeing reference to the same entity in both passages. Greenberg says that the reference is primarily to a natural creature, probably a crocodile, but correctly notes that תנין in the latter passage, which is said to be in the seas as opposed to in the Nile, alludes to cosmogonic myth.

small creatures with large ones.
²⁶ There go the ships,
Leviathan whom you formed to play with.

Finally, in Job 40, God claims that he has mastered and controlled Leviathan, an awful creature no mortal can hope to subdue and fish out of the waters (40:25–32). In Job 40:15, God explicitly claims to have made (העשה) Behemoth but does not similarly say so about Leviathan. We might, however, classify both Leviathan with Behemoth as marvelous creatures God created.⁶⁵ This final set of texts reflects a development within the Hebrew Bible that, in emphasizing that God is creator, consequently reimagines once primordial forces of chaos as created entities. The Dragon and Leviathan are invariably depicted as watery creatures that live in the sea and as awesome but ultimately as posing no threat to God, the memorable Psalm 104 even depicting Leviathan as God’s plaything. In a world governed by one God, creator and king both, forces of evil are subsumed under his control.⁶⁶

As we just discussed, the Hebrew Bible preserves three distinct traditions concerning Leviathan or the Dragon that is in, thus distinct from, the sea. One preserves the ancient mythological background in diminished form; another uses the monsters as expressive symbols for world powers; a third claims that God created the dragons, Leviathan included, and imagines them too awful for human control but no threat to

⁶⁵ In proposing this, I have in mind extra-biblical traditions that link the two monsters (1 Enoch; 4 Ezra; 2 Apocalypse of Baruch; etc.) and may preserve an ancient mythological tradition. For a discussion of Behemoth and Leviathan in extra- and post-biblical texts, see Levenson, *Creation*, 33–36; K. William Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts: Leviathan and Behemoth in Second Temple and Early Rabbinic Judaism* (HSM 63; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006).

⁶⁶ This raises the question of theodicy. The response of apocalyptic writers was to affirm that God will destroy the force of evil once and for all at the eschatological end of days.

God's mastery. Because of this ambiguity, we cannot say with certainty that Leviathan-Dragon in Isa 27:1 is a creature. We can, however, on the basis of these passages in which we find the sea monster imagined as distinct from and in the sea, say that the power of such a monster is greatly reduced. Neither the serpent in the bottom of the sea nor Egypt in the guise of the great dragon, and certainly not Leviathan whom God formed to play with, poses a threat to YHWH's authority. To be distinct from the sea, for Leviathan, signals a reduction in power. I say this without forgetting the preceding analysis. Leviathan remains a mythological monster and a symbol for political powers. However, the ferocity implied by its mythic dimension is diminished by its distinction from the sea; and Leviathan's diminished status may have reminded the hearers of the prophetic message that the earthly powers that now oppress and torment them stand under God's authority to judge and punish, that God will annihilate them in a little while (Isa 26:20).

In sum, by describing the Dragon as being in the sea, not to be identified with it, the prophet looks forward to YHWH's eventual victory over Leviathan. The mythic pattern, established in primordial time and affirmed through repetition in history, alone would have assured the audience that YHWH will triumph over Leviathan in the eschaton. But the prophet strengthens this result with reference to Leviathan's diminished status, signaled by its distinction from the sea, and places YHWH's triumph over the chaos sea further beyond doubt.

4. Composite Leviathan

The composite identity of Leviathan testifies to the commingling of traditions that gives a complexity and a richness to the various themes and motifs that come together to shape Leviathan here. The mythic, the political, and the creaturely together define Leviathan-Dragon and crack open a window on a strange world where all three dimensions of reality coexist, more or less harmoniously, as co-dependent variables in a unified worldview. Historical and political realities are not interpreted within a closed this-worldly frame of reference. What happens between nations is determined by what happens in the heavenly realm between divine beings. At the same time, the mythic is not given determinative force. The mythic enemies of the one God are tamed, perhaps even domesticated. World politics is determined by cosmic battles between deities, but all deities except the one God become, in the prophet's vision, subordinate to the creator.

This is the work of fragmentation.⁶⁷ By taking but a fragment of a mythological event, even if with high fidelity, the prophet is able effectively to manipulate its meaning

⁶⁷ Fragmentation may be interpreted in two ways: (1). It can be interpreted as part of the process of demythologization. To preserve only fragments of a mythological whole is to use myth as ornamental language, useful for symbolic expression but not to be confused for ontological identity. (2) Fragmentation may be interpreted as an efficient means to evoke a well-known mythological whole and make it present in the text and available for interaction and manipulation. I see fragmentation being used in the latter manner in Isa 27:1, as evoking myth. According to the literary theories of Black and Harshav, a metaphor makes available to the text a frame of reference of which the metaphor is a fragment; and the meaning of the metaphor changes as a result of the interaction between the metaphorical frame of reference and the literary context, which makes present other frames of reference. Harshav ("Poetic Metaphor and Frames of Reference," 7) writes, "[W]e must observe metaphors in literature not as static, discrete units, but as dynamic patterns, changing in the text continuum, context-sensitive, relating to specific (fictional or real) frames of reference and dependent on interpretation." Thus, what I describe below is a process by which the mythological fragment, Leviathan, makes present in the text the mythological pattern of rebellion, battle, and defeat at the hand of God that is modified and transformed through interaction with the other contextual frames of reference, namely political and creation frames of reference. I interpret fragmentation as

through strategic placement within a larger work and incisive additions of minute details. The placement of Isa 27:1 within chapters 13–27, with its broad political interest and theological claims for YHWH’s mastery over history, colors the interpretation of the verse. It politicizes the mythic fragment so that we cannot help seeing the various nations, denounced in chapters 13–23, represented, perhaps even present, in Leviathan. At the same time, with the addition of a single phrase, “that is in the sea,” the prophet drains the potency out of the mytho-political Leviathan. Thus, YHWH’s victory over Leviathan becomes something more and less than Baal’s victory over Yamm.⁶⁸ It is more because Leviathan is both a chaos monster and all the political foes, past, present, and future, that defy YHWH’s will. It is less because Leviathan is but a creaturely monster, sporting in the sea, no threat to the passing ships of human commerce and daring.

5. Leviathan as an Analogy to Apocalypticism

Isaiah 24–27 “is not an apocalypse, but the beginning of an apocalyptic understanding of the world and an awareness of history are there. Isaiah 24–27 stands at the beginning of a powerful movement, one in which the faith of Israel once again showed that it had surprising creative power.”⁶⁹ This is Wildberger’s judicious conclusion about the relationship between Isaiah 24–27 and apocalypticism. He notes

part of the metaphorical use of mythic and textual tradition. The fragmentary textual unit preserves tradition at the same time it becomes the site for innovation.

⁶⁸ For a survey of the variety of ways in which the *Baal Cycle* has been interpreted, see Smith, *UBC I*, 58–114.

⁶⁹ Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 602.

that the so-called Isaiah Apocalypse is a mosaic of both apocalyptic and non-apocalyptic motifs but identifies in Isa 27:1 signs of an apocalyptic eschatology. Thus, there exists an ambiguity in the relationship between Isaiah 24–27 and apocalypticism that both permits and qualifies the following comments about the implication of the study of Leviathan in Isa 27:1 as an introduction to apocalypticism we will see in full bloom in Daniel 7.

In her recent and important book, *Apocalypticism Against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism*, Anthea E. Portier-Young argues that some of the earliest Jewish apocalypses, parts of Daniel, the Enochic Apocalypse of Weeks and Book of Dreams, are politically charged resistance literature against Seleucid hegemony and domination.⁷⁰ Reviewing and critiquing the political theory of James C. Scott, she dismisses the concept of the “hidden transcript,” as opposed to “public transcripts,” for these apocalypses. She argues that the “hidden” and “anonymous” nature of hidden transcripts reinforce, rather than resist, the “domination system.”⁷¹ The apocalyptic writers took seriously not only imperial domination through physical coercion but also its hegemony through “non-violent forms of control” that aimed to shape the consciousness of the dominated.⁷² Apocalypses are not Scott’s hidden transcripts, Portier-Young argues, that operate within bounds set by imperial authority for private, safe, and ultimately ineffectual exercises in liberty. Apocalypses publicly expose the inner logic of imperial discourse, produce counter-discourses that offer an alternative vision of a higher reality, and set the program for effective action against empire. The writers of apocalypses, far

⁷⁰ Portier-Young, *Resistance*.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 11.

from cowering in the safety of the private, boldly step into the public sphere and call for active (but not necessarily military) resistance against imperial domination and hegemony.

Portier-Young's political reading of apocalypse as resistance literature, though she acknowledges that not all apocalypses can be read as such,⁷³ is a welcome supplement to the theories of Paul D. Hanson and others that too radically separate apocalyptic eschatology from the concerns of history and world politics.⁷⁴ To use the language we used to describe Leviathan above, Hanson characterizes the origins of the apocalyptic as a retreat from world politics into the realm of myth. Portier-Young, in contrast, argues that the oldest apocalypses are far from politically disinterested. Rather, they are political and are intended to engage its readers in "effective action" against empire.⁷⁵

Portier-Young, however, does not engage sufficiently in the "hidden transcript"-like aspect of apocalyptic literature that empowers its readers to scoff, in the safety of secrecy, at the futility of world politics in the face of the greater reality of God's cosmic reign, revealed to the apocalyptic seer and through him to a select community. The quiet

⁷³ Ibid., 45.

⁷⁴ "In translating Yahweh's cosmic rule into the terms of contemporary history and politics, they [the prophets] often functioned as statesmen, as seen in their pronouncements on treaty relations, threats of war, and decisions regarding internal affairs; and throughout the pre-exilic period they held in tension the twin dimensions of their office, the vision of Yahweh's cosmic dominion and the translation of that vision into the idiom of their historical situation. After 587... [t]he prophets no longer have the events of a nation's history into which they can translate the terms of Yahweh's cosmic will. Hence the successors of the prophet, the visionaries, continue to have visions, but they increasingly abdicate the other dimension of the prophetic office, the translation into historical event. At that point we enter the period of the transition from prophetic into apocalyptic eschatology" (Hanson, *Dawn*, 16).

⁷⁵ "Resistance is effective action" (Portier-Young, *Resistance*, 44).

and private rebellion of escapism is, if not resistance, at least a powerful survival tactic for the dominated minority. She also does not treat sufficiently the mythological, transcendental claim that it will be God who slays Leviathan (Isaiah 27) and the great beasts that rise from the mythological sea (Daniel 7).⁷⁶ There is a significant part of apocalypticism that encourages the faithful to wait, to hope, and to believe in God, who alone can save them from a cosmic foe of mythic proportions. Nevertheless, we are indebted to her for pointing out again that apocalypses are not only escapist literature born out of pessimism about this world but also literature deeply troubled by but engaged in this-worldly affairs. They are also interested and invested in the correct interpretation of history and world politics as the dominion of God.

Are apocalypses also interested in creation, mirroring the natural dimension of Leviathan? Jonathan Goldstein, in his book, *Peoples of an Almighty God*, studies the religions of the ancient Near East through the heuristic lens of “an almighty god.”⁷⁷ He does not explicitly employ theories of resistance, but his interest in literature written in response to empire, such as the Neo-Assyrians and the Seleucids, comports with what we might call resistance literature. For example, he writes of Isa 43:10–15, “These words and others like them were to inspire the Jews for centuries to preserve their own identity in the face of bitter adversity and defeat.”⁷⁸ Goldstein says that the reason that the Jews were able to resist the pressure and adversity of empire and maintain their identity is that the Jews, like the Babylonians and, to a lesser degree, the Iranians and Egyptians, were

⁷⁶ On this, see below.

⁷⁷ Goldstein, *Almighty God*.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

“peoples of an almighty God.” That is, a people who “believes that a god stronger than all other powers combined is ultimately committed to be their protector, though temporarily the people may suffer adversity.”⁷⁹ Goldstein also argues that the literary production of such peoples shares certain common characteristics, especially when they face a crisis on a national scale. These include “connected histories” that explain how the people came about and, in case of defeat or enslavement, how and why their god permitted them to fall;⁸⁰ and prophetic texts that, on the basis of a prophetic interpretation or representation of past history, predict a glorious future.⁸¹ It is interesting that the Book of Daniel, with parts of Isaiah, is for Goldstein the exemplary literary production of one people of an almighty god, the Israelites. Goldstein argues that peoples who believe in an almighty god characteristically produce apocalyptic literature, particularly the historical type, in response to national crises.

Peoples who believe in an almighty god also share another characteristic: “all *peoples of an almighty god*,” Goldstein writes, “were like the Jews in holding that their special divine protector was the creator of the world.”⁸² He does not give much space to this observation, but belief that an almighty god, especially if he should be the sole god, is responsible for the creation of the cosmos is consistent with the referential frame of a people of an almighty god. If we take together the belief that an almighty god is the creator god with the above argument that a people of an almighty god, when faced with a

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 7.

⁸¹ Ibid., 18.

⁸² Ibid., 4.

tremendous crisis, will produce literature akin to apocalypses, we begin to understand the reason that apocalypses evince so much interest in primordial, especially cosmogonic events.⁸³ The claim for an almighty god's mastery in the realm of myth and history is redoubled by the belief that he is also the creator. Since he created all things, there is no cosmic or historical foe that can ultimately defy him, their maker. Writers of apocalypses are a people of an almighty god, and their god is the creator. Peoples of such a god could look to the fact of creation, the cosmic claims of myth, and revealed patterns in history to know and be assured that their God has been, is, and always will be in control, and for them.

That apocalypticism is a multifaceted phenomenon and that apocalyptic literature can assume many forms are well established observations in the field. To the brief discussion above, we might add Peter Schäfer's judicious study of *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism*, which deals with apocalyptic literature among others in uncovering the origins of Jewish mysticism.⁸⁴ The point that needs emphasizing, in analogy to the study of Leviathan, is that the study of apocalypses, apocalypticism, and apocalyptic eschatology requires a holistic approach that takes seriously their multiple dimensions, not as conflicting and confusing, but as working together to create a new metaphorical whole. The task is no doubt a difficult one, one that this current study adumbrates dimly. It is also necessary work if we are to capture fully the complexity, subtlety, and richness of apocalypticism.

⁸³ See the chart in Collins, "Jewish Apocalypses," 28.

⁸⁴ Peter Schäfer, *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

In conclusion, we cannot claim that what we have in Isa 27:1 is “an important link in the chain which connects the apocalypses with prophecy.”⁸⁵ Nor can we locate the multifaceted whole of apocalyptic in Leviathan-Dragon. What we can claim, however, is that we have a window onto an ideological landscape that intimates the kind of rich mixture of traditions out of which apocalyptic eschatology arose. And if the analysis of Leviathan’s multi-dimensional identity is correct, apocalyptic eschatology comes from an intellectual environment that made a daring combination of received traditions to address the questions of given reality in a bold claim for God’s future reign and salvation. The situation defies systematization. It is more like a living organism than a mechanical system. We might aptly liken it, in fact, to Leviathan, that great dragon in the sea.

C. The Sea Myth Pattern in the Isaiah Apocalypse

According to William R. Millar, Isaiah 24–27 several times replicates a mythic pattern, which he labels “the Divine Warrior Hymn,” also found in the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle*: threat, war, victory, and feast.⁸⁶ He argues that Isa 27:1 participates in one instance of the pattern (found in Isa 26:16–27:6) and depicts both the war between

⁸⁵ Rowland, *Open Book*, 198.

⁸⁶ Millar, *Isaiah 24–27*, 65–102. Millar’s thesis, though perhaps carried out too rigidly, correctly recognizes the deeply mythological nature of these chapters. The theme of feasting (Isa 25:6–8), which mentions YHWH’s swallowing the Death (הַמּוֹת, 25:8) (possibly a reference to the West Semitic Deity Môt; for a brief review of opinions on this issue, see Hibbard, *Intertextuality*, 81 n. 49), after a deity’s victory and enthronement (24:21–23) is another clearly mythological theme. For further suggestions, see Day, *God’s Conflict*, 142–51.

YHWH the Divine Warrior and the chaos monster Leviathan (27:1a) and YHWH's victory (27:1b).⁸⁷

The elements of the sea myth pattern are also discernable in the Isaiah Apocalypse, though admittedly not in an orderly pattern. The allusions to the waters of Noah assume God's primordial battle and victory over the cosmic waters of chaos and his mastery over them. YHWH's ability to unleash them again in a worldwide judgment is an exercise of this mastery. Isa 27:1 enacts an event seemingly prior to God's mastery over the sea, his battle and victory, as Millar has argued. Thus, what we have in the Isaiah Apocalypse is not an oracular collection strictly patterned after the sea myth, with the familiar battle followed by goodly consequences. Nevertheless, we have all the constitutive elements of the sea myth pattern represented in the Apocalypse, demonstrating once again the enduring vitality of the myth as a metaphor in the Bible. Since we have already identified Isa 27:1 as depicting God's battle against and victory over the sea, we can briefly enumerate the parts that reflect the goodly consequences.

1. Creation

Judgment and destruction, not creation and renewal, dominate in the Isaiah Apocalypse. Thus, the earth "dries up and withers" as if it were a garden (24:4); "a curse devours the earth" (23:5a); and the earth is desolate like the groves "as when an olive tree is beaten / as at the gleaning when the grape harvest is ended" (24:13). In short, "the earth is utterly broken... torn asunder...violently shaken" (24:19). What is pictured in

⁸⁷ Millar, *Isaiah 24–27*, 69.

the Isaiah Apocalypse is a worldwide destruction in part, as we discussed above, by the waters of Noah. However, this destruction is penultimate and is a necessary stage before renewal and recreation – clearances that stand open for new creation.

The eschatological prophet uses horticultural imagery in order to depict this recreation, particularly in Isaiah 27. Hibbard notes correctly that “Isaiah 27 brings much of the devastation introduced in Isaiah 24 full circle, offering a portrait that highlights the possibility of future blessing and restoration (cf. 27:2–6). That the two chapters have common features is easily seen in their shared use of horticultural imagery,” chapter 24 figuring destruction and chapter 27 renewal using horticultural metaphors.⁸⁸ The verses cited above well illustrate the use of horticultural imagery to depict destruction in Isaiah 24. Isa 27:2–6, on the other hand, well illustrate horticultural renewal:

² On that day,
Sing about it⁸⁹, a pleasant vineyard!
³ I YHWH am its keeper,
I water it every moment.
Lest someone destroy it,
I guard it night and day.
⁴ I have no wrath.
Should it give me thorns and thistles,
I march in battle against them,
I burn them⁹⁰ together.

⁸⁸ Hibbard, *Intertextuality*, 168. For a good treatment of horticultural metaphors in the Hebrew Bible, especially in Jeremiah 1–24, see Jindo, *Biblical Metaphor*, esp. 151–240.

⁸⁹ The feminine pronoun does not agree with the masculine “vineyard” (כרם). However, כרם is understood as feminine in Lev 25:3. “Some inanimate nouns show two genders,” and כרם is may be an example of this phenomenon (Walke-O’Conner 6.3.2 c). Whether or not this is the case here, I take the feminine pronoun to refer to the vineyard as a symbol for Zion, which is grammatically and metaphorically understood as feminine.

⁹⁰ The referent of the feminine pronoun is ambiguous. It is not to be understood as the vineyard, though the vineyard is understood as feminine in verse 2, but as referring

⁵ Or, if it should hold onto my refuge,
He makes peace with me,
He makes peace with me.
⁶ In days to come, Jacob will take root,
Israel will sprout and blossom.
Then the face of the world will be filled with fruit.

This song is almost universally acknowledged as an example of inner-biblical interpretation of the vineyard song in Isa 5:1–7.⁹¹ The “new” vineyard song reverses the curses threatened against Israel in the “old” vineyard song.⁹² Thus, Isaiah 5 provides an important context in which to interpret Isa 27:2–7.

More important is the immediate literary context of the Isaiah Apocalypse which universalizes the implications of the vineyard song, moving from the renewal of the people of Israel to the recreation of the entire world. As Hibbard has noted, if the worldwide destruction is, in part, figured in terms of the destruction of a garden or vineyard (24:4, 13), then its restoration, its recreation, is also figured in horticultural terms. Only, rejuvenation begins with Israel, whereas destruction is of the entire world. The new vineyard song makes clear that the rejuvenation of Israel, here figured as God’s royal garden, is the beginning of a worldwide renewal: “Jacob will take root / Israel will sprout and blossom. / Then the face of the whole world will be filled with fruit.” That is to say, after destroying the entire world by means of the waters of Noah and also

collectively to the “thorns” and “thistles.” Walke and O’Conner (16.4 b) note that “[s]ingular suffixes can have a collective reference.”

⁹¹ Hibbard (*Intertextuality*, 177 n. 42) finds that only Johnson (*Chaos*, 86–7) denies an intertextual relationship between Isa 5:1–7 and 27:2–6. But even Johnson (*ibid.*, 86) acknowledges that “[t]he points of contact between the original vineyard song [Isa 5:1–7] and 27:2–6 are numerous.”

⁹² See Johnson, *Chaos*, 86.

destroying the agents of chaos in Leviathan, the apocalyptic writer says that YHWH will renew creation beginning with Israel, that Israel will be the source and principle of life, safeguarded from destruction in a room reminiscent of Noah's Ark for this very purpose (26:20–21). Israel, in this light, becomes a second Noah, a kind of third progenitor of the human race after Adam and Noah. Israel also becomes a second Eden. Just as the Garden of Eden lies at the center of the cosmos and so establishes luxuriant life on earth at the time of first creation, so too does the renewal of the garden of God, the people of Israel, reestablish and renew creation in the eschaton.

2. Kingship

The divine garden, in the Hebrew Bible, is a conduit for various themes. Job Y. Jindo writes, "In the Bible, while the locus of the divine garden remains in the mytho-poetic sphere, the temple or the temple-city is conceived of as an earthly representation of the divine garden."⁹³ He also writes that "the motif of the divine garden is modeled after the notion of the royal garden."⁹⁴ Thus, if we are correct to see in the image of the garden in Isa 27:2–6 not only an Eden-like garden, a second Eden, but also the divine garden located in Zion, then we must also recognize in the garden motif a reflection of royal and sacral themes. Israel as a garden is a figure not only for a new creation but also for God's royal city and his holy temple.

⁹³ Jindo, *Biblical Metaphor*, 158.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 155.

The Isaiah Apocalypse, apart from the divine garden, clearly celebrates God's kingship in 24:21–23 and 25:6–8. These two passages, now separated by a psalm of praise (25:1–5), are closely related.⁹⁵ Both passages recount events that take place on Mount Zion, events that demonstrate YHWH's kingship. In fact, YHWH is explicitly hailed as king in 24:23b α : "King is YHWH of hosts / On Mount Zion and in Jerusalem." Furthermore, he is depicted as exercising, celebrating, and affirming his kingly authority in the passage. In the first half of the vision (24:21–22), YHWH judges the heavenly hosts and the earthly kings, demonstrating his authority over the entire cosmos. In the second half (25:6–8), he prepares an eschatological feast for all the peoples. As we mentioned above, feasts celebrate and inaugurate kingship. During this feast, God also swallows Death, the paradigmatic swallower of life (25:8a).⁹⁶ In sum, Zion is the site of God's royal garden and the seat of his eschatological kingship where justice is meted out against his heavenly, earthly, and infernal foes and where feasting occurs in celebration and confirmation of his eternal kingship.

3. Temple

Zion is not only a royal city, it is also, without doubt, the divine garden and the holy temple. This brings the Jerusalem Temple into view as the cultic center of God's

⁹⁵ Hibbard, *Intertextuality*, 75; Millar, *Isaiah 24–27*, 65; Polaski, *Isaiah 24–27*, 161–62.

⁹⁶ For depictions of "death" as a swallower, in the Hebrew Bible, see Num 16:30; Isa 5:14; Hab 2:5; Prov 1:12; etc. In the *Baal Cycle*, see *KTU* 1.4 VIII 14–20; 1.5 I 6–8, 14–19; II 2–6. For a fuller discussion, see Paul Kang-Kul Cho and Janling Fu, "Death and Feasting in the Isaiah Apocalypse (Isaiah 25:6–8)," in *Formation and Intertextuality in Isaiah 24–27* (eds. Todd Hibbard and Paul Kim; SBLAIL 17; Atlanta: SBL, 2013) 117–42.

kingdom. The liturgical characteristics of the Isaiah Apocalypse, most thoroughly explored by Lindblom, are an implicit indication of the importance of cultic life to the idea of eschatological restoration.⁹⁷ And Isa 27:13 makes the importance of the Temple explicit:

¹³ And it will be on that day that the great horn will be sounded, and those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were banished in the land of Egypt will enter and worship YHWH on the holy mountain, in Jerusalem.

The restoration after YHWH's cosmic battle with Leviathan includes the restoration of worship at the Temple, thus of necessity also the Temple itself.

In sum, the so-called Isaiah Apocalypse prophesies the coming of the three familiar goodly consequences of God's victory over the chaos sea: creation, divine kingship, and temple. Like the prophet of Deutero-Isaiah, the eschatological prophet assumes the continued viability of YHWH's kingship over heavenly and earthly powers but, at the same time, locates its celebration in an eschatological feast to come. YHWH's authority as creator is demonstrated, on the one hand, by his mastery over the chaos waters: his victory over Leviathan and his power to release the primordial waters in judgment. On the other, his creative power is on display in his ability to renew creation by renewing the divine garden in Zion (27:2–6). Finally, the Temple, implied in both Zion as the place of God's judgment and feast and in the image of the divine garden, comes clearly into view in 27:13, which depicts the exiled Israelites returning to Jerusalem to worship YHWH, their king and creator.

⁹⁷ Lindblom, *Jesaja-Apokalypse*.

II. Daniel 7

The sea appears in Daniel 7 in an apocalyptic vision concerning the end-time in arguably the latest layer of the Hebrew Bible. It appears as the “great sea” that the four winds of heaven agitate and out of which four great beasts rise (7:2–3). The sea is symbolic of chaos here as the place of origin of the four beasts, themselves symbolic of world empires. Though the sea itself does not threaten God, his people, or creation, the four beasts it releases, especially the fourth, are tremendous destructive forces. They give expression to the apocalyptic writer’s sense that the entire world stands under threat of destruction. The era of the four beasts, according to the vision, is an era of crisis and disorder – understood as one continuous time of exile – which climaxes during the period of the fourth beast. Worse still within that final period is the reign of the eleventh king, represented by the eleventh horn. This, the apocalyptic writer declares, is the depths of exile, the very nadir of world history.

At long last, at this very juncture in history, after centuries of patience, the apocalyptic writers speaks of imminent salvation. God will subdue the beasts, annihilate the fourth beast and its eleventh horn, and give everlasting dominion to the One like a Son of Man. These imminent events are a repetition of past battles between God and his foe – only this time it will be the fact of victory that endures and not the forces of chaos. If past battles placed the watery foe under restraint but did not destroy it, the apocalyptic writer says that the battle in the eschaton will be a perfect and permanent enactment of God’s mastery. His cosmic foe will fall to rise nevermore. This has always been a hope,

that God will one day put the raging sea to lasting rest. And the vision in Daniel 7 proclaims that that day is come.

A. Daniel 7 in Context

Before we examine the sea in the apocalypse of Daniel 7, we need first to set the chapter in its literary and historical context.

1. Literary Context

The Book of Daniel is a book of bifurcations. The book is first divided along generic lines. The first six chapters (Daniel 1–6) are a collection of court tales mostly set in the Babylonian exile.⁹⁸ The final six chapters (Daniel 7–12), in contrast, are an apocalypse and recount a series of apocalyptic visions.⁹⁹ The character of Daniel, being the protagonist of the court tales (with the exception of the story in chapter 3) and the apocalyptic seer, binds the court tales and the apocalyptic visions. But the contents of the two sections are, in terms of genre, far different from one another.¹⁰⁰ The book is also divided along linguistic lines. Daniel 1 and 8–12 are preserved in Hebrew in the MT,

⁹⁸ For a convenient discussion of the genre of the tales, see John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 38–52.

⁹⁹ See above. Also see Collins, *Daniel*, 52–71. These chapters are, according to Collins (“Jewish Apocalypses,” 22), a historical apocalypse with no otherworldly journey.

¹⁰⁰ On the similarities between Daniel 2 and 7 below.

whereas Daniel 2–7 are preserved in Aramaic.¹⁰¹ The generic and linguistic bifurcations together present a number of challenges to interpreting the Book of Daniel as a whole and, as we will now see, chapter 7 in particular.

This is because Daniel 7 straddles the double divide that characterizes the Book of Daniel. Like most of the court tales, Daniel 7 is preserved in Aramaic. But in terms of genre, it is an apocalypse like the second half of the book. It stands in the breach between the two halves of the book and, as Collins has argued, functions as an editorial device that binds the halves together.¹⁰² Furthermore, Paul R. Raabe and J. Paul Tanner independently argue that Daniel 7 is a “*hinge* which ties together the beginning and the end of the book.”¹⁰³ In short, Daniel 7 is Janus-faced and looks backward and forward.

Let us first consider the close relationship between Daniel 7 and the preceding chapters. More than common language binds Daniel 2–7. Adrianus Lenglet provides a strong argument for the literary unity of Daniel 2–7 in arguing that “cette partie araméene

¹⁰¹ To be precise, Dan 2:4b–7:28 are in Aramaic. Whether or not these sections were originally composed in the languages in which we have them now is a matter of continued debate. For a review of past scholarship on this issue, see Collins, *Daniel*, 12–24, 33–38; Adam S. van der Woude, “Die Doppelsprachigkeit des Buches Daniel,” in *The Book of Daniel in the Light of New Findings* (ed. A. S. van der Woude; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993) 3–12. Louis F. Hartman and Alexander A. Di Lella (*The Book of Daniel* [AB 23; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978] 14–15) believe that the entire book was first composed in Aramaic and certain sections secondarily translated into Hebrew; following H. Louis Ginsberg, *Studies in Daniel* (New York: JPS, 1948) 38–40, 41–61. For counter arguments to this position, see Collins, *Daniel*, 23.

¹⁰² Collins, *Apocalyptic*, 89.

¹⁰³ Paul R. Raabe, “Daniel 7: Its Structure and Role in the Book,” in *HAR* 9 (1985) 267–75, here 272, emphasis original. J. Paul Tanner, “The Literary Structure of the Book of Daniel,” *BSac* 160 (2003) 269–82.

est structurée d'une manière concentrique."¹⁰⁴ Chapters 2 and 7 both contain a four kingdom schema, which is presented in a dream vision to Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel, respectively.¹⁰⁵ These chapters form the outer circle of what might be called the Aramaic Book of Daniel. Chapters 3 and 6 form the inner circle and recount stories of divine deliverance of willing martyrs for God, Daniel's three friends and Daniel himself.¹⁰⁶ Finally, the central chapters, chapters 4 and 5, are stories of divine admonition against proud rulers, Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, that are genetically (Belshazzar is presented as Nebuchadnezzar's son)¹⁰⁷ and textually (Nebuchadnezzar's story from chapter 4 is repeated in chapter 5) sown together.¹⁰⁸ The concentric structure of Daniel 2–7 teaches us that we must take their literary unity seriously.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Adrianus Lenglet, "La structure littéraire de Daniel 2–7," *Bib* 53 (1972) 169–90, here 169. In addition to Lenglet's brief discussion (*ibid.*, 169–70) on the prevalence of concentric structures in ancient literature, see Mary Douglas, *Thinking in Circles: An Essay on Ring Composition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 171–82. On the four kingdom schema, see Collins, *Daniel*, 166–70.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 182–85.

¹⁰⁷ Belshazzar is the son of Nabonidus, not Nebuchadnezzar. On this, C. L. Seow (*Daniel* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003] 76–77) writes, "One should keep in mind that in the Semitic language, 'father' is not limited to that of a biological or even adoptive parents. The term may be used simply of an ancestor or a progenitor." He continues, "The father-son language serves to link the two kings [Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar]: the one who took the vessels from the temple in Jerusalem with the one who desecralized them; the one who ruled at the beginning of Judah's exile under the Chaldeans with the one who ruled at the end of that period." It also binds the central chapters of the Aramaic Book of Daniel more closely together.

¹⁰⁸ Lenglet, "Daniel 2–7," 185–87.

¹⁰⁹ See Rainer Albertz, "The Social Setting of the Aramaic and Hebrew Book of Daniel," in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, Vol. 1 (eds. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint; Leiden: Brill, 2001) 171–204, esp. 176–79.

At the same time, Daniel 7 is also closely related to the following chapters. First of all, as we mentioned above, Daniel 7 is an apocalypse like Daniel 8–12 and shares with the latter chapters a pessimism about foreign rulers. Whereas pagan rulers are depicted as corrupt but corrigible in the first half of the book, able to acknowledge and even glorify the God of the Jews (2:46–47; 3:28–29; 4:34–37; 5:29; 6:25–27) – the possibility of full Jewish participation in the life and government of foreign nations still exists; in the second half of the book, foreign nations are beasts, irredeemable, and must be replaced by the humane kingdom of God. And this pessimistic conception of foreign nations and the optimism concerning the coming age are presented in symbolic, allegorical visions that require angelic interpretation.¹¹⁰

Moreover, Daniel 7 participates in the chronological structuring schema that organizes Daniel 7–12. Daniel 2–6 reflect a chronological development from Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2–4), Belshazzar (Daniel 5), to Darius and Cyrus (Daniel 6). However, Daniel 7 breaks this chronological development and reverts back to Belshazzar. In fact, chapter 7 begins a new chronological sequence that continues into the following chapters. The four visions contained in chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10–12 replicate the four kingdom pattern we see in chapters 2 and 7: Babylon (Daniel 7), Media (Daniel 9), Persia (Daniel 10), and Greece (Daniel 10:20).¹¹¹ Furthermore, the four visions are organized chronologically: Daniel receives the first vision in the first year of Belshazzar (7:1), the second vision in the third year of Belshazzar (8:1), the third in the first year of Darius

¹¹⁰ This is not to deny the difference between Daniel 7 and chapters 8–12. See van der Woude, “Doppelsprachigkeit,” 4–5.

¹¹¹ See Collins, *Apocalyptic*, 89.

(9:1–2), and the fourth in chapters 10–12 in the third year of Cyrus (10:1).¹¹² In sum, not only is chapter 7 integral to the Aramaic section of Daniel, it has strong generic, thematic, and structural affinities with the Daniel 8–12. Chapter 7 straddles the two seams that divide the book and functions as an interlocking device.

Paul Raabe builds on these observations and argues that Daniel 7 serves as a “*middle pivot or hinge*.”¹¹³ He argues this point by observing that chapter 7 looks backward to chapter 2 and forward to chapter 12. In addition to the thematic relationship between chapters 2 and 7, Raabe notes that “only in 2:21 and 7:25 is there a reference to one ‘changing the seasons.’ God ‘changes the seasons’ in 2:21, whereas the little horn intends ‘to change seasons and law’ in 7:25.”¹¹⁴ Raabe also argues that chapter 7 anticipates the end of the book. The themes of the persecution of the saints and the triumph of “the people of the saints,” which are expansions on the basic theme of four kingdoms chapter 7 shares with chapter 2, are in turn the focus of the following chapters. In addition, the “books” of judgment (7:10) and the phrase “a time, two times, and a half a time” (7:25) are found elsewhere in Daniel only in 12:25 and 12:7.¹¹⁵ Daniel 7 anticipates chapter 12.

¹¹² See Tanner, “Literary Structure,” 278.

¹¹³ Raabe, “Daniel 7,” 272.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. The phrase used in Dan 7:25 is not a perfect match with what we find in 2:21. Dan 2:21 reads, “והוא מהשנא עדניא וזמניא” (He changes seasons and times). Dan 7:25 reads, “ויסבר להשנייה זמנין ודת” (He will think to change times and law). God’s authority is connected to his ability to depose and enthrone kings (2:25), which he exercises over all kingdoms and kings, including Antiochus IV. Antiochus IV attempts to change the cultic calendar, according to which the Jews celebrate God. In this sense, God’s actual power and Antiochus’ assumed power stand at war against each other. God actually has power over kings like Antiochus. Antiochus thinks he has power over God.

Independent of Raabe, Paul Tanner also argues that “Daniel 7... serves as a *hinge* to both major sections of the book” and strengthens Raabe’s basic thesis with four additional observations.¹¹⁶ First, Tanner argues that chapter 7 bridges the bifurcated temporal perspective of the book. Whereas chapters 2–6 primarily focus on “God’s dealing with kingdoms in Daniel’s own lifetime” and chapter 8–12 on “matters that [go] beyond the lifetime of Daniel,” chapter 7 “reiterates the succession of ancient Gentile kingdoms” and “provides more detail about the ‘latter days’ when the Antichrist will arise.”¹¹⁷ Daniel 7 facilitates the temporal transition from the Babylonian to the Hellenistic era by beginning in the former and ending in the latter.

Second, the dating notices of the two halves of the book are different. “[C]hapters 2–7 are not strictly arranged chronologically, whereas the visions of chapters 7–12 are arranged in precise chronological order.”¹¹⁸ In chapters 1–7, we find dating notices only in 1:1, 2:1, and 7:1. As we noted above, these chapters overall are arranged thematically in a concentric structure, not chronologically. On the other hand, we find dating notices at the beginning of each vision in chapters 7–12, and they follow a strict chronological order: “In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon” (7:1); “In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king” (8:1); “In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus” (9:1); and “In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia” (10:1). In sum, chapter 7

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 273.

¹¹⁶ Tanner, “Literary Structure,” 282, emphasis added.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 278.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

participates in both organizing schemes and bridges the concentrically structured and chronologically structured two halves of Daniel.

Third, on the one hand, in chapters 1–6, “each chapter ends with either Daniel being honored or God being exalted and praised (and in several cases they are both).”¹¹⁹ On the other, in chapters 8–12, “the concluding paragraph of each unit generally emphasizes a much different motif, namely, the opposition and defeat of a future ruler who will martyr many saints (8:23–27; 9:27; 11:44–45).”¹²⁰ Both of these motifs, however, appear in chapter 7: God and his people are exalted and the defeat of foreign rulers is foretold (7:25–27).

Fourth, chapter 7 bridges the change in narrative voice between the two sections. While chapters 1–6 are told in the third person, chapters 8–12 are narrated from the first-person perspective. “Chapter 7, however, is technically in the third person, though in practicality it is in the first.”¹²¹ It begins as a third-person narrative (7:1), changes into the first-person perspective (7:2), and does not revert back to the third-person for the remainder of the book.¹²²

In sum, if the Book of Daniel is characterized by two bifurcations, one of language and the other of genre, then Daniel 7 binds the two halves in a variety of ways and, indeed, facilitates the transition from one half to the other. It functions as an

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 279.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 280.

¹²² Dan 7:28a briefly reverts back to third person narration.

interlocking device, a hinge, and as a bridge. Daniel 7 is pivotal to the correct understanding of the Book of Daniel as a whole.¹²³

2. *Historical Context*

The pivotal role of Daniel 7 in the Book of Daniel makes it difficult to date the chapter and thus determine its historical context. Should it be dated earlier with the Aramaic court tales, some parts of which may date as far back as the Persian era, or later to the Maccabean period with the Hebrew apocalypse? Did Daniel 7, with Daniel 2–6, constitute an Aramaic book before the introduction of the Hebrew sections?¹²⁴ Or was Daniel 7 composed along with Daniel 8–12 to facilitate the transition from the court tales to the apocalypse? The issue of dating is intimately related to the history of composition, itself a complex issue.¹²⁵

We cannot examine the numerous issues involved in dating Daniel 7. As we will see, Daniel 7 contains older source materials that the final apocalyptic author shaped into its current form, all of which further complicate the issue. It should also be noted that

¹²³ On the redactional unity of Daniel, see Collins, *Apocalyptic*, 87–90.

¹²⁴ See Collins, *Daniel*, 33–37.

¹²⁵ Collins (*Daniel*, 38) proposes a five step process of textual growth: (1) The court tales of chapters 2–6 circulated independently. (2) Dan 3:31–6:29 were initially collected into a unit. (3) In the Hellenistic period, the Aramaic tales were collected, with an introductory chapter 1. (4) In the early stages of the persecution of Antiochus IV, chapter 7 was composed in Aramaic and appended to the earlier collection of tales. (5) Between 167 and 164 BCE, chapters 8–12 were composed in Hebrew and chapter 1 translated into Hebrew. For a more detailed discussion, see *ibid.*, 24–38.

cogent arguments that Daniel 2–7 form an originally independent unit have been made.¹²⁶ However, we can argue with relative confidence that the final form of Daniel 7 should be dated closer to the apocalyptic visions of Daniel 8–12 in the Maccabean period, probably between 169–167 BCE, after the beginning of the persecution of Antiochus IV Epiphanes but before the desecration of the Temple in December 167.

The decisive point in dating the final form of Daniel 7 to the Maccabean period has to do with the identity of the “little horn” that takes the place of three of the ten horns of the fourth beast (7:8, 20, 24), speaks arrogantly (7:8, 11, 25), wages war against the holy ones (7:21, 25), and attempts to change the times and the law (7:25). A minority of scholars identifies the “little horn” with Antiochus III.¹²⁷ But the majority identifies the little horn with Antiochus IV Epiphanes, since this interpretation better explains the specific details of the vision.

Dan 7:8, 20, and 24 state that three horns were plucked out in order to make room for the eleventh horn. Broadly speaking, scholars propose two ways of identifying the three horns in efforts to identify the eleventh and smaller horn with Antiochus IV. The first way is to interpret the ten horns as representing the line of Greek kings, beginning with Alexander the Great.¹²⁸ Within this framework, some commentators point out that

¹²⁶ Lenglet, “Daniel 2–7”; Albertz, “Social Setting,” 183–91. See Collins, *Daniel*, 278. Collins argues against the existence of a pre-Maccabean stage in the compositional history of Daniel 7.

¹²⁷ Jürgen-Christian Lebram, *Das Buch Daniel* (ZBK AT 23; Zürich: Theologische Verlag, 1984) 21, 84, 89.

¹²⁸ “Whether Antiochus IV Epiphanes was actually the eleventh king in this sequence of monarchs from Alexander to the time of the writer is open to considerable question, though one way of counting produces just such a number” (W. Sibley Towner, *Daniel* [Interpretation; Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1984] 95).

Antiochus IV's immediate predecessors, Antiochus III and Seleucus IV, died violent deaths: Antiochus III was killed during an attempt to rob a temple in Elam in 187, and Seleucus IV was murdered by Heliodorus in 175.¹²⁹ The suggestion is that Antiochus III and Seleucus IV are two of the three displaced horns. As the third horn, Heliodorus, Demetrius I, or Antiochus (the latter two being the sons of Seleucus IV) is usually named. Antiochus IV murdered Heliodorus;¹³⁰ Demetrius I, the older son of Seleucus IV, was exiled to Rome, though not by Antiochus IV;¹³¹ and Antiochus IV initially made Antiochus, Seleucus' younger son, co-regent but murdered him after five years.¹³² Objections have been raised against these candidates.¹³³ So within the same framework of interpreting the horns as Greek kings, other commentators propose a different solution. Collins, for example, writes that “[t]he most reasonable hypothesis is that these [three

¹²⁹ See Chris Seeman, “Jewish History from Alexander to Hadrian” in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism* (eds. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010) 25–55, here 31–32; Leonard J. Greenspoon, “Between Alexandria and Antioch: Jews and Judaism in the Hellenistic Period” in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World* (ed. Michael D. Coogan; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 317–51, here 323–26; Bright, *History of Israel*, 418.

¹³⁰ Towner, *Daniel*, 95.

¹³¹ Hartman and Di Lella, *Daniel*, 216; Collins, *Daniel*, 321.

¹³² Collins, *Daniel*, 321 and n. 401.

¹³³ Hartman and Di Lella (*Daniel*, 216) argue against the identification of the third horn with Demetrius I or Antiochus, noting that neither was king before Antiochus IV. Demetrius I became king after Antiochus IV, and Antiochus was coregent with Antiochus IV. Antiochus IV murdered Heliodorus, but Heliodorus was never king (Towner, *Daniel*, 95).

horns] were the kings or claimants whom [Antiochus IV] Epiphanes supplanted in order to reach the throne,” namely Seleucus IV and his two sons, Demetrius I and Antiochus.¹³⁴

Another way of identifying the three horns was first suggested by Porphyry, a Neoplatonic philosopher from the third century CE. He identified the three uprooted horns with Artaxias of Armenia, Ptolemy VI Philometer, and Ptolemy VII Euergetes, all of whom Antiochus IV indeed defeated in 166, 169, and 168, respectively.¹³⁵ Hartman and Di Lella agree with Porphyry and so propose that the final author/redactor of Daniel 7 “must have considered the ten horns of the fourth beast as representing, not ten consecutive rulers of the Greek kingdom... but as ten more or less contemporaneous pagan rulers of his day... the fourth beast is not merely the Greek kingdom, but the totality of the pagan world in the Greek period.”¹³⁶ It should be noted here that Hartman and Di Lella consider the passages concerning the eleventh horn (7:8, 11a, 20b–21, 24b–26) as later additions by a redactor.¹³⁷ The original author of the apocalypse, they argue, meant the ten horns to represent the line of Greek kings, the tenth being Antiochus IV. However, a later redactor of Daniel 7 interpreted the ten horns as referring to

¹³⁴ Collins, *Daniel*, 321. Maurice Casey (*Son of Man: The Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7* [London: SPCK, 1979] 20–21) also identifies the three horns with Seleucus IV and his two sons, Demetrius I and Antiochus.

¹³⁵ Hartman and Di Lella, *Daniel*, 216; André Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel* (trans. David Pellauer; English ed. rev. by the author; Atlanta: John Knox, 1979) 141 n. 90; Collins, *Daniel*, 320. Preserved by Jerome.

¹³⁶ Hartman and Di Lella, *Daniel*, 216–17. See also H. H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in Daniel: A Historical Study of Contemporary Theories* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1964) 101–103. In support of the contemporaneity of the ten horns with the little horn, one might mention Dan 7:20 which calls the horns “his [Antiochus’] fellows” (חברתה).

¹³⁷ Hartman and Di Lella, *Daniel*, 210, 215–17. In this, Hartman and Di Lella essentially follow Ginsberg, *Daniel*, 5–23.

contemporaries of Antiochus IV. Thus, they find that the bifurcation within the interpretive tradition concerning the three uprooted horns can be explained by reference to the literary history of the text. At an earlier stage of textual development, the ten horns were symbolic of the line of Greek kings as many commentators propose. A redactor transformed them to refer to contemporary world ruler of Antiochus by adding the passages concerning the eleventh horn, as Porphyry and others argue.

In sum, neither method of decoding the horn symbolism is conclusive.¹³⁸ Both are dependent on historical or literary reconstructions that remain open to debate. However, the details of the present text and their interpretation do not disallow an identification of the eleventh horn with Antiochus IV, which in any case can be established more firmly on other grounds. We now turn to them.

Dan 7:21 and 25 state that the little horn wages war against the holy ones and attempts to change the times and the law. These details allow us to identify the little horn with Antiochus IV and furthermore to date Daniel 7 to after 169, probably to late 167.¹³⁹ The *terminus post quem* of 169 BCE is set by Antiochus IV's first direct military action against Jerusalem in that year when he plundered the Temple (see 1 Macc 1:20–28; cf. 2 Macc 5:11–21).¹⁴⁰ This is the earliest possible referent of the little horn's antagonism against the holy ones. The *terminus ante quem* is set by the fact that the desecration of the Temple, which took place on Chislev 15, 145 (=December 6, 167 BCE; 1 Macc 1:54),

¹³⁸ For a treatment of the animal and horn imagery with reference to contemporary metaphor theory and Mesopotamian mantic wisdom tradition, see Paul A. Porter, *Metaphors and Monsters: A Literary-Critical Study of Daniel 7 and 8* (ConBOT 20; Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1983).

¹³⁹ Portier-Young, *Resistance*, 176.

¹⁴⁰ Collins, *Daniel*, 62, n. 496.

is not mentioned anywhere in Daniel 7. The desecration is mentioned in Dan 8:11–13 and other passages. The fact that the apocalyptic vision and its interpretation refers to the heavenly court, the archetype of the earthly temple, is further evidence that the Jerusalem Temple had not been desecrated at the time of the final redaction of Daniel 7.

Within 169–167, we can more precisely date the final form of Daniel 7 to late 167, before the desecration of the Temple, but after the time Antiochus instituted a program of Jewish persecution in that year, forcing Jews “to profane Sabbaths and feasts” (1 Macc 1:45; 2 Macc 6:6; see 1 Macc 1:44–50) and executing those who possessed the Torah (1 Macc 1:57).¹⁴¹ The eleventh horn’s attempt to change “the times and the law” (Dan 7:25) refers to Antiochus’ 167 edict that outlawed the practice of Judaism, an edict that was enforced through threat, torture, and execution.¹⁴² These details allow us to date the final form of Daniel 7 to late 167, in the wake of Antiochus’ programmatic persecution of Jews and on the eve of the erection of a desolating sacrilege in the Jerusalem Temple.

B. The Sea and Daniel 7

1. Literary Shape of Daniel 7

¹⁴¹ The reason for the extent of Antiochus’ persecution of the Jews is still under debate. For a review of scholarly proposals, see Collins, *Daniel*, 63–65. For a recent suggestion, see Portier-Young, *Resistance*, 115–39.

¹⁴² Portier-Young, *Resistance*, 176. See Collins, *Daniel*, 323–24; Albertz, “Social Setting,” 187.

The final form of Daniel 7 can be confidently dated to the Maccabean period. However, as Daniel Boyarin has convincingly argued, chapter 7 is comprised of older sources that predate the Maccabean period.¹⁴³

Just as the Book of Daniel is characterized by bifurcations, so too is chapter 7. The chapter is divisible, first of all, into the vision (7:2–14) and its interpretation (7:15–27). The vision itself, as we will see in greater detail below, is also divisible into two distinct sources, a four-beast apocalypse (7:2–8, 11–12) and a two-throne apocalypse (7:9–10, 13–14). The interpretation (7:15–27) assumes the unity of the two apocalypses and is likely the work of the final author of Daniel 7 who stitched the two apocalypses together.¹⁴⁴ Since this literary history is important to the interpretation of the “great sea” (7:2, 3) and the sea myth pattern in Daniel 7, it bears rehearsing Boyarin’s recent arguments.

Boyarin’s basic thesis is that the vision portion of Daniel 7 (vv 2–14) is comprised of two originally independent apocalypses. The first apocalypse is that of the four beasts that rise from the sea (7:2–8, 11–12). And the second apocalypse is that of the two thrones, one for the Ancient of Days and the other for the One like a Son of Man (7:9–10, 13–14). Boyarin offers a number of observations to argue that “the author of Daniel had before him two texts in two literary forms, a myth that had been transformed already into a political allegory (the four beasts) and a poetic fragment of myth [the two thrones] that

¹⁴³ Daniel Boyarin, “Daniel 7, Intertextuality, and the History of Israel’s Cult,” *HTR* 105 (2012) 139–62.

¹⁴⁴ The final author may also be responsible for passages concerning the eleventh horn.

the author of Daniel sought (largely but not entirely successfully) to so transform through his own literary and then interpretive art.”¹⁴⁵

Boyarin begins by noting that there are “two abrupt changes of scene in these two verses [verses 9 and 11], one that jumps from the description of the speaking horn to the tribunal and then after two verses one that jumps back even more abruptly to the speaking horn.”¹⁴⁶ These abrupt changes indicate that two unlike source materials have been spliced together, sources that differ in terms of genre, narrative logic, and basic semiotics.

First, the two sources are distinguishable by genre. The four-beast apocalypse is written in prose, but the two-throne apocalypse is in poetry.¹⁴⁷ The prosody of verses 9–10 and 13–14 is recognizable by the use of synonymous parallelism, rhythmic structure, and other poetic features, which are absent from the rest of the vision account.¹⁴⁸

Second, separating the two sources undoes the abrupt narrative changes and reveals their original narrative coherence.¹⁴⁹ Verse 8, which ends with the eleventh horn speaking arrogantly, naturally flows into verse 11, which begins with the same image.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 148.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 143.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 145–46.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 146.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 144–45.

¹⁵⁰ This is resumptive repetition, a technique often used by biblical writers. The original four-beast apocalypse may have contained material elided in the composite apocalypse, material in which the victor over the sea or sea monsters is identified. More on this below.

Verses 9–10 and 13–14 are also “a coherent whole.”¹⁵¹ The presence of multiple, likely two, thrones (כרסין) in verse 9 suggests that one is for the Ancient of Days and the other for the One like a Son of Man, who approaches the Ancient of Days with the clouds (7:13). “Without seeing the appearance of the One like a Son of Man as a direct continuation of the appearance of the Ancient of Days, it is impossible to explain why there is more than one throne.”¹⁵²

Third, the two apocalypses are distinguishable by the different ways in which they create meaning. On the one hand, “[t]he vision of the four beasts is clearly a symbolic or even allegorical vision; the beasts represent something else, kings or kingdoms.”¹⁵³ But, on the other, in the two-throne apocalypse, “the Ancient of Days is not an allegorical symbol of any kind – he is undoubtedly God.”¹⁵⁴ This suggests that “the One like a Son of Man who actually approaches him, would also not be an allegory, but a real person, also an actual divine entity not a symbol of something else.”¹⁵⁵ In sum, the figures in the four-beast apocalypse are symbolic. They figuratively stand for something else. However, the figures of the two-throne apocalypse represent themselves.

This third point helps explain the bifurcation within the interpretive tradition concerning the man-like figure, one line of interpretation arguing that the man-like figure

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 144.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 146.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

is a collective symbol of Israel and the other that he is a divine being.¹⁵⁶ In the reconstructed original two-throne apocalypse, the man-like figure is “a real divine entity in the form of a human being and not a picture of a human being standing for something else.”¹⁵⁷ Boyarin argues that we cannot have a divine Ancient of Days who interacts with a symbolic entity, the One like a Son of Man. Rather, the literary unity of the two-throne apocalypse dictates that both the Ancient of Days and the One like a Son of Man are divine entities. However, in the composite Daniel 7, the conjoining of the four-beast apocalypse makes available its allegorical semiotics for interpreting the man-like figure as a symbol for Israel or its faithful subset, as he in fact is in the interpretation section (7:15–27).¹⁵⁸ To generalize, the depth dimension of Daniel 7 makes possible both figurative and literal interpretations of the vision. As we will see below, the semiotics of the two originally independent apocalypses become available for the interpretation of the entirety of the composite apocalyptic vision of Daniel 7 and its individual elements. More to the point at hand, just as literary history may help explain the bifurcated interpretive tradition concerning the ten horns, the theory of two older sources helps explain the history of interpretation of the One like a Son of Man.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 139.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 147.

¹⁵⁸ Casey (*Son of God*, 25) writes, “It follows from this that the man-like figure is a symbol of the Saints of the Most High. Moreover he is a pure symbol, that is to say, he is not a real being who exists outside Daniel’s dream; he is only a symbolic being within the dream.” At the same time, he (ibid., 27) writes, “The other important being in the dream is the Ancient of Days; here there is no $\bar{\omega}$ because this being in fact exists.” I agree with Boyarin that such efforts to argue that the Ancient of Days is an actual being and that the One like a Son of Man is a symbol are awkward.

2. *The Great Sea*

Boyarin explores carefully the implications of the literary history of Daniel 7 for interpreting the two-throne apocalypse but does not do so for the four-beast apocalypse. His explicit interest concerns the One like a Son of Man and the bifurcation of the interpretive tradition concerning that figure. In his opinion, the allegorical semiotics of the four-beast apocalypse dominates the final form of Daniel 7 and is the one promoted by the Danielic author in his own interpretation of the vision (vv 15–27). The binitarian theology of the two-throne apocalypse is suppressed in favor of monotheism by transforming the mythical representation of a second deity into a symbol of a historical people. The preference of the composite work for the semiotics of the four-beast apocalypse means, to a certain extent, that the four-beast apocalypse continues to mean symbolically in the present context as it had originally. The bringing together of the two apocalypses transformed the two-throne apocalypse to a greater degree than the four-beast apocalypse. Thus, the four-beast apocalypse is of less interest for Boyarin whose interest lies in unearthing older traditions buried in the present text.

Yet, the transformation of the two-throne apocalypse has been partial, and the four-beast apocalypse, too, has changed as a consequence of the union. For example, the Ancient of Days does not become symbolic of a second figure in the composite work but remains the Ancient of Days, and it is still possible to interpret the man-like figure as an actual divine entity, as the interpretive tradition demonstrates. Boyarin recognizes this: “In the final text, we end up with [an actual] God speaking with a *symbol* for Israel and

not with a member of the celestial court.”¹⁵⁹ The man-like figure becomes a symbol but not the Ancient of Days. In addition, Boyarin recognizes that the river of fire of the throne vision (7:9) becomes the literal fire of judgment for the fourth beast, not a symbol for something else (7:11).¹⁶⁰ The fire example teaches us that the transfer is not unidirectional, from the four-beast apocalypse to the two-throne apocalypse, but bidirectional. Elements from both apocalypses interpenetrate each other. That is to say, we also find that the four-beast apocalypse has been transformed by its union with the two-throne apocalypse.

Thus, if Boyarin finds in the bifurcated interpretive tradition concerning the man-like figure his methodological starting point for the literary history of Daniel 7, on a smaller scale, we find the same in the interpretive tradition of the “great sea” (7:2). For the “great sea” too has been interpreted in two different ways.

Scholarly debate concerning the “great sea” in Dan 7:2 vacillates between the Mediterranean Sea and the mythic sea of chaos. Maurice Casey has steadfastly supported the Mediterranean identity since 1979.¹⁶¹ There are strong reasons for this interpretation. As we discussed earlier, the sea par excellence in the Hebrew Bible is the Mediterranean Sea, which is simply called ים or ימים or often referred to by its proper names, הים האחרון or הים הגדול. The latter name, הים הגדול, in fact, is never used in the Hebrew Bible to refer to anything other than the Mediterranean Sea and is consistently translated in the

¹⁵⁹ Boyarin, “Daniel 7,” 147.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹⁶¹ Casey, *Son of Man*, 17–18, 22; *The Solution to the ‘Son of Man’ Problem* (London: T&T Clark, 2009) 82. See also John E. Goldingay, *Daniel* (WBC 30; Dallas: Word Books, 1989) 160–61.

Aramaic Targumim as ימא רבא, the very phrase we find in Dan 7:2.¹⁶² The Aramaic usage of ימא רבא to refer to the Mediterranean Sea is further corroborated by *IQapGen* (21:11, 16), a text contemporaneous with Daniel 7.¹⁶³ In sum, the case for Casey's identification of the "great sea" in Daniel 7 with the Mediterranean Sea is solid.

Against this position, Anne Gardner and Andrew Angel have proposed two arguments, to which we can now add a third, for understanding the "great sea" in a mythic sense. First, Ann Gardner adduces "three Biblical passages where ים is used in a context which blurs the distinction between an actual and a mythological sea": Ps 74:13–14; Isa 51:9–10; and Ps 104:25–26.¹⁶⁴ Isa 27:1 also belongs to this list. We examined these passages above and agree, in principle, with Gardner's analysis. The sea in these passages is simultaneously mythic and geographic, largely because the ancients did not sharply distinguish between these dimensions of reality.

Angel points out that Gardner "does not supply any text in which ימא רבא refers to anything other than the Mediterranean. Nor is there any OT text which uses הים הגדול of the mythological sea or any sea where the lines between the natural and mythological are blurred."¹⁶⁵ Angel remedies this situation by pointing out that ימא רבא is used to refer to a mythic sea in 4Q541 7.3, which he translates:

¹⁶² Andrew Angel, "The Sea in 4Q541 7.3 and in Daniel 7:2," *VT* 60 (2010) 474–78, here 475, n. 8; Gardner, "Great Sea," 412.

¹⁶³ Casey, *Son of Man*, 18.

¹⁶⁴ Gardner, "Great Sea," 413–14.

¹⁶⁵ Angel, "Sea," 475. He notes that Ps 104:25 is not an exception.

And the great sea will be silenced.¹⁶⁶

On the basis of “the motif of those who do not understand” 4Q541 (line 1) shares with other apocalyptic texts, Angel reasons that “despite the fragmentary nature of the text it is not unreasonable to assume that it is apocalyptic in nature.”¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, he argues that the silencing of the great sea in line 3 refers to “the conquest of the chaos waters by the divine warrior.”¹⁶⁸ What we have in 4Q541 fragment 7, he concludes, is the use of “ימא רבא” to refer not to the Mediterranean Sea but to the mythic sea of chaos.¹⁶⁹ This evidence makes a like use of the phrase in Dan 7:2 more probable than previously thought.

We can add to Gardner and Angel’s arguments for interpreting the “great sea” in Dan 7:2 as referring first to the mythic sea and only secondarily to a geographic sea. In the four-beast apocalypse, identified as once independent by Boyarin, the four beasts are symbolic of world empires or kings – though it cannot be said that they are pure

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 476. Florentino Garcia Martinez (*The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English* [2nd Ed.; trans. Wilfred G. E. Watson; Leiden: Brill, 1996] 270) translates the verb, reading שתיק, actively: “and he will make the great sea silent.” Emile Puech (“Fragments d’un apocryphe de Lévi et le personnage eschatologique. 4QTestLévi^c-^d (?) et 4QAJa,” in *The Madrid Qumran Congress: Proceedings of the International Congress on the Dead Sea Scrolls. Madrid 18–21 March, 1991*, Vol. 2 [eds. Julio Treballe Barrera and Luis Vegas Montaner; Brill: Leiden, 1992] 449–501, here 464) agrees. Angel bases his reading of the verb as שתיק on recent personal communications with Puech (Angel, “Sea,” 476).

¹⁶⁷ Angel, “Sea,” 476–77.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 478.

¹⁶⁹ “[T]here is no reason to read the phrase in Dan 7:2 as referring to the Mediterranean. Given Daniel 7 draws on ancient chaos mythology, it makes better sense to read ‘the great sea’ as referring to the chaos sea” (ibid). Angel’s insistence on a strict dichotomy between the Mediterranean Sea and the mythological sea is a bit curious, since the linguistic evidence he reviews demonstrates that ימא רבא can point to both.

symbols.¹⁷⁰ Now, if the four beasts are symbolic, this suggests that the “great sea” out of which they rise should also be interpreted as symbolic, probably of cosmic chaos. The beasts and the sea belong to the same semiotic world of symbolic myth. As such, the sea should be interpreted as symbolic and mythic. If it refers to the Mediterranean Sea, it does so as a consequence of its union with the four-beast apocalypse.

In light of these reasons, how do we explain interpretations of the “great sea” as the Mediterranean? We already noted the linguistic reasons above. In addition, unity of space is another reason that Casey argues that the great sea refers to the Mediterranean in Dan 7:2. He writes, “In vss. 3–8 the beasts came out of the Mediterranean Sea on to the land, presumably... the land of Israel. No change of scene is marked at the beginning of vs. 9. We have no right to suppose one.”¹⁷¹ The assumption is that the sea whence the beasts come and the land of Israel, where the divine judgment takes place according to Casey, are spatially contiguous just as the passages of the four-beast apocalypse and the two-throne apocalypse are textually contiguous. In other words, Casey literalizes the setting of the four-beast apocalypse, which originally was largely symbolic, to conform to the world of the two-throne apocalypse.

This does not indicate an interpretive failure on the part of Casey. Rather such readerly harmonization of two distinct worlds is the unavoidable consequence of the “literary mismatch” between the two apocalypses that all interpreters of Daniel 7 must negotiate. The symbolic semiotics of the four-beast apocalypse and the literal world of the two-throne apocalypse are available for the interpretation of the composite Danielic

¹⁷⁰ The world powers are symbolized as beasts because they are, to the apocalyptic imagination, instantiations of the monstrosity of beasts.

¹⁷¹ Casey, *Son of Man*, 22.

vision.¹⁷² The sea, the One like a Son of Man, the fire, the beasts – in fact, all the elements of the vision are open to a double interpretation. If the interpretive tradition bifurcates concerning the “great sea” in Dan 7:2, it is because “the text itself... is split and doubled on itself.”¹⁷³ That is to say, the “great sea” is first a mythic symbol of chaos in line with the symbolic semiotics of the four-beast apocalypse but acquires, through its partnership with the poetics of the two-throne apocalypse, an additional literal, spatial dimension. This is true for the entire apocalypse.

In sum, it is not only the One like a Son of Man who can be interpreted in two ways, as real and as symbolic. The great sea and all the elements of the two apocalypses that now make up the one apocalypse are simultaneously real and symbolic. Of course, there are elements that resist symbolization or actualization. For example, it is hard to imagine any interpretation in which the Ancient of Days becomes symbolized to the extent the One like a Son of Man has been in the interpretation section (7:15–27). But most elements of the unified vision ramify into the symbolic and the literal worlds as defined by the semiotics of the two apocalypses that, in the present text, define a single reality. The four beasts are symbols. But they are simultaneously real beasts that can interact with the real fire, the earth, and the One like a Son of Man of the two-throne apocalypse. The text of Daniel 7 is simultaneously bifurcated and joined – as is its semiotics. Daniel 7 means literally and symbolically at the same time and contributes to the rich interpretive traditions that find, in part, their source here.

¹⁷² Boyarin, “Daniel 7,” 147.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 139.

3. *Sea Myth Pattern in Daniel 7*

Collins has repeatedly argued that “[a]ny source division that separates the sea from the heavenly figures can hardly be credible” because “[b]oth the sea and the rider of the clouds have integral parts in the Canaanite myth.”¹⁷⁴ Since the sea and the rider of the cloud are integral parts of the sea myth pattern, he questions whether an ancient author would mention the sea without the subsequent battle and defeat of the sea at the hand of the cloud rider. He argues for the integrity of the Danielic vision on the ground that a theory of different sources fragments the sea myth pattern. This argument, however, assumes that the sea myth pattern cannot be recombined out of two separate sources, which may or may not have independently replicated the pattern. Stated positively, the unity of the sea myth pattern in Daniel 7 may be redactional. If it appears to be original, as Collins argues, it is a testament to the composite artistry of the author and not necessarily evidence of its compositional unity.

Battle and Victory

1. Battle

The battle between Baal and Yamm in the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle* becomes, in Daniel 7, a battle between God and the beasts that rise from the sea. We saw this kind of

¹⁷⁴ John J. Collins, “Stirring Up the Great Sea: The Religio-Historical Background of Daniel 7,” in *The Book of Daniel in the Light of New Findings* (ed. A. S. van der Woude; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993) 121–36, here 135.

metonymic transformation of the enemy already in the Sea Event where YHWH battles Egypt at the sea, as opposed to the sea itself. Isa 27:1 and other passages in which the sea monster is distinct from the sea may also lie in the background of the Danielic theme of the foe rising from the sea. The beasts are terrible but diminutive in power in comparison to the power of God.

The foe and thus the nature of their antagonism in Daniel 7 can be subdivided into three. The sea, as symbolic of chaos, establishes the general tone. Within that framework, the first three beasts, who represent the Babylonian, Median, and Persian empires, form one group. The first beast, a lion with eagle's wings, does not seem to pose any threat (v 4). It is a fearsome beast but a beast that is subject to manipulation (by God?) – its wings are plucked off and it is made to stand on its feet. It is of no more threat to God than Leviathan in Job 40. The second bear-like beast is commanded (by God?) to “devour many bodies” (v 5). It presumably obeys the command, not unlike the serpent in Amos 9:3. The third beast is leopard-like with four wings and four heads. The third beast alone is said to have been given dominion (v 6), but all three beasts apparently have dominion (see v 12).¹⁷⁵ In sum, the first three beasts are fearsome but of no threat to God's mastery; they are obedient to God and rule at the will of God. They are symbolic of world empires not unlike the ones we know from elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible – for example, the Assyrians whom God used to punish Israel and punished in turn (Isa 10:5–

¹⁷⁵ For a discussion of possible emendations and explanations concerning the details of the the beasts, see Ginsberg, *Daniel*, 13–15.

19). We do not find the optimism of Deutero-Isaiah concerning a foreign ruler in Daniel.¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the three beasts are under God's command.

This all changes with the fourth beast whose difference from the preceding beasts is repeatedly emphasized (vv 7, 23). It is also repeated that the fourth beast devours, breaks into pieces, and tramples at his own will (vv 7, 19, 23). It is a destructive force that threatens the whole earth (v 23). All world empires are, according to the Danielic vision, beasts. But the one true monster, which has no analogical parallel in the created world unlike the first three, is the fourth empire. It cannot be likened to a lion, an eagle, a bear, a leopard, or to any other animal because it is other. That is to say, it breaks into creation as the embodiment of a non- or even anti-creation principle.

If the fourth beast represents the most monstrous empire, then the eleventh horn, the little horn, represents the most monstrous of its kings, Antiochus IV. It is said that the eleventh horn wars against the holy ones and destroys them (vv 21, 25). Antiochus' physical persecution of the Jews is in view. Nevertheless, the primary form that his antagonism against God and his people takes, in Daniel's opinion, is verbal, that it "speaks arrogantly" and attempts "to change the times and the law" by issuing edicts outlawing the practice of Judaism (vv 8, 11, 25).¹⁷⁷

We know that Antiochus IV first conquered Jerusalem and plundered the Temple in 169, using Jason's revolt in that year as a pretext to do so. The conquest, Portier-Young argues, was not merely military but was more importantly a symbolic act. Antiochus was decreating Jerusalem in order to pave the way for his self presentation as

¹⁷⁶ On this, consider Darius who wishes but is unable to deliver Daniel in chapter 6.

¹⁷⁷ See n. 109 above.

its recreator and, as its recreator, as the authority behind the laws and regulations that govern life in Jerusalem. What is involved here is a reenactment of creation as a way of claiming god-like power over the empire. “[F]or the Hellenistic kings,” Portier-Young writes, “conquest equaled creation, including creation of the empire itself... [Thus] the Hellenistic kings, Antiochus included, could continually re-create their empires and so assert their power and even divinity by reconquering their provincial subjects.”¹⁷⁸

Antiochus’ hostility against the Jews, according to this analysis, is a part of an imperial strategy for domination and hegemony. By destroying Jerusalem and the Jewish way of life, Antiochus demonstrates his raw, physical power over the Jews and, theoretically, creates a *tabula rasa*. Then, he imposes a new order as “creator, source, and sole sovereign” over the new creation in direct competition with the creator God.¹⁷⁹

The theological implication of Antiochus’ self-presentation as rival to God the creator was not lost on the apocalyptic writer of Daniel. The brief but important description of Antiochus’ activities as an attempt “to change the times and the law” indicates this awareness. First, Antiochus’ attempt to change “the times” refers to his 167 edict requiring the Jews “to profane Sabbaths and feasts” (1 Macc 1:45; cf. 2 Macc 6:6).¹⁸⁰ This was an attempt to disrupt the cultic calendar and to undo Jewish identity and the Jewish way of life. Second, the apocalyptic writer also recognized that Antiochus’

¹⁷⁸ Portier-Young, *Resistance*, 137.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 138. Portier-Young argues that Antiochus’ actions against the Jews and Judaism was an ideological statement meant for the entire empire. He was making a claim to his authority over the entire empire, not only over the Jews. Setting Antiochus’ still puzzling hostility against the Jews and Judaism within an imperial ideological program somewhat mitigates its mystery.

¹⁸⁰ Collins, *Daniel*, 322.

program was not limited to the religious persecution of a minority group, that he was making a claim to imperial, if not cosmic, authority.

Portier-Young notes that “God’s law is referred to not as ‘Torah’ but as תִּד (תִּד אֱלֹהִים, ‘the law of his God,’ 6:6)” in the Aramaic section of Daniel.¹⁸¹ Then she notes that what Antiochus attempts to change along with “the time” is “the law” (תִּד, 7:25). From these observations, Portier-Young underlines the cosmic and political significance of Antiochus’ effrontery in attempting to change “the law.” “By using the same terminology to refer to God’s ordering of human life, the writers of the Aramaic portions of Daniel were able to contrast the true sovereign power of God with the contingent and limited power of the earthly kings who ruled over Judea.”¹⁸² I would add that the use of the same term to refer to God’s authority and human authority underlines the arrogance of Antiochus’ ambition. His attempt to change “the times and the law” (7:25) was a direct challenge to God’s authority in fact to change “seasons and times” (2:21). Antiochus believed that he had the authority over the religious life of his subjects, including the Jews, and over the entire “law” that governs life in his empire. In truth, more serious than the physical destruction of the world by the fourth beast is the threat posed by the arrogant mouth of the little horn whose words attempt to redescribe, thereby recreate reality.

2. Victory

¹⁸¹ Portier-Young, *Resistance*, 245.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 246.

Just as there are three different foes, there are three different victories, though it is not clear in each case who the victor is. The first victory is over the first three beasts. No battle is recorded concerning the defeat of the three beasts. Rather, it is simply stated that “their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time” (7:13). God’s victory over these beasts is registered as routine and unremarkable. The second victory over the fourth beast is narrated succinctly. Befitting its crime as a physical threat to the earth, the incomparable beast is punished bodily: “the beast was put to death, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire” (7:12).¹⁸³

We pause here to consider who defeats the fourth beast. Collins, among others, has insisted on the unity of Daniel 7, as we discussed above, on the grounds that the One like a Son of Man performs the role of Baal in the apocalyptic vision, namely defeat the sea monster. If Collins is correct, the one who defeats the four beasts must be the One like a Son of Man. However, this is not clearly stated. In Dan 7:11–12, it is stated that the fourth beast is defeated, but the victor is not named. The victor may have been named in the complete four-beast apocalypse, but he goes unnamed in the Danielic vision. In fact, the Danielic vision seems to suggest, without stating this outright, that the Ancient of Days defeats the sea monster. He is the only one mentioned before the beast

¹⁸³ The destruction of the beast’s body does not conclude God’s battle against the fourth beast. It is more important that the words of the beast, spoken by the eleventh horn, be silenced. The relative priority of words over the body is already seen in Daniel 3, where Daniel’s three friends deem the destruction of their bodies secondary to upholding their words of confessions.

is defeated, and the fire with which the fourth beast is consumed is likely the fire of his throne (cf. 7:11 and 9–10).¹⁸⁴

Are we to suppose, then, that the Ancient of Days battles and defeats the beasts from the sea? It is important, in this light, that the Danielic author does not say but only suggests that the Ancient of Days is responsible for the victory. As Boyarin has argued, the theology of the two-throne apocalypse appears to be binitarian, resembling the El-Baal relationship found in Ugaritic mythology.¹⁸⁵ The Ancient of Days is an El-like figure, the patriarch of the gods. And the One like a Son of Man, possibly originally referring to YHWH, is a subordinate, second deity. The older deity sits enthroned in judgment as the head of the divine council. The younger deity, by contrast, is a warrior God. If Boyarin is correct, then it is unlikely that the Ancient of Days goes out to battle in the two-throne apocalypse. Rather, it was likely the One like the Son of Man who fought the sea. Consequently, Dan 7:13–14 likely recounts the scene after the battle

¹⁸⁴ In fact, Boyarin (“Daniel 7,” 151) argues that Danielic author spliced the two apocalypses precisely in order to introduce the means of punishment, the river of fire.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 155. Cross (*Canaanite Myth*, 75) writes that we must “recognize in Yahweh an ’Ēl figure.” He (ibid., 72) took seriously the observation that “[m]any of the traits and functions of ’Ēl appear as traits and functions of Yahweh in the earliest traditions of Israel” and understood YHWH as an epithet for El (ibid., 72; see ibid., 44–71). He contrasts YHWH’s unproblematic relationship with El to the antagonism that exists between YHWH and Baal: “’El, ’Elyōn, Šadday, and ’Ōlām continued throughout Israel’s history to be suitable names for Yahweh despite fierce animosity to Ba’l, the chief god of Syria in the first millennium B.C.” (ibid., 71–72). Cross (ibid., 147–94) recognizes and analyzes YHWH’s Baal-like characteristics but does not offer an explanation how YHWH acquired these traits and functions. This is problematic, as Boyarin (“Daniel 7,” 158–9, note 63) notes. Boyarin (ibid.) suggests that YHWH and Baal were “variant forms and names of the young God” under “El the universal old God” and that YHWH and El merged at a later point. This reconstruction reverses the chronological order in which YHWH is understood to have absorbed the characteristics of El and Baal as proposed by Cross and Mark S. Smith (*The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* [2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002] 32–47).

between the One like a Son of Man and his aquatic foe, when the One like a Son of Man approaches the Ancient of Days in order to receive kingship as a reward for having defeated the sea.

However, it is important to note that we do not have the totality of the two-throne apocalypse, nor of the four-beast apocalypse in Daniel 7. Instead, what we have are discontinuous fragments of the two that have been spliced together in order to create a new cast of characters and a new sequence of events. First, from the four-beast apocalypse, we have the introduction of the foes from the sea (7:2–8). Second, we have from the two-throne apocalypse the identity of one of the gods, the Ancient of Days, but not that of the second god (7:9–10). Third, we return to the four-beast apocalypse for the battle scene between the agents of chaos and the agent of order, purposefully unidentified (7:11–12). Fourth and finally, we get the denouement from the two-throne apocalypse in which a new character, the One like a Son of Man, receives the benefits of victory (7:13–14). By interweaving the two apocalypses, through his redactional artistry, the Danielic author suppresses the identity of the one who defeats the aquatic foe and creates the impression that the Ancient of Days is responsible. The Ancient of Days is elevated to the status of sole God. And the One like a Son of Man, who likely battled the foe in the original two-throne apocalypse, is transformed into a passive beneficiary of the victory over the sea monster (7:14).

The reason for this transformation is not hard to imagine. The first reason is that of monotheism. The Danielic author sought to transform the binitarian theology of the two-throne apocalypse into monotheism. Doing so required that the One like a Son of Man be transformed from a divine being into a symbol for the “holy ones of the Most

high” (7:22, 27).¹⁸⁶ The equation between these two figures is not made explicitly in the text, but it is strongly implied. The One like a Son of Man receives the kingdom in the vision (7:14), and (the people of) the holy ones in the interpretation (7:22, 27). If “the people of the holy ones” (7:27) are different from “the holy ones” (7:22), “the holy ones” may be understood as the angelic representatives of “the people.” For the holy ones to receive dominion was tantamount to the people receiving it.¹⁸⁷

The second reason for the transformation of the One like a Son of Man has to do with the type of resistance to empire espoused by the author. Portier-Young argues that Daniel espouses “resistance that includes prayer, fasting, and penitence, teaching and preaching, and covenant fidelity even in the face of death” but not military action.¹⁸⁸ The Danielic program of resistance is non-violent, associated not “with arms, but with knowledge and understanding,” and characterized by “holding fast to the covenant, teaching, and thereby giving strength to others.”¹⁸⁹ In this light, the reason that the One like a Son of Man, as the symbol for (the people of) the holy ones, is not given a military role in the vision or in the interpretation becomes clear. God alone fights and defeats the enemy. The role of the faithful is to wait for God, even if that should result in physical

¹⁸⁶ For a review of scholarly positions on the identity of the “holy ones,” see Collins, *Daniel*, 313–18. Collins (*ibid.*, 318) concludes that “the understanding of the holy ones as angels is the interpretation most consistent with the undisputed instances of the use of the term in Daniel and the predominant usage in the contemporary literature.” If the “holy ones” are angels, as Collins argues, then the “people” of the holy ones must be Israel, or her faithful subset.

¹⁸⁷ Collins, *Daniel*, 318.

¹⁸⁸ Portier-Young, *Resistance*, 229. See also *ibid.*, 223–79.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 236.

death.¹⁹⁰ The vision and its interpretation in Daniel 7 claim that God will himself defeat the foe in the eschaton and give an everlasting kingdom to the faithful. The One like a Son of Man does not take up arms against the beasts of the sea because he, as the symbolic representation of God's people, cannot be seen to engage in military resistance.¹⁹¹ The battle is the Lord's – alone (see 1 Sam 17:47).

The third victory over the little horn is befitting the little horn's crime. As we noted above, the little horn's primary crime is its arrogant words. Fittingly, its punishment comes in the form of a verbal judgment. The judgment is recounted twice, once by Daniel (7:22) and again by the angelic interpreter (7:26–27). The judge is no doubt the Ancient of Days. There is no ambiguity concerning who defeats the little horn. The judgment is twofold. One, the judgment is against the horn. Its dominion is taken away and the horn itself is “to be consumed and totally destroyed” (7:26). Two, the positive side of the horn's punishment is the giving of “the kingship and dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven” to (the people of) the holy ones (7:22, 27). God, without struggle or battle, exercises his kingly authority and power to depose kings and to set up kings (Dan 2:21; cf. 2:44; cf. 3:33; 4:31; 5:21). God speaks and that makes it so.

Goodly Consequences

¹⁹⁰ See *ibid.*, 262–65. Portier-Young insists that waiting is not a passive form of resistance (*ibid.*, 264, n. 164), that the practice of prayer (with windows open so that the imperial powers may know the existence of rebellion [*ibid.*, 261]), Torah observance, teaching and modeling covenant faithfulness (even to the point of death), are active forms of waiting.

¹⁹¹ Paul G. Mosca (“Ugarit and Daniel 7: A Missing Link,” *Bib* 67 [1986] 496–517, esp. 512–14) notes that we find a like passivity in David as portrayed in Psalm 89.

1. Creation

Creation is of concern in Daniel 7 in a similar way in which it is in the Isaiah Apocalypse. It stands in danger of destruction. The four beasts that rise from the chaos sea are symbolic of an anti-creation principle. Their very constitution, being in part a mixture of various animals and in another part human, is indicative of their disorderliness and anti-creation force.¹⁹² They originate from outside created order, namely in the sea. Furthermore, if the sea whence they come is symbolic of chaos, the four beasts embody that chaos, transgress the cosmic boundary between land and sea, and thereby transport chaos onto all the earth.

The general threat posed by the beasts to creation is amplified in the fourth beast whose monstrosity far exceeds that of the others: “After this I saw in the visions by the night a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong... It was different from all the beasts that preceded it...” (7:7). Indeed, the fourth beast has no analogy anywhere in creation and must be understood as not only other in relation to creation but also to the creator. Thus it is only about the fourth beast that it is said that “it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces” (7:23). All the beasts embody an anti-creation principle. But the fourth beast epitomizes it. Furthermore, the eleventh horn of the fourth beast gives expression to that principle, defying God the creator and attempting to change the laws that govern created order (7:25).

¹⁹² Boyarin (“Daniel 7,” 142, n. 8), following Ginsberg, argues that each of the beasts contain a human element.

From these observations, we can safely say that the sea and its four beasts pose to creation a similar threat that Yamm posed in the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle*. Their threefold defeat, therefore, brings about similar goodly consequences as did Yamm's defeat, including the return of orderliness and the rejuvenation of creation. God's victory in Daniel 7 is a reenactment of his primordial battle that reactivates the goodly consequences of his fructifying reign.¹⁹³

2. Kingship

The importance of the theme of kingship to Daniel 7 and to the Book of Daniel as a whole is evident. In the two-throne apocalypse and in the interpretation of the vision, the Ancient of Days sits on his throne as undisputed universal king, and from there abolishes former kings (7:11–12, 26) and sets up new kings (7:22, 27). The kingship of the Ancient of Days is unquestioned, even when the sea monsters threaten all of creation, and is assumed as an eternal fact. The One like a Son of Man and in him the holy ones apparently join the Ancient of Days as eternal vicegerent of all the kingdoms under heaven. The identity of this second eternal king, whether he is a second deity or a collective symbol, has important theological and socio-political implications.

As we discussed above and Boyarin has argued in greater detail, the man-like figure is a deity in the two-throne apocalypse.¹⁹⁴ In the original apocalypse of the two

¹⁹³ For an overview of the theme of creation in Daniel, see Jacques B. Doukham, "Allusions à la création dans le Livre de Daniel," in *The Book of Daniel in the Light of New Findings* (ed. A. S. van der Woude; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993) 285–92.

¹⁹⁴ See Boyarin, "Daniel 7," 154–62.

thrones, then, it is a second deity who receives an everlasting dominion over earthly kingdoms. This pattern of relationship in which an older deity confers kingship to a younger deity is not without precedent. We saw this in the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle*, the Mesopotamian *Enuma Elish*, and we also find a similar picture in Deut 32:8–9.¹⁹⁵ In this light, Boyarin’s thesis that binitarianism is internal to Israel appears less controversial. Of course, this is not the interpretation of the One like a Son of Man espoused by the apocalyptic author of Daniel 7.

Paul G. Mosca helpfully compares, but does not equate, the One like a Son of Man in Daniel 7 to David in Psalm 89. Mosca posits that the figure of David in Psalm 89, religio-historically speaking, is Janus-faced and looks both backward to Canaanite mythic traditions concerning Baal and forward to early Jewish conceptions of the One like a Son of Man. He argues that in Psalm 89, “especially in vv. 26–28, David is in a sense invited to play Baal to Yhwh’s El. For David, like Baal, gains dominion over ‘sea’ and (recalling Yamm’s parallel name, Nahar) ‘rivers.’”¹⁹⁶ Ps 89: 26 reads:

²⁶ I will set his hand upon the sea,
His right hand upon the rivers.

Mosca points out, however, that David, in contrast to Baal, is a passive recipient of the cosmic authority over the sea and rivers. David does not battle and defeat the sea.

Rather “it is Yhwh alone who defeats both sea (vv. 10–11) and David’s enemies (vv. 23–

¹⁹⁵ Reading בני אלים for MT בני ישראל. See *BHS* apparatus ad loc. For a discussion of the Ugaritic parallels, see, Collins, *Daniel*, 291.

¹⁹⁶ Mosca, “Ugarit and Daniel 7,” 512.

24). David here is no warrior. He does not win his dominion; he is given it.”¹⁹⁷ David’s passivity, according to Mosca, anticipates the passivity of the One like a Son of Man as interpreted in Daniel 7.

So, after comparing David to Baal, Mosca compares David’s relationship to YHWH in Psalm 89 to the relationship of the One like a Son of Man to the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7. As we noted above, the One like a Son of Man does not battle and defeat the beasts from the sea in Daniel 7. The apocalyptic author suppresses the divinity of the One like a Son of Man and his martial accomplishments through his redactional art – he omits the portion of the two-throne apocalypse that identified the man-like figure as the warrior who fights the sea monsters – and, through his interpretative art, makes the figure into a collective symbol of the holy ones. The One like a Son of Man does not win his dominion. Rather, like David, he is given it. Thus, Mosca concludes that “Psalm 89 is an important stage on the long road from Bronze Age Canaan to the Hellenistic Jewish world of Daniel 7.”¹⁹⁸ David is the middle term between Baal and the Danielic One like a Son of Man.

We can fine-tune this history of tradition. As far as typology goes, the One like a Son of Man in the original two-throne apocalypse stands closer to the Canaanite mythic pattern of the *Baal Cycle* than does the David of Psalm 89. And the symbolic interpretation of the man-like figure in the redacted Daniel 7 is, as Mosca has argued, a stage beyond Psalm 89. That is to say, we can plot the development of the motif of a second divine or royal figure from the *Baal Cycle*, to the two-throne apocalypse, to Psalm

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 513–14.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 515.

89, and finally to Daniel 7, theologically moving from polytheism, to binitarianism, to monotheism with divine adoption of a human king, and finally to monotheism with democratization of royal authority.¹⁹⁹ Thus, what we find in the canonical text of Daniel 7 is not the binitarianism of the two-throne apocalypse, but monotheism, and not monotheism in which a human king can be thought of as the “son of God” but a monotheism in which a people, either Israel or more likely those who remain faithful to God, are elevated to vicegerency with God.

Now, it has been argued that Daniel reconceptualizes exile, interpreting past traditions to say that the exile extends into the Hellenistic period. Michael Knibb, followed by others, argues that Daniel reinterprets Jeremiah’s prophecy that the Babylonian exile will last for “seventy years” as denoting “seventy weeks” of years (Dan 9:2, 24–27; cf. Jer 25:11–12; 29:10–14).²⁰⁰ This interpretation builds on the Levitical idea that the exile is time allotted for the land to “enjoy its sabbath years” (Lev 26:34; cf. 2 Chron 36:21). The exile that began in 587 would last for 490 years. According to this conceptualization, the exile does not end with Israel’s return from Babylon. Rather, “the period of the Babylonian exile was just the first phase of a much longer exilic period that

¹⁹⁹ Typology does not necessarily parallel historical processes. That is to say, the developmental history of typology need not happen in chronological order. The development from polytheism toward monotheism with democratization of royal authority need not have happened as outlined above and may have involved parallel processes that intersected and influenced each other in surprising and nonlinear ways. In short, two or more competing theologies can and probably did exist side by side in Israel and developed in isolation and conjunction. In any case, if Boyarin is correct that the two-throne apocalypse, fragments of which are preserved in Daniel 7, is an Israelite tradition, we can affirm that the proposed typology points to the antiquity and pedigree of binitarianism within Judaism, without necessarily discounting other theorized histories of God in Israel.

²⁰⁰ Michael Knibb, “The Exile in the Literature of the Intertestamental Period,” *HeyJ* 17 (1976) 253–72; Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile*, 9; Portier-Young, *Resistance*, 267–72.

would come to an end during the crisis under Antiochus IV Epiphanes.”²⁰¹ For the Danielic author, as Ackroyd put it, “the exile is no longer an historic event to be dated in one period; it is much nearer to being a condition from which only the final age will bring release.”²⁰² In other words, the exile has become a symbol or, as Martien Halvorson-Taylor has argued, a metaphor for “a state that is to be ended only by the intervention of God and the inauguration of the eschatological era.”²⁰³ All previous experiences are a prelude to the one final and perfect liberation to come in the eschaton.

What this means for our present analysis is that we can interpret the Danielic reinterpretation of the One like a Son of Man as a response, in part, to the experience of exile in general and to the specific tragedy that befell the Davidic monarchy in 587. Within this framework, that the Danielic author moves directly from the binitarianism of his source material, the two-throne apocalypse, to a democratic understanding of human kingship becomes more poignant. If the author was aware of the Davidic tradition reflected in the royal psalms, including Psalm 8 – and it is hard to imagine that he was not²⁰⁴ – it is no small matter that he does not mention it. We saw above that the Psalter as a whole responds to the demise of the Davidic monarchy by deemphasizing the kingship of David and emphasizing the kingship of God, in the process bringing the people to the fore:

²⁰¹ Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile*, 9.

²⁰² Ackroyd, *Exile*, 242.

²⁰³ Knibb, “Exile,” 255. Ackroyd, *Exile*, 242.

²⁰⁴ Portier-Young (*Resistance*, 230; see also 229–32) argues that the Book of Daniel springs from a “social class of scribally trained individuals.” If so, it is probable that the author of Daniel was familiar with the Davidic tradition.

¹⁵ Blessed are the people for whom it is thus;
Blessed are the people whose God is YHWH (Ps 144:15)

We likewise examined the fluidity of human kingship, that foreign kings can be considered YHWH's anointed (Isa 45:1), and the celebration of YHWH's enduring kingship in Deutero-Isaiah (Isa 52:7). Within this context, we also saw that Deutero-Isaiah transfers the Davidic covenant to the people of Israel (Isa 55:3).

Therefore, there is precedence for Daniel's democratization of kingship. But what is of interest is that Daniel does not mention the Davidic tradition in moving from divinity to people. Within the diachronic dimension of Daniel 7, a divine figure is transformed directly into a symbol of a human collective. The Danielic author seems to dismiss, for whatever reason, the possibility that a single human person can act as Israel's savior, be it David, Cyrus, or any other human figure. Salvation comes from God – through the witness of those who remain faithful to their covenantal relationship with God. One of the lessons of Daniel 7 is that the sea can be resisted, even if the ultimate battle belongs to God, by ordinary folk who hold on to God and his covenant – through the pious practice of everyday life.

3. Temple

We arrive, finally, to the issue of the temple. It is important, as we noted above, that the desecration of the Jerusalem Temple in 167 is not mentioned in Daniel 7. In contrast to the following visions, in which its desecration and restoration is an important

part of the apocalyptic vision, Daniel 7 does not mention the earthly Temple.²⁰⁵ Rather, its validity is assumed. We know this because Daniel 7 presents the existence of a heavenly court as unproblematic. If there is a homology between the heavenly and the earthly temples so that to be in the Temple is to be in the heavenly court (see Isaiah 6), the fact that Daniel 7 presents the scene of heavenly judgment without qualification indicates that the earthly Temple stood unmolested at the time of its composition. Otherwise, we would expect the traumatic experience to have left some mark in the text. Therefore, the erection of the Temple is not one of the goodly consequences. Rather, the Temple is a presumed fact, the foundation for God's creative and kingly authority he is said to demonstrate in the eschaton so majestically.

In conclusion, we can say that all the elements of the sea myth pattern can be found in Daniel 7. The great sea and its monstrous beasts preserve and transform some of the same themes we encountered already in Isa 27:1. The monsters from the sea are creaturely symbols of this worldly powers transposed into a mythic realm in which God himself defeats them as a prelude to the eschatological kingdom of God. Daniel 7 is a "vision for the end-time" and speaks of a permanent change in the state of history and creation from one of exile to one of divine rule (Dan 8:17). In this, it is like and not like past instances of the sea myth pattern. God once again demonstrates and enacts his

²⁰⁵ The Temple, as we mentioned above, is a major theme of the second vision in Daniel 8. The desecration of the Temple is recounted (8:11–12), its state of ruin lamented (v 13), and its restoration foretold (14). The Temple is also of concern in the third vision (9:20–27). The restoration of the Temple (vv 24–25) "seventy weeks" after its attempted destruction and desecration (vv 26–27) conclude Gabriel's revelation to Daniel. The desecration of the Temple is also of concern in the final vision (11:31).

mastery over the sea. Only this time, it is a permanent achievement that cannot be undone.

I would like to conclude our examination of the sea myth and the eschaton in the Isaiah Apocalypse and Daniel 7 with a brief note on narrative structure. There are, it seems to me, two sides to apocalyptic eschatology, divided by the imminent battle between God and the sea monsters. Before the battle, which itself lies in the future, is the eschatological present. The present is the period of the sea, or better the sea's monsters, Leviathan and the great beasts. The eschatological future after the battle is the period of God and his vicegerent. Within this framework, one reason for the attraction between apocalyptic eschatology and the sea myth lies in the fact that the sea myth provides the eschatological writers with language for describing the present and the future. The figure of the sea provides poignant language, enriched and deepened by tradition, with which to give expression to the writers' assessment that the present is the worst it has been since creation, almost comparable to the state of chaos before the first creation. And the language of goodly consequences facilitates the articulation of the exuberant hope that the eschatological writers had for the age to come, that it will be the best since creation. An important contribution of the sea myth to apocalyptic eschatology is, without doubt, that of language.

Just as important, if not more important, than the contribution of language, in my opinion, is the gift of thought. What I mean by this is that the sea myth provides the writers with a way to move from despair to hope, from the depths of the sea up to the mountain of God, by connecting the present and the future narratively. The narrative

structure, that is the plot, of the sea myth explains how a state of chaos can be transformed into a state of order. The ability to describe evil is important. It is necessary for lamenting and coping with trauma. Also important is the ability to hope and to articulate that hope. More important than both, however, is the ability to chart the path from here to there, from the present state of chaos to a future state of glory.

For the eschatological writers of the Isaiah Apocalypse and Daniel 7, the sea myth provided them with language to describe the present and the future. More importantly, it gave them a way to imagine a bridge from that present to that future. It taught them that it will be God, that it can only be God, who brings about the hoped for reversal. God will defeat both the cosmic source of chaos, the sea and its acolytes, and the historical embodiments of evil, the world empires, neighboring nations, and individual kings. In short, the sea myth is a metaphor for the eschaton on the level of language and of structure, on the level of *lexis* and of *muthos*. It is perhaps not possible to disengage the language of the sea myth, its *lexis*, from its narrative structure, its *muthos*, but if one has to evaluate their importance individually, I agree with Aristotle that it is the *muthos* that must be given the higher value. The analogical, that is, the metaphorical relationship between the sea myth and biblical conceptions of the eschaton exists at the level of *lexis* and *muthos*. Among these two, the greater is the analogy of *muthos*.

To look back to our discussion of the exodus and the exile as a way of looking forward to our next and final topic, “the sea *muthos*,” we note that the analogy of structure exists between the sea myth and both the biblical presentation of the exodus and of the exile. As in the eschaton, the writers of Exodus 14–15 and Deutero-Isaiah conceived the structure of events of the exodus and the exile as analogous to the plot of

the sea myth. This is visibly evident in the exodus narrative. The battle at the sea literally and narratively divides Israel's history into the period under Egyptian bondage and the period under God's sovereignty. In Deutero-Isaiah, the analogy is less evident but it is there. For, in Deutero-Isaiah, the present is also a period of the sea, the future a period of God, and the path from now to then forged by a decisive act of God against the chaos sea and its monsters.

Part IV. Sea *Muthos*

Chapter 8. Sea *Muthos*

Thus far, we have tried to establish the prevalence of the sea imagery in the Hebrew Bible and to analyze its considerable contribution to Israel's religious thought concerning creation, kingship, and temple and to biblical historiography concerning the exodus, the exile, and the eschaton. For the purposes of analysis, we introduced two related heuristic concepts, that of the sea myth pattern and the sea *muthos*. The sea myth pattern, in relation to religious thought, facilitated our examination of the various ways in which the biblical writers used and adapted the sea myth to speak about creation, kingship, and temple. We found that the sea myth remained a vital element in ancient Israelite tradition but also that the biblical writers did not reproduce the entire myth. Rather, they made use of fragments of the total pattern and creatively adapted its themes to suit their social, political, and theological needs.

In relation to biblical historiography, we found that each of the elements of the sea myth pattern are present in some form in the account of the Sea Event in Exodus 14–15, the exile in Isaiah 40–55, and the eschaton in Isaiah 24–27 and in Daniel 7. Furthermore, we argued that the sea *muthos* structures the narrative conceptualization and at times also the textual presentation of temporal events in these texts. This is most evident in Exodus 14–15 and Daniel 7, where the textual representation of the events is equal to the *muthos*. We also argued that the sea *muthos* underlies the conceptualization, though not the textual presentation, of the exile in Deutero-Isaiah and of the eschaton in

the Isaiah Apocalypse. The present crisis, in all these texts, is conceived of as a period of aquatic chaos that YHWH's battle and victory over the aquatic foe bring to an end. The end of the era of chaos is seen as ushering in a time of new creation and a time of revitalized kingship, with God's throne firmly reestablished in Zion. The sea *muthos* does not always structure the textual presentation of the events, but it does structure, at a minimum, the assumed sequence of events, which the reader must reconstruct.

In this chapter, the discussion moves from the analysis of the ways in which the sea *muthos* functions as a metaphor for the biblical conception of individual events to the examination of the role of the sea *muthos* as a metaphor for a biblical view of historical reality *in toto*. Along the way, we examine the ways in which the many *muthoi* of the Hebrew Bible work as a centripetal force, a binding agent, in the Enneateuch and beyond. We place our discussion of the sea *muthos* within this larger context to argue that the sea *muthos* plays a unique and unequalled role to unify an array of traditions concerning Israel's historical reality. The result of this unifying work is a complex tapestry of multiple and overlapping reenactments of the sea *muthos* that covers the entire stretch of the history of Israel from her birth to her eschatological glory. In this, in this intricate tapestry, woven by many hands out of a common yarn, we find a principle that encapsulates the spirit of biblical historiography: This day and this night, the sea roars; but come morning, God will silence the sea and redeem his people Israel.

I. *Muthoi* and the Integrity of the Hebrew Bible

The metaphor of the library is often used to describe the literary character of the Hebrew Bible. The metaphor works to restrain overemphasizing the unity of the Hebrew Bible and to underline the observation that the Hebrew Bible is a collection of more and less discrete literary units, of books. Of course, as any student of the Hebrew Bible knows, the metaphor both goes too far and does not go far enough. On the one hand, for example, not only is the Book of Genesis distinct from the Book of Isaiah, the two books are themselves collections of arguably discrete compositions that are divisible horizontally into documentary sources or redactional layers and vertically into blocks of originally oral traditions or collections of oracles from distinct historical periods. The vertical and horizontal divisions that riddle many biblical books, including Genesis and Isaiah, demonstrate that the metaphor of the library does not go far enough to highlight the divisions of the Hebrew Bible. On the other hand, there exist connections among the various parts of these books and among the books themselves that make it clear that the larger and smaller compositional units of the Hebrew Bible do not stand alone but are interrelated at multiple levels of text and tradition. For example, the promises God makes to Abraham in Genesis (12:1–3; 15:1–21; 17:4–8; etc.) anticipate the narratives of Exodus to Joshua; and Joseph’s bones (Gen 50:25; Exod 13:19; Josh 24:32) punctuate the Hexateuchal narrative arc from Genesis to Joshua as outlined by what Gerhard von Rad called the “little historical creeds” (Deut 26:5b–9; Deut 6:20–24; Josh 24:2–13).¹ Furthermore, Deutero-Isaiah echoes and alludes to the prophecies of Proto-Isaiah and Jeremiah, among others. In light of these interconnections among the books of the Bible, it might be said that, if the Bible, or more specifically the Hebrew Bible, is a library, it is

¹ Von Rad, “Form-Critical Problem.”

a special collections library of closely related books, of compositions written by individuals and groups that knew, respected, and often disagreed with one another across time and space, compositions that fed from diverse and common traditions and would go on to feed common and diverse traditions in turn.

Given the variegated diversity and cohesiveness of the Hebrew Bible, it is no surprise that – leaving aside the issue of the fractures of the Hebrew Bible – the arguments put forth for the unity of the Hebrew Bible and its numerous parts are likewise various. Shared theology, common vocabulary, inner-biblical allusions and interpretations, and citations are some of the criteria used to argue for unity. Thus, it has been noted that P has a theological profile distinct from those of the other Pentateuchal sources; that the Deuteronomistic passages in Deuteronomy through Kings, Jeremiah, Hosea, and others share a common vocabulary; that Deutero-Isaiah reuses oracles from Jeremiah and Proto-Isaiah; and that Joel 2:13–14 cite and reinterpret Exod 34:6; Jon 3:9; and 4:2.

In addition to these criteria, a mainstay argument for the unity of smaller and larger compositions of the Hebrew Bible has been that of narrative plot or *muthos*. The basic way in which *muthos* functions to unify the disparate traditions that comprise the Hebrew Bible is to organize and to relate the traditions in a way that makes narrative sense. For example, as I mentioned above, God's promise of numerous descendants and land to Abraham look forward to their fulfillment in Exodus to Joshua. The result, the Hexateuch, is a collection of heterogeneous material that are nevertheless bound closely together by a narrative glue. The narrative integrity of the Hexateuch, to which we will

return shortly, is one among several major examples of how *muthos* unifies the Hebrew Bible.

Before we turn to the Hexateuch and a number of related topics as a prelude to our examination of the sea *muthos*, it bears noting that the perceived unities in the Hebrew Bible are often the combined result of evidence internal to the text and assumptions imposed on the text from the outside. That is to say, the unities of the Hebrew Bible are the product of both the givens of the text and their interpretation. To take an obvious example, many introductions to the Hebrew Bible point out that there are several canons of the Hebrew scriptures that differ in both form and content. Thus the Tanak of Judaism and the Old Testament of Protestant Christianity agree in terms of content but differ in form. And while the Protestant Old Testament agree with the canons of Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodox Christianity concerning the order of the books they have in common, the Catholic and Orthodox canons each include different sets of books and other writings not included in the Protestant canon. The diversity among the several canons, we should remember, is not radical. The four canons include all the books of the Jewish canon, and the books of the Torah and the Former Prophets (Genesis to 2 Kings) are, because of their narrative chronology, in the same order in all the canons. Nevertheless, the fact of diversity teaches us that a part of the principle and authority behind the form and content of the Hebrew Bible resides outside the text in the communities that hold the scriptures authoritative. The canonical text is the product of the internal qualities of the text and the interpretative decisions of the various communities. The observation that internal features and external decisions define the

unities of the Bible holds true concerning smaller and larger compositions of the Hebrew Bible, including the unity we will argue the sea *muthos* forms.

The importance of *muthos* to the unity of the Hebrew Bible is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the ongoing debate about the Enneateuch. This debate takes us back once again to Hermann Gunkel. Gunkel, in his monumental introduction to his Genesis commentary, “Die Sagen der Genesis,” introduced to biblical scholarship the form-critical method.² His fundamental insight was that the basic unit of Genesis and, by implication, of the Pentateuch is not the documentary sources (JEDP) but relatively short independent stories, such as the stories about the binding of Isaac (Genesis 22) and Abraham’s search for a wife for Isaac (Genesis 24).³ These individual stories, he proposed, have their origin in oral tradition and were only later combined to form longer cycles of stories, usually clustered around a central figure, such as Abraham or Jacob. “[T]he connection between individual legends” that make up the cycles, Gunkel argued, were “of later origin in many cases [than the stories], if it be not simply an hallucination of the exegete.”⁴ He also placed under question the connection between the larger cycles of stories, between the blocks of traditions concerning Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, etc. If

² The first edition of “Die Sagen der Genesis” of 1901 was first translated into English by W. S. Carruth and published as *The Legends of Genesis* (Chicago: Open Court, 1901). A second 1910 edition was later translated into English by John J. Scullion and published as *The Stories of Genesis* (Oakland: Bibal, 1994). All citations are from the translation of the second 1910 edition.

³ Gunkel, *Stories*, 42–43. Gunkel (*ibid.*) recognized that the Pentateuch contains materials other than short narratives: “Now our Pentateuch consists, in addition to the collections of legends, of such books of law from various periods and of very diverse spirit.”

⁴ *Ibid.*, 45.

the connections between the individual stories are secondary, the connections between the cycles of stories are tertiary. In this way, Gunkel reformulated and revitalized the issue of the integrity of the Pentateuch and challenged the assumption of the documentary hypothesis that the Pentateuch is comprised of essentially continuous narrative sources. If the documentary hypothesis dissected the Pentateuch along its horizontal seams, Gunkel's form-criticism did so along its vertical seams.

Despite the radical incompatibility of his insights concerning the Pentateuch with the documentary hypothesis, Gunkel nevertheless attempted to harmonize his form-critical observations with the latter.⁵ In doing so, however, Gunkel demoted the Yahwist and the Elohist to the status of collectors and denied them any significant role in the authorship of the individual stories and the cycles of stories:

These collectors, then, are not masters, but rather servants of their subjects. We may imagine them, filled with reverence for the beautiful ancient stories and endeavoring to reproduce them as well and faithfully as they could. Fidelity was their prime quality.⁶

Gunkel argued that the Yahwist and the Elohist did not much change their received tradition and that they preserved the cycles of stories and even the individual stories mostly in their original, unitary state. He acknowledged that the Yahwist and the Elohist "occasionally reshaped a sort of history by the combination of various traditions" but not much more.⁷ And where the collectors did change the stories, it was usually for the worse: "Thus the legends now make the impression of an old and originally many-

⁵ See *ibid.*, 123–60.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 131.

colored painting that has been many times re-touched and has grown dark with age.”⁸ He looked back to a lost past with Romantic nostalgia, lamented the degrading and harmonizing work of the collectors, and rejoiced when he found that the collectors had left the “beautiful ancient stories” close to their original form. Gunkel found that even when the collectors had sewn the stories together to form a sort of history, the connections were as insubstantial as “an hallucination of the exegete.”

In sum, Gunkel rejected in principle, though not in practice, the documentary conception of the Pentateuch. He proposed that the independent stories and cycles of stories were the basic literary units of the Pentateuch. In this way, he created a traditional-historical problem: How did these cycles of stories, these blocks of tradition that grew independent of one another, come to form a more or less continuous narrative? Gunkel did not satisfactorily answer this question. Who or when or how or according to what principle the once distinct cycles of stories were collected and stitched together remained for Gunkel a mystery.

The process of remodeling the legends, which had been under way for so long, went farther in [the collectors’] hands. As to detail, it is difficult, and for the most part impossible, to say what portion of these alternations belonged to the period of oral tradition and what portion to the collectors or to a later time.⁹

One senses in reading Gunkel’s introduction to his Genesis commentary that he was in fact not very interested in the connections between the beautiful ancient stories. Filled with reverence for the beautiful ancient stories, he seems glad that the collectors had not

⁸ Ibid., 133.

⁹ Ibid., 131.

much altered the once oral stories. Gunkel happily believed that Genesis, and the Pentateuch, is riddled with gaps between the individual stories and even deeper gaps between the cycles of stories. The collectors were second-rate artists, and the connections they forged secondary.

Gerhard von Rad, in his seminal essay, “Das formgeschichtliche Problem des Hexateuchs,”¹⁰ took up Gunkel’s observations and, among other things, proposed that the glue that binds the “large quantity of detached materials” of the Hexateuch, Gunkel’s cycles of stories, is the *muthos* of the short historical creeds, brief narrative accounts of Israel’s early history (Deut 26:5b–9; also Deut 6:20–24; Josh 24:2–13).¹¹ He also said that the Yahwist, who he argued was responsible for the basic form of the Hexateuch, was an author of considerable literary and theological powers. He thus overturned Gunkel’s low opinion of the “collectors” of Israel’s traditional stories and provided a plausible response to Gunkel’s unanswered form-critical problem concerning the connection between the disparate blocks of tradition.

Von Rad believed that he found an ancient narrative plot, which predates the Yahwist but encapsulates the general scope of his work, in confessional prayers, which he labeled the “short historical creeds.” His principal example comes from Deut 26:5b–9:

¹⁰ Gerhard von Rad, “Das formgeschichtliche Problem des Hexateuchs,” in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (TB 8; Munich: Kaiser, 1958) 9–86. English translation, “The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch.”

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

^{5b} A wandering Aramean was my father. He went down to Egypt and sojourned there, few in number. There, he became a great nation, strong and numerous. ⁶ But the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, and imposed hard labor on us. ⁷ When we cried to YHWH, the God of our fathers, YHWH heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. ⁸ YHWH took us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great demonstration, and with signs and wonders. ⁹ And he brought us into this place, and he gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

Von Rad wrote that the plot of this historical review “commemorates [God’s] guidance and redemptive activity” and “takes on accepted historical instance of God’s saving purpose.”¹² He placed the accent on history, activity, and movement (in contrast to the accent placed on revelation, encounter, and non-movement in the Sinai tradition – a false dichotomy). He also showed that this plot is found elsewhere in Deut 6:20–24, Josh 24:2–13, and other songs and psalms.¹³ These texts belonged to the “settlement tradition” and outlined the narrative that stretches from the patriarchal age to the settlement in Canaan, that is, from Genesis to Joshua.

Thus, according to von Rad, there was “one central co-ordinating conception” that binds the “ancient and often very scattered traditions” of the Hexateuch, the historical creeds with their historical and theological dimensions.¹⁴ On the one hand, the historical creeds are in form an account of Israel’s early history from the patriarchal age to the time of Israel’s settlement in Canaan. On the other, they are in content Israel’s confessional prayers and, as such, theological statements about Israel’s relationship with God. In total, von Rad’s short historical creeds are a double-sided adhesive that binds together human

¹² Ibid., 32.

¹³ See *ibid.*, 7–10.

¹⁴ Von Rad, “Form-Critical Problem,” 36.

history and divine activity, world history and religious faith. In this way, this-worldly history and religious belief were seen to be one, the *muthos* of history the container for theological thought.

The genius of the Yahwist, according to von Rad, was his ability to take this historical-theological core of Israel's confession and, by using its *muthos* as the basic narrative framework, to construct the Hexateuch, an expansive literary work of historical and theological integrity. Von Rad writes,

what we see is a large quantity of detached materials that have been fused into a single whole according to the pattern of one ancient tradition. The various materials all lie as it were in the same stratum. One plan alone governs the whole, the gigantic structure such as this, the whole conforming to one single plan, does not grow up naturally of its own accord.¹⁵

In other words, von Rad's Yahwist took Gunkel's "beautiful ancient stories" and turned them into a still more beautiful theological epic by mapping them onto the *muthos* of the historical creeds. If Gunkel articulated a principle of discrimination that allows us to separate one complex of tradition from another, the Abraham cycle from the Jacob cycle, von Rad articulated a principle of amalgamation, the historical-theological glue of the historical creeds that connects the wandering forefather to a people settled in Canaan and traces the history of a thanksgiving prayer of an agricultural nation back to the cry of a once oppressed minority. There are gaps in the Hexateuch. But those gaps, von Rad demonstrated, are sufficiently and meaningfully bridged by a simple *muthos*.

¹⁵ Ibid., 39.

Working with the same form-critical methodology but on a different set of texts, Martin Noth expanded Gunkel's form-critical insight about Genesis to describe what since Noth has come to be known as the Deuteronomistic History (Deuteronomy to 2 Kings). In doing so, he challenged the integrity of von Rad's Hexateuch, since the Hexateuch and the Deuteronomistic History awkwardly overlap in Deuteronomy and Joshua. Noth argued that Deuteronomy to 2 Kings is a work that is independent of the non-Deuteronomistic Pentateuchal sources and has its own integrity. "[T]here is no sign of 'Deuteronomistic editing' in Genesis-Numbers," he wrote, and conversely that "the pre-Deuteronomistic material [of Genesis to Numbers] shows no intrinsic continuity in Joshua-Kings."¹⁶ Noth advanced three principal observations in order to argue for the integrity of Joshua-Kings: (1) the language of the Deuteronomistic History is characterized by a distinctive style, marked by "its vocabulary, diction and sentence structure"¹⁷; (2) the Deuteronomistic historian meaningfully punctuated his work with "general retrospective and anticipatory reflections at certain important points in the history" that are usually delivered by a leading personage, such as Joshua (Joshua 1, 21), Samuel (1 Samuel 12), or Solomon (1 Kings 8)¹⁸; and (3) the retrospective and reflective speeches share "a simple and unified theological interpretation of history."¹⁹

¹⁶ Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*, 28, 25. Noth (*ibid.*, 28 n. 1) acknowledged the presence of occasional deuteronomistic redaction in Genesis-Numbers.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Noth's Deuteronomistic historian resembles both Gunkel's Yahwist and Elohist and von Rad's Yahwist. On the one hand, Noth said that the historian is a collector who reproduced received tradition as well and faithfully as he could. Thus,

Despite these elements contributed by Dtr. in order to unify the work, the separate parts of his work seem disunited and heterogeneous. The explanation is that Dtr. clearly did not intend to create something original and of a piece but was at pains to select, compile, arrange and interpret existing traditional material, which was already in written form, on the history of his people in Palestine, that is, he consciously committed himself to using the material available to him.²⁰

As a result, we get a picture of the Deuteronomistic History that resembles Gunkel's vision of the Pentateuch. On the other hand, whereas Gunkel was happy to leave the traditio-historical process in mystery, Noth clearly identified the purpose of the Deuteronomistic historian's work and his methodology.

The historian was, in Noth's opinion, a single individual who, standing in the wake of the historical catastrophes of the early 6th century B.C.E., sought to understand their meaning by writing "a comprehensive and self-contained historical account, using those traditions concerning the history of his people to which he had access."²¹ By and large, he agreed with the theology of Deuteronomy and understood the destruction of the people as the punishment for their disobedience. He also sought to produce a chronological and continuous narrative of Israel's history.²² As a result, a

²⁰ Ibid., 120.

²¹ Ibid., 145.

²² Ibid., 143–44, 34–44

historical/chronological and theological plan binds Noth's Deuteronomistic History, not unlike von Rad's Hexateuch.

In this light, it is important to note that the Deuteronomic theology espoused by the historian gave a certain cyclical, rise and fall, shape to the historical narrative. This is most evident in Judges, where the historian's hand in shaping the traditional material is heaviest. Noth notes that the historian "was particularly concerned to portray the people's repeated apostasy" in Judges.²³ However, when they repented and cried out for help, the historian ignored certain details of the heroic tradition on which he based the narrative of the judges and "gave each hero credit for liberating the whole of Israel from foreign rule, each liberation being followed by 40 years of peace for all Israel."²⁴ These emphases and manipulations gave rise to an overall cyclic pattern in Judges that moves from national apostasy, punishment, repentance, deliverance, peace, and back to apostasy. Northrop Frye put it this way,

The heavy emphasis on the structure, where because of the moral interest we are in effect being told the same kind of story over and over again, indicates that the individual stories are being made to fit that pattern... The priority is given to the mythical structure or outline of the story, not to the historical content.²⁵

To varying degrees, we can detect the theologically shaped *muthos* of Judges in all of the Deuteronomistic History. Disobedience leads to punishment and ultimately to exile.

²³ Ibid., 72.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Frye, *Great Code*, 41.

Konrad Schmid argued that the disagreement between von Rad and Noth concerning the limits of the Yahwist's Hexateuch and the Deuteronomistic History led to a kind of gentleman's compromise that resulted in a "separation model," which "assumes a huge gap between the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic History."²⁶ Von Rad continued to speak of the Hexateuch as a unity and Noth of the Deuteronomistic History as comprised of Deuteronomy to 2 Kings, each acknowledging the other's theory but without seriously engaging it.²⁷ Their gentleman's compromise left uncontested the considerable overlap of Deuteronomy and Joshua between the Hexateuch and the Deuteronomistic History, which became another form-critical problem. One response to this problem that has gained traction within the field as of late has been to propose that the Hexateuch and the Deuteronomistic History form a unified work, the Enneateuch or, as David Noel Freedman called it, the Primary History.

Without getting into the debate about the literary history of the Enneateuch, in my mind, it makes good sense to think of the Enneateuch in its canonical form as the product of two large overlapping *muthoi* that in fact form one continuous tragic *muthos*.²⁸ In this

²⁶ Konrad Schmid, "The Emergence and Disappearance of the Separation between the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic History in Biblical Studies," in *Pentateuch, Hexateuch, or Enneateuch? Identifying Literary Works in Genesis through Kings* (eds. Thomas B. Dozeman et al.; SBLAIL 8; Atlanta: SBL, 2011) 11–24, here 15.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ For a concise presentation of some of the basic arguments for an early redactional unity of Genesis–2 Kings, see Konrad Schmid, *Genesis and the Moses Story: Israel's Dual Origins in the Hebrew Bible* (trans. James D. Nogalski; Shiphrut 3; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010) 16–35. Against Martin Noth who analyzed the Deuteronomistic History as a tragedy, Gerhard von Rad (*OT Theology*, I:342–47), Hans Walter Wolff ("Das Kerygma des deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerks," *ZAW* 73 [1961] 171–86), Frank Moore Cross (*Canaanite Myth*, 274–289), and Jon D. Levenson ("Who Inserted the Book of the Torah?" *HTR* 68 [1975] 203–33; "The Last Four Verses in Kings," *JBL*

vein, Schmid has recently proposed dividing the Enneateuch into two, into “the time of salvation (from the origins to the conquest) and the time of decline and judgment (from the Judges to the end of the monarchy).”²⁹ According to this reading, the Enneateuch appears to have an overall rise and decline structure of tragedy, the Hexateuch roughly covering the “rise” portion of the structure and the Deuteronomistic History the “decline” portion. Important to note for the argument that the Hexateuch and the Deuteronomistic History form a unified Enneateuch is the overlap between the rising and falling. The story of Israel’s rise begins in principle with Abraham and in earnest with Israel’s exodus from Egypt and continues until Israel’s settlement in Canaan. That is to say, the settlement tradition of Joshua is integral to the patriarchal tradition of Genesis and the exodus tradition of Exodus. At the same time, with the settlement tradition, we are already in the Deuteronomistic History and that work’s account of Israel’s history to the time of the Babylonian exile. We cannot neatly separate the rising from the falling, the Hexateuch from the Deuteronomistic History. Therefore, we must conclude that the Enneateuch, whatever the details of its complex literary history, is preserved and presented as a unity in the various canons of the Hebrew Bible for the good reason that it

103 [1984] 353–61) argue that one can identify a “note of grace” in the work of the Deuteronomist, a promise of restoration after the catastrophe of 587. Levenson attributes this salvific motif to the exilic Deuteronomist, Dtr² in Cross’ nomenclature.

²⁹ Thomas Römer, “How Many Books (*teuchs*): Pentateuch, Hexateuch, Deuteronomistic History, or Enneateuch?” in *Pentateuch, Hexateuch, or Enneateuch? Identifying Literary Works in Genesis through Kings* (eds. Thomas B. Dozeman et al.; SBLAIL 8; Atlanta: SBL, 2011) 25–42, here 35. See Schmid, *Moses Story*, 19–22. The proposed division mirrors von Rad’s division of the Enneateuch into “the ‘canonical’ saving history, from the patriarchs to the entry into Canaan,” and the “post-canonical” period of the Deuteronomist’s history (von Rad, *OT Theology*, I:126).

tells a continuous narrative from exodus to settlement to exile, unified by a single tragic *muthos*.

Thomas Römer helpfully points out, in response to arguments for the Enneateuch, that there is no evidence internal to the Bible for an Enneateuch and that it is possible to read Kings “as a transition to the following prophetic books.”³⁰ In this regard, he observes that Isaiah and Jeremiah contain significant cross-references to Kings: Isaiah 36–39 to 2 Kings 18–20, Jeremiah 26 to 2 Kings 22–23, and Jeremiah 52 to 2 Kings 25. These parallels may be interpreted as indexal links between the Former and the Latter Prophets that extend the narrative arc of the Enneateuch beyond the beginning of the Babylonian exile into the prophetic world and its visions of the exilic and post-exilic periods. Just as significantly, Israel’s history is not permitted to end in pessimism but allowed to look toward a future redemption. The tragic *muthos* of the Enneateuch is updated, and uplifted, by its connection with the comedic view of life found in the Latter Prophets.³¹

In this way, Römer points out that dividing the Hebrew Bible into various groups of texts may do violence to an overall unity. The Hebrew Bible is riddled by seams that are indicative of larger and smaller gaps and divisions. At the same time, much of the

³⁰ Römer, “How Many Books?” 36, following Ernst Axel Knauf, “1–2 Rois,” in *Introduction à l’Ancien Testament* (eds. Thomas Römer et al.; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2009) 302–311, esp. 307.

³¹ Norman K. Gottwald (“Tragedy and Comedy in the Latter Prophets,” *Semeia* 19 [1984] 83–96, here 86) wrote that, “although tragedy abounds along the way, the prophetic books all end in comedy.” He (*ibid.*, 84) was careful not to say that the prophetic books are a comedy and spoke rather of their “comic views of life.” He did, however, think that the “implied narrative” of the Latter Prophets – what I call the *muthos* – has an overall comedic structure.

Hebrew Bible is also held together by a network of overlapping, crisscrossing, and cross-referential *muthoi* or, more generally, frames of reference, among other centripetal forces. Thus, in addition to the connections we noted above, the Psalter reinterprets the life of David as told in the Deuteronomistic History through the use of psalm titles³²; Proverbs (1:1; 25:1), the Song of Songs (1:1), and Qohelet (1:1) are related to Solomon; the narrative of Ruth is interjected into the period of Judges by virtue of its opening lines: “In the days when the judges ruled” (Ruth 1:1a); Daniel (1:1) continues the narrative with which 2 Kings ends; the Chronicler retells all of history from Adam (1 Chron 1:1) to Cyrus (2 Chron 36:22–23), from the creation to the end of the exile; and Ezra-Nehemiah continue where Chronicles concludes. The connections between the individual stories of Genesis, between the blocks of tradition that make up the Hexateuch and the Deuteronomistic History, between the Hexateuch and the Deuteronomistic History, between the Former and Latter Prophets, among the Latter Prophets, between the Writings and the rest of the canon – these are not the hallucinations of the exegete but genuine observations about the text that help us to see the Hebrew Bible as a composite unity.

In sum, we can argue for the unity of the Hebrew Bible in a variety of ways. Thus, we should speak of the unities of the Hebrew Bible. And *muthos* is one among many literary and theological features that holds together the rich tapestry of traditions that is the Hebrew Bible. The sea *muthos*, as we will see shortly, is one such unifying *muthos* that functions in a unique way to bind the various parts of the Hebrew Bible and also to present a metaphorical vision of history.

³² See Pss 3:1; 7:1; 18:1; 34:1; 51:2; 52:2; 54:2; 56:1; 57:1 59:1; 60:1–2; 63:1; 142:1. For a recent treatment of this issue, see Vivian L. Johnson, *David in Distress*.

Before we move on to discuss the sea *muthos* in particular, it will be helpful to underline and clarify a number of points concerning the *muthoi* of the Hebrew Bible we touched on above.

The first point is that *muthos*, as a narrative framework, can bind together a wide range of materials. This is exemplified by von Rad's Hexateuch, Noth's Deuteronomistic History, and, if we put the Hexateuch and the Deuteronomistic History together, also by the Enneateuch. Furthermore, as Römer pointed out, the *muthos* of the Enneateuch may be thought of as extending into the prophetic world of the Latter Prophets. Thus, a single (extended) *muthos* is revealed to hold together disparate materials, ranging from the narrative to the poetic, from legal materials to prophetic oracles, etc.

The second point about *muthos* I would like to underline is that history can be and often is made to fit the *muthos* in the Hebrew Bible. Put positively, *muthos* gives shape to the amorphous historical reality, thereby mediating the relationship between the human mind and the world. This is the case, on a small scale, in the biblical account of the Sea Event in Exodus 14–15; at an intermediate level, in the Book of Judges; and on a grander scale, in the Hexateuch or even the Enneateuch. What this means is that biblical historiography and its conception of history is as much poetry as it is history. The biblical writers did not passively report historical events but actively shaped their telling.

Third, *muthos* itself has meaning. In this vein, Frye, somewhat over-enthusiastically, wrote:

The universal in the history is what is conveyed by the *mythos*, the shape of the historical narrative. A myth is designed not to describe a specific

situation but to contain it in a way that does not restrict its significance to that one situation. Its truth is inside the structure, not outside.³³

Frye thinks of *muthos* as a container for meaning. This is not to say that the contents alone are meaningful. Rather, the point is that *muthos* imparts meaning on what it contains through its filtering and organizing work. The *muthos* reveals itself as having a meaning, which it commutes to what it shapes and contains.

Frye explicates his valuation of *muthos* in discussing the Book of Judges and the exodus narrative. We already mentioned above Frye's judgment that the "priority was given to the mythical structure or outline of the story, not to the historical content" in Judges. The more important meaning of Judges is conveyed by the cycle of apostasy, punishment, repentance, and redemption, not by the individual stories. Frye also writes that the reason that various oppressed peoples are able to look to and use the biblical account of Israel's exodus from Egypt as a model for themselves is because of its *muthos*. Pointing to the fact that American blacks looked to the exodus tradition for comfort, stay, and inspiration, Frye writes, "history as such is dust and ashes: only myth, with its suggestion of an action that can contain the destinies of those who are contemplating it, can provide any hope or support at all."³⁴ In Frye's opinion, the *muthos* is essential and the particular details of history accidental. The particular details that fill out the *muthos* are interchangeable.³⁵ The meaning and universal significance of a liberation story are

³³ Frye, *Great Code*, 46.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

³⁵ Cross (*Canaanite Myth*, viii) writes, "Characteristic of the religion of Israel is a perennial and unrelaxed tension between the mythic and the historical" and goes on to state that "the epic events and their interpretations were strongly shaped by inherited

not dependent on whether it is about the Israelites or American slaves. They are dependent on the story following a *muthos* that moves from oppression to liberation. The *muthos* can select, order, and shape any number of historical events, which are in themselves dumb to speak, to convey the same meaning.

This brings us to our fourth and final point. Frye overstated the importance of *muthos* and underestimated the importance of the particular details of history when he wrote that history as such is “dust and ashes.” Frye’s point was that *muthos* selects a subset of elements from the infinite details of actual history and shapes them into a meaningful whole, to make history comprehensible to the human mind. He recognized that biblical salvation history is not opposed to actual history and did not reduce biblical historiography into pure poetry. However, he created an unhelpful dichotomy and perilously turned the *muthos* itself into a symbol, a trap he himself fell into.³⁶ We must remember that if history without an organizing *muthos* is dust and ashes, formless therefore incomprehensible, then *muthos* is an empty shell without the particulars and the details of historical reality. One must be careful not to overstate the universality of *muthos* and the muteness of historical particulars. There is perhaps no history without *muthos*, but conversely *muthos* without history reverts to meaningless form. The

mythic patterns and language.” Cross places equal emphasis on the historical, horizontal dimension and on the vertical, mythic dimension and, unlike Frye, does not allow the mythic pattern to overshadow the importance of the historical details.

³⁶ Frye (*Great Code*, 171) wrote, “That is, the garden of Eden, the Promised Land, Jerusalem, and Mount Zion are interchangeable synonyms for the home of the soul, and in Christian imagery they are all identical, in their ‘spiritual’ form (which we remember means metaphorically, whatever else it may also mean), with the kingdom of God spoken of by Jesus.” This comment is symptomatic of a tendency within Christianity to reduce the complexity of the Hebrew Bible into its spiritual meaning and to interpret the Old Testament as precursors to New Testament fulfillment, exacerbated by Frye’s excessive enthusiasm for structural symmetry in literature.

universal in the biblical account of Israel's exodus from Egypt may in fact be its *muthos*, but it is the particular details of that story that give it palpable power for ancient Israelites, American slaves, liberation theologians, *minjung* theologians, and others.

II. The Sea *Muthos* and the Integrity of the Hebrew Bible

From this general discussion of the unifying role of *muthoi*, we move to the more specific task of clarifying how the sea *muthos* functions to unify the Hebrew Bible.

Much of the discussion here takes the form of summary and pieces together a number of discussions from our previous treatment of the relevant topics: creation, the exodus, the exile, and the eschaton. However, new emphasis will be placed on the phenomenon of sequential updating where a subsequent tradition (e.g., Deutero-Isaiah's conceptualization of the exile and return) takes up earlier traditions (e.g., the creation theology and the exodus tradition) to articulate a message relevant for a new time.

Overall, I argue that the sea *muthos* not only punctuates the Hebrew Bible at critical junctures but that it also is a metaphor for the entirety of time that encapsulates Israel's history from the creation to the exodus, from the exodus to the exile, and from the exile to the eschaton. I argue that the sea *muthos* meaningfully characterizes biblical historiography both in its parts and in its totality.

The Hebrew Bible begins with God's creating the heavens and the earth. It is a picture of creation that is without conflict, without even an indication of struggle or difficulty. God speaks: "Let there be light," and his word becomes fact: "and there was

light” (Gen 1:3). The fact that the Priestly account of creation in Genesis 1 does not speak of a cosmic battle between the creator God and the aquatic forces of chaos is remarkable given some of the well-known ancient Near Eastern accounts of creation, such as the *Enuma Elish* and the *Baal Cycle*, in which conflict and battle precede acts of creation – though the Memphite theologians envisioned a comparably conflict-less creation by means of thought and speech.³⁷ The lack of conflict becomes more remarkable in light of the observation that the Priestly writers were likely aware of and may have structured their composition after the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, as we discussed above. We can interpret this denial of a *Chaoskampf* before creation as a polemic against Marduk, the god of the Babylonians, and as a theological claim for the superiority of the God of Israel. The beginning of the Hebrew Bible presents the creator God and his creation as foundational facts to the subsequent history. It is a monotheistic denial of the implied dualism of a world born out of the conflict between two opposing forces and an affirmation of the unity of all creation under the rule of the one God. The Hebrew Bible does not deny the existence and persistence of evil. But it has canonized at the beginning a creation without conflict and a God without rival.

Thus, the creation theology of Genesis 1 frames the canonical form of the Hebrew Bible and puts into perspective all subsequent battles between God and his foes. As we discussed in part, the Hebrew Bible is full of accounts of conflict, much of it cast in the form of a conflict between God and some cosmic or historical enemy. However, in light of the conflict-less creation that stands proudly at the head of the biblical canon, these

³⁷ See “The Memphite Theology of Creation” in *The Ancient Near East, Volume I, An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (trans. John A. Wilson; ed. James B. Pritchard; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973) 1–2.

conflicts between God and the cosmic and historical forces of chaos are bracketed within an overriding claim for God's mastery. Evil persists, at times triumphantly, but God endures as incomparable creator and king through it all. God's mastery, as demonstrated at creation, frames the biblical perspective on history as a foundational fact. Creation is the stage upon which history takes place, and all historical conflicts happen within the framework of God's creative mastery.

The biblical account of the Sea Event marks the birth of the Bible's theological historiography as informed and shaped by the sea *muthos*. We can also trace in its textual strata significant stages of the maturation of the marriage between history and the sea *muthos*. The Song at the Sea (Exodus 15), possibly the oldest composition preserved in the Hebrew Bible, makes the innovative equation of myth and history. Using the sea *muthos* as the narrative framework, the poet of the Song composes a historical hymn of praise that depicts, be it elliptically, Israel's early history from her exodus from Egypt to her settlement in the sacred land of YHWH, which we argued is Canaan. Unlike von Rad's historical creeds that mention a patriarch, the "wandering Aramean" (Deut 26:5b), the Song begins with the exodus and follows the plot of the sea *muthos* toward new creation, temple, and kingship.³⁸

³⁸ Among von Rad's little historical creeds, Josh 24:2–13 is most elaborate concerning the patriarchs, mentioning Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by name. On the other hand, Deut 6:20–24 does not mention the patriarchs and begins with Israel's slavery in Egypt. The Song at the Sea mentions "the God of my father" (Exod 15:2) but gives no further details. The language is generic and probably refers to an ancestral deity. The narrative portion of Exodus takes pains to identify the God of the exodus with the God of the fathers (Exod 2:24; 3:6, 15, 16; 4:5; 6:3). See Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, 514. For the view that the Song at the Sea refers to the Genesis patriarchal narratives, see Schmid, *Moses Story*, 222. Note that Schmid assumes that the Song at the Sea is late and uses archaizing language.

God's initial battle against the sea, transformed into a battle at the sea, happens in two stages. The first battle takes place at the Red Sea (or the Sea of End/Extinction/Annihilation)³⁹ against Egypt (Exod 15:2–12), and victory there leads to the creation of a new Israel, once an enslaved people but now become a people freed for and by YHWH (15:13a, 16b). The second battle takes place, it may be presumed, at or around the Jordan River against the people groups of Philistia, Edom, Moab, and Canaan, who now occupy YHWH's sacred land (15:14–15). Victory there leads to the establishment of YHWH's temple and his everlasting kingship (15:17–18). The battle at the Red Sea and the Jordan River should be understood typologically as a single event, as Psalm 114 makes clear. In this way, history is made to conform to the sea *muthos*: conflict and victory against the sea lead to three goodly consequences, creation, temple, and kingship. Or positively, the sea *muthos* gives meaningful shape to history. The result is an account of history that is studded with the powerful and enduring symbols taken from the realm of myth. It is worth repeating that the *muthos* of the Song at the Sea encapsulates not only the Sea Event but the entire early history of Israel from exodus to settlement.

The Yahwist is responsible for the earlier of the two prose renditions of the Sea Event we examined in some detail above. That discussion need not be repeated. The point I mentioned briefly above and would now like to discuss a bit more fully here is that the Yahwist seems to be the first to have integrated the Song at the Sea into an

³⁹ See Bernard F. Batto, *Slaying the Dragon: Mythmaking in the Biblical Tradition* (Louisville: WJK, 1992) 115–16.

account of the history of Israel. What, if any, are the implications of this observation for the literary history of the Hebrew Bible?

At first glance, we might be tempted to agree with von Rad that Exodus 15 “is not a free composition, but is recounted according to the accepted pattern [of the settlement tradition] with but little variation: it tells of the miracle of the Red Sea, the journey through the wilderness and the occupation of Canaan.”⁴⁰ Exodus 15 is another little historical creed whose *muthos* covers the early history of Israel from her exodus from Egypt to her settlement in Canaan. On closer observation, however, we must disagree with von Rad.

Important to note is that von Rad abstracts from the Song at the Sea Exod 15:4, 5, 8, 9, 10a, 12–16 in order to demonstrate that the Song accords with the settlement tradition.⁴¹ He applies a filter to highlight only those details that are favorable to his thesis that the Song follows the *muthos* of the settlement tradition. Now, we argued above that the Song at the Sea follows the sea *muthos*: conflict with and victory over a watery foe leads to creation, temple, and kingship. It is possible that the poet of the Song combined the *muthoi* of the settlement tradition and the sea myth. The important question is to which of the two he gave the priority.

In my opinion, it is the sea *muthos* that better encapsulates the *muthos* of the Song and was given the priority. Decisive in this regard is the fact that von Rad does not take Exod 15:17–18 into account in his reconstruction of the *muthos* of the Song. He explains that the reference to “your holy abode” in 15:13 refers to Canaan, not Sinai, but he

⁴⁰ Von Rad, “Form-Critical Problem,” 9.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 8–9.

altogether ignores the related conclusion of the Song and its emphatic focus on the temple and YHWH's kingship:

¹⁷ You brought them in and planted them on the mountain of your inheritance,
The place, O YHWH, you made your dwelling,
The sanctuary, O Lord, your hands established.

¹⁸ YHWH will reign forever and ever. (Exod 15:17–18)

Von Rad is correct that “your holy abode” refers to the “holy land.”⁴² However, he misreads the Song when he ignores the emphasis placed on the temple and YHWH's kingship and interprets the reference to the land as indicative only of the settlement tradition. “Your holy abode,” “the mountain of your inheritance,” “your dwelling,” and “the sanctuary” point first and foremost to YHWH's temple and secondarily, if significantly, to Israel's settlement. The settlement tradition has been incorporated into the sea *muthos*, which frames the entire Song from beginning, middle, to end.

We discussed above that the temple of the Song may refer to Gilgal, Shiloh, or the land of Canaan as a whole within the original context of the Song at the Sea. But we also said that the temple can refer to no other place than Jerusalem within the canonical context of the Song, as virtually all commentators agree. That is to say, the Yahwist who first inserted the Song into a narrative account of Israel's history – unless we assign him to a pre-Solomonic period – most likely interpreted the temple of the Song as referring to Jerusalem, whatever its original referent. Thus, if the Yahwist first incorporated the Song at the Sea into an account of Israel's history and interpreted the temple in the Song as referring to Jerusalem, it becomes unlikely that he would have concluded his work with Joshua, as von Rad thought, when Jerusalem remained in Jebusite possession (Josh

⁴² Ibid., 9.

15:63) and the Jerusalem Temple was generations away from being built. In order to cover the *muthos* outlined in the Song at the Sea, the Yahwist's work would have to extend at minimum to the beginning of Kings.⁴³ The suggestion is to think of the Song at the Sea, an ancient hymn that predates the Yahwist, as forming the basis for the narrative plot for the Yahwist's composite work – instead of von Rad's little historical creeds, which are unlikely to be early traditio-historically.⁴⁴ The suggestion is also to think of the Yahwist and the Deuteronomistic historian as a single person or group. Thus, closer study of the earliest composition preserved in the Hebrew Bible may help us better understand the foundational unity of the Enneateuch, whether we call the responsible hands the Yahwist or the Deuteronomistic historian.⁴⁵

We cannot pursue these proposal further in the dissertation. It would take us far afield. But the relevant point for us is that the simple *muthos* of the Song at the Sea is analogous to the more elaborate *muthos* of the Enneateuch. We are not certain that there is a causal relationship from the Song to the Enneateuch (or, as Schmid argues, from the

⁴³ According to the Deuteronomistic History, David conquered Jerusalem toward the beginning of his kingship (2 Sam 5:6–9) and Solomon built the Temple there (1 Kgs 6:1).

⁴⁴ See Schmid, *Moses Story*, 8 and n. 44.

⁴⁵ We cannot, within the context of this dissertation, pursue this proposal further. As a means to defer some of the initial questions, I direct the reader to Schmid's helpful defense of the unity of Genesis–2 Kings in which he argues for the identity of the Yahwist and the Deuteronomistic historian (*Moses Story*, 16–35). Furthermore, Schmid also notes that Exodus 15 “appears to be structured so as to show the big picture of salvation history” spanning from the patriarchal age to the erection of the Temple in Jerusalem (ibid., 222). However, he dates the Song late, to a post-Priestly period (ibid., 223). In contrast, dating the Song early, as we argued above, allows us possibly to identify the Yahwist who inserted the Song with the pre-exilic Deuteronomist, whom Frank M. Cross (*Canaanite Myth*, 278–89) called Dtr¹, as opposed to the exilic Dtr².

Enneateuch to the Song)⁴⁶ that explains this analogy. It is nevertheless significant that the Song at the sea contains *in nuce* the *muthos* of the Enneateuch. The sea *muthos* encapsulates the plotline not only of the Song but also of the Enneateuch.

The Priestly writers were responsible for the latest redactional layer of the account of the Sea Event and, as such, also of the canonical form of Exod 13:17–15:21. We argued above that the Priestly writers interpreted the Sea Event as a second act of creation, in which God brings into being a newly constituted Israel. We put forth two reasons in support of this idea. First, we noted that the Priestly writers made a subtle but certain allusion to the manner in which Marduk created the firmament above and the earth below out of Tiamat's cloven carcass in saying that the sea was split (בִּקַּע; Exod 14:21b) in order to allow Israel to cross over. The redemption of Israel at the Red Sea, according to the Priestly writers, was an event analogous to the creation of the cosmos. Second, we noted that Israel's walking through the split sea has cosmic significance and signaled not only YHWH's mastery over the sea but also Israel's priority over created order. YHWH is willing to undo creation in order to redeem and recreate Israel, is the point. In this way, the Priestly writers clarified the relationship between cosmogony and genogony, the birth of a people. On the one hand, cosmogony has ordinal priority in that it precedes the creation of Israel as God's people. On the other, genogony has absolute priority in that God can and, in fact, does undo cosmic order first in order to save and to create a people for himself and second to reestablish the cosmos. God moves heaven and

⁴⁶ See note 45.

earth for the sake of his people at the time of the exodus, as the Priestly writers, located in the exilic period, perhaps hoped he would once again in their days.

In sum, the Priestly redaction emphasized the theme of creation already found in the Song at the Sea and formed a more explicit connection between the creation of a people and the creation of the world. In doing so, the writers extended the significance of the Sea Event backward to creation. Thus the Sea Events, in its canonical form, looks back to Genesis and forward to Kings. This is not to say that the Enneateuch strictly follows the sea *muthos* as found in the Song at the Sea. The point is to bring to light the expansive role of the Song and its sea *muthos* for biblical historiography. The generic innovation of the Song, which married history and the *muthos* of the sea myth, informs biblical historiography more deeply and more expansively than previously recognized.

Deutero-Isaiah reached to creation theology and to the exodus tradition for resources to respond to the crisis of exile and to give articulation to what he was certain was a new unfolding of God's saving act in history to redeem his people Israel. What attracted Deutero-Isaiah to these two traditions were no doubt their honest depiction of the forces of evil, which resonated with his historical context, and the powerful witness to God's ultimate victory over them, which he hoped would inspire faith in the exilic community. What facilitated the prophet's combination of the two traditions to speak about the exile, enabling him to move analogically and effortlessly between creation, exodus, and exile, as I argued above, were their shared *lexis* and *muthos*. That one could talk about both the creation and the exodus using the same *lexis* and that the drama of both creation and the exodus followed a similar *muthos* contributed to the prophet's

analogical way of thinking, a poetics of metaphorical compression, best exemplified by Isa 51:9–11, in which myth and history, the past and the future, all exist simultaneously as one reality.

To review, Deutero-Isaiah thought of Rahab the Dragon (Isa 51:9) as a mythic monster, the cosmic and geographical sea, historical Egypt and, by analogy, Babylon and the experience of exile all at once. For the inspired prophet, creation, exodus, and now the imminent return from exile constituted enactments of the one and the same principle of divine redemption that would inevitably play out in the same way – as the sea *muthos* displays. Furthermore, not only were these events analogically similar for the prophet, they were also metaphorically equal. YHWH clove Rahab, dried the Sea, and made a path through the Red Sea at different cosmic and historical times, but as actions that define God, these disparate events were thought as contemporary facts that point to the same divine character. In this regard, we should remember that the prophet refers to these actions as enduring participial attributes of God, not as punctual, historical events. Thus, one might say that God carries these events inside himself, in Deutero-Isaiah's conception of God, as concrete distillations of an enduring divine potential for action. There is no difference between cleaving Rahab or slitting the Red Sea, because the “Hewer of Rahab” is the “One who makes a path in the depths of the sea for the redeemed to pass over” (Isa 51:10). Disparate events are compressed into one, through metaphorical equation, in the divine – or, in this case, in the divine arm.

In sum, Deutero-Isaiah conceived of history as an extension of God's character, his potential for action. Therefore, when God does act, history unfolds according to a recognizable pattern as revealed in God's interventions in the mythic and historical past.

Consequently, history is studded with repetitions of the old in new contexts. And the prophet recognized the sea *muthos*, the sequence of events that underpins creation and the exodus, again being reenacted toward the end of Israel's Babylonian exile. He who acted in creation and in the time of the exodus was again acting, now, in a new dispensation of familiar grace but in a far more glorious manner to deliver Israel out of the Babylonian captivity. History, for Deutero-Isaiah, was connected by repetitions of patterns, most significantly, the sea myth pattern of conflict and goodly consequences. And these patterns were in fact witnesses to the divine character. Deutero-Isaiah saw history and theology as two sides of the same coin.

We noted above that the prophet of the Isaiah Apocalypse (Isaiah 24–27) takes up the sea myth to describe the eschatological event to come, that God will judge and punish the forces of chaos represented by Leviathan and usher in a time of new creation and renewed kingship, established once again in Zion. We also noted that the Isaiah Apocalypse aptly concludes the oracles against the nations (Isaiah 13–23). When the oracles against the nations are read in light of the Isaiah Apocalypse, they can be interpreted as historical precursors and anticipations of the judgment to occur in the eschaton on a cosmic scale. In this way, history is taken up into apocalyptic eschatology. Furthermore, since the Isaiah Apocalypse recasts a myth of creation into a myth of the eschaton, the intervening history is also revealed to participate in the unfolding of a mythic *muthos* that characterizes primeval time and the end time. *Endzeit gleich Urzeit*. What more, *Gesamtzeit* participates in the actualization of the sea *muthos* that

characterizes *Urzeit* and *Endzeit*. With the Isaiah Apocalypse, we can begin to speak of a biblical view of total time that is characterized by the sea *muthos*.

So far, we saw that the *muthos* of the Song at the Sea covers the period from Israel's exodus from Egypt to her settlement in Canaan. Then we considered the possibility that the Yahwist may have used the Song at the Sea as the narrative framework, akin to von Rad's idea of the little historical creeds, for an account of Israel's early history that stretches from Exodus to Kings. We found that the Priestly writers subsequently accentuated the dimension of creation already found in the Song at the Sea, thereby forming a connection between the Sea Event and Genesis 1. Next, Deutero-Isaiah, during the exilic period, updated the significance of the exodus tradition and creation theology to speak a powerful word of salvation to the exilic community: The God of old, of creation and of the exodus, is about to act once more in a decisive manner to redeem Israel from the Babylonian exile. The history of Israel from her exodus from Egypt and return from the Babylonian exile, in one way or another, is interpreted through the lens of the sea *muthos*.

Daniel, to whom we turn now, follows in the steps of this tradition of sequentially updating the sea *muthos* in order to address a later situation. Daniel updates traditions concerning the exile and of seeing Israel's historical enemies as chaos monsters to speak of the time of the Greek empires. For Daniel, the exile did not end with Israel's return from Babylon but continued far past it into the Hellenistic period, each period under Babylonian, Median, Persian, and Greek rule comparable to the reign of one of the four monstrous beasts from the sea (Daniel 7). Daniel foresaw that the definitive end to the

exilic period would come after seventy weeks of years since the beginning of the Babylonian exile (Dan 9:2, 24–27), when God defeats the fourth beast through the agency of the One like the Son of Man (7:11–12), destroys the arrogant eleventh horn (7:26), and gives everlasting reign to the people of the holy ones (7:22, 27). Daniel does not deny God’s past redemptive activity. Rather, he sees all past instances of God’s redemptive interventions in history as a prelude to the one final act in the eschaton. Only then do Israel’s exile and the reign of the various monstrous agents of aquatic chaos come to an utter and final end. All time since the Babylonian exile and before the eschaton is a time of chaos, increasing in intensity toward the time of Antiochus IV. God has acted in the past to subdue the beastly empires, renew creation, and assert his kingship. But he will act one final time to destroy Antiochus IV and inaugurate an eschatological era. This, too, of course, is an reenactment of the sea *muthos*: God defeats the foe from the sea, then reinvigorates creation, reestablishes his kingship, and resanctifies his temple.

From this survey of the role the sea *muthos* has played in the conceptualization and in the writing of biblical historiography, we see that the influence of the sea *muthos* has grown from structuring a panegyric hymn to YHWH (Exodus 15) to cover, in one way or another, the entire stretch of time from creation to the eschaton. The growth process has been organic and sporadic rather than continuous and systematic. Time periods, such as the patriarchal era, and other blocks of tradition, such as the Sinai tradition, so far as I can see, are not integrated into a discernable instance of the sea *muthos*. Thus, we cannot speak of the sea *muthos* of the Hebrew Bible without qualifications. However, it is a remarkable fact that the sea *muthos* informs the writing of

history or the conceptualization of historical periods in meaningful ways concerning virtually the entire stretch of biblical time.

In these intimations of a tradition history, we learn the enduring vitality of myth, that biblical historiography may owe a greater debt to the mythic heritage Israel shared with the ancient Near Eastern world than previous thought, and the conservatism and the creativity of the canonical process. The influence the sea myth has had on the Hebrew Bible is, at one level, direct. And this influence has been the subject of many studies, some of which we surveyed throughout the dissertation. The influence that has gone mostly unnoticed, the influence I have tried to clarify, has occurred at a deeper level of the tradition. I have tried to show that the sea myth has provided the biblical writers not only with the language with which to articulate their fears and hopes but, what more, with a narrative structure, a *muthos*, by which to organize, interpret, and represent historical reality. The constitutive elements of the sea myth, as mythic symbols, became living metaphors for the biblical writers, informing their thinking about chaos, combat, creation, kingship, and the temple. Furthermore, the *muthos* of the sea myth, as a narrative framework, became a metaphor for history, for individual events and for the entirety of time. All of history is, in one sense, a divine comedy: God battles, even struggles, against the rebellion of chaotic forces, but he ultimately triumphs gloriously.

The conservatism of the canonical process is evident in the continued use of the sea myth from the earliest (Exod 15) to the latest (Daniel 7) compositions canonized in the Hebrew Bible. There is no time period when the sea myth, as metaphor and as *muthos*, did not exert considerable influence on Israel's religious thought and biblical historiography. The creativity of the traditions of this continuous and living tradition is

evident in the myriad and motley ways they adapted the sea myth to speak a fitting word for their historical and theological situation, beginning with the poet of the revolutionary Song at the Sea. Above, we outlined the ways in which the sea *muthos* unifies various episodes in the history of Israel and, to a limited extent, the entirety of Israel's conception of history from creation to the eschaton under one central mythic tradition. Below, we turn to one final contribution of the sea *muthos* to a biblical worldview.

III. The Sea *Muthos* as a Metaphor for Reality

We have thus far labored to demonstrate the various and vital ways in which the sea myth as metaphor and *muthos* has informed biblical thought and historiography. In conclusion, I would like to propose that the sea myth or, more correctly, the sea *muthos* has enabled the biblical writers boldly to face the overwhelming disarray of historical reality, to interpret it faithfully as an arena for human and for divine activity, and to create the reality they saw through the filter and lens of the sea *muthos* by describing it. It is no surprise that the historians, poets, priests, prophets, and sages of the Hebrew Bible had mixed success in convincing their contemporaries to believe in and to live in the reality they saw. However, their creation was a powerful legacy for communities of faith at the time and later as well, who, in small and big ways, have believed and lived in a world in part created by their visions.

In chapter 1, we defined the metaphor, the metaphorical participants, and the metaphorical copula. We said that a metaphor is the equation of two or more unequal metaphorical participants; that the participants are any single frame of reference or

coherent combination of two or more frames of reference; and that the metaphorical copula means “is and is not.” We further noted that a metaphor can equate a fictional frame of reference and a frame of reference that exists in the real world. We resume our discussion here by returning once again to Aristotle.

Aristotle understood poetry as an imitative art, as an imitation of nature (μίμησις φύσεως). Of art in general, he famously wrote, “Art imitates nature.”⁴⁷ Of poetry in particular, he wrote,

Epic composition, then; the writing of tragedy, and of comedy also; the composing of dithyrambs; and the greater part of the making of music with flute and lyre: these are all in point of fact, taken collectively, imitative processes.⁴⁸

From this, we can deduce that the individual elements of poetry are the concrete literary tools for the work of imitation. Thus, not only do the six elements of tragedy⁴⁹ we discussed in chapter 1 characterize tragic poetry – we said of *muthos* in particular that it is “the heart and soul” of tragedy – they are also instrumental for the completion of the goal of poetry, which is to imitate nature. They reach outside the boundary of literary art into the world and, in the literary world, recreate that world. Thus, in order better to understand the dynamic relationship between poetic art and nature, we turn to the concept of *mimêsis* and, once gain, to that of *muthos*.

The term *mimêsis* is often and misleadingly translated into English as “imitation.” However, *mimêsis* in Aristotle does not mean “a copy or reproduction” of the object

⁴⁷ ἢ τέχνη μιμεῖται τὴν φύσιν (*Physics* 2:2 194 a 21–2; *Meteorology* 4:3 381 b 6).

⁴⁸ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 15.

⁴⁹ Plot, character, verbal expression, thought, visual adornment, and song-composition.

being imitated.⁵⁰ Rather, *mimêsis* is a creative process. As Ricoeur put it, “There is *mimêsis* only where there is a ‘making’ [faire].”⁵¹ *Mimêsis* is making (up) – *poiêsis*; just as *poiêsis* (poetry) is *mimêsis*.⁵² Put in other terms, a poet does not only imitate things “the way they are or were” but also “the way they ought to be.”⁵³ Poetic *mimêsis* is not only a matter of faithful description but as much a matter of creative invention.

The creative and inventive aspect of poetry understood as *mimêsis* becomes evident when we consider the principal element of tragic poetry, the *muthos*. *Muthos* contributes to the goal of *mimêsis* in equal measure to its importance to tragic poetry as its “heart and soul.” This makes all the more significant that *muthos* “is quite a strange brand of imitation,”

which composes and constructs the very thing it imitates! Everything said about the ‘whole and entire’ character of myth, of the ordering of beginning, middle, and end, and in general of the unity and order of action [in the *Poetics*], helps distinguish imitation from all duplication of reality.⁵⁴

The *muthos* does not simply represent an event as it happened but as it ought to have – as the *muthos* selects and organizes the details of the event. It creates order, imposes a beginning, middle, and end to the disarray of historical events, and in the process omits certain details and invents others in order to construct a whole. Put emphatically, *muthos*

⁵⁰ Gassner, “Aristotelian Literary Criticism,” 116, see also 121–62. See also Ricoeur, *Metaphor*, 37–43.

⁵¹ Ricoeur, *Metaphor*, 38.

⁵² “*Mimêsis* is *poiêsis*, and *poiêsis* is *mimêsis*” (ibid., 39).

⁵³ Aristotle, *Poetics*, 67.

⁵⁴ Ricoeur, *Metaphor*, 39.

deconstructs an event into its component elements and reconstructs a new event that is and is not the original event. The central role *muthos* plays in poetry places the creative aspect of *mimêsis* beyond doubt.

In emphasizing the creative aspect of *muthos* and of poetry, we should not lose sight of the denotative aspect, that poetry is *mimêsis phuseôs*. We need not delve into the complex notion of “nature” (φύσις) in Aristotle, except perhaps to note that Aristotle’s “nature” is not Plato’s “forms.” The former is a dynamic concept and does not denote the ultimate essence of things.⁵⁵ In any case, the important point to keep in mind is that poetry as *mimêsis phuseôs* affirms the connection of poetry to the reality outside the boundaries of art. It

reminds us that no discourse ever suspends our belonging to a world. All *mimêsis*, even creative – nay, *especially* creative – *mimêsis*, takes place within the horizons of a being-in-the-world which it makes present to the precise extent that the *mimêsis* raises it to the level of *muthos*.⁵⁶

Muthos is clearly an artistic invention. But what it recreates in being invented is an imitation of the world – raised up to the level of *muthos*, that is, of creative art.

Therefore, the relationship between art and nature, as it is mediated by the twin concept of *mimêsis* and *muthos*, is ultimately tensive, dynamic, and bi-directional. The fruit of that relationship is something that is neither pure creation nor pure imitation.

Ricoeur writes,

⁵⁵ For a brief note on the use of “nature” in the *Poetics*, see Ricoeur, *Metaphor*, p. 333 n. 82, and Butcher, *Poetics*, 116–20.

⁵⁶ Ricoeur, *Metaphor*, 43.

Both directions of the relationship between *muthos* and *mimêsis* must be appreciated: if tragedy achieves its effect of *mimêsis* only through the invention of the *muthos*, *muthos* is at the service of *mimêsis* and its fundamentally denotative character... *mimêsis* is the name of the 'metaphoric reference.' What Aristotle himself emphasized through this paradox is that poetry is closer to essence than is history, which is preoccupied with the accidental. Tragedy teaches us to 'see' human life 'as' that which the *muthos* displays. In other words, *mimêsis* constitutes the 'denotative' dimension of *muthos*.⁵⁷

Three points bear emphasis. First, *mimêsis* submits to the filtering and structuring work of *muthos* as history passes from the real world into the world of poetry. Second, since the goal of art is imitation, it is actually *muthos* that is "at the service of *mimêsis*." In this way, neither *muthos* nor *mimêsis* is allowed to have the supremacy. They co-exist in a dynamic and co-dependent relationship. Together, they characterize the metaphoric nature of poetry as that which brings together and merges into one what it makes up (or invents) and what it describes (or denotes). Third, the tensive character of metaphorical literature teaches us to "see as." It teaches us to "see" what is denoted "as" that which the *muthos*, which is invented, displays. The result of the metaphorical world of *muthos* and *mimêsis* is, in sum, a worldview that is bound to reality but is free to see fabulous new worlds in that reality.

Muthos, in conclusion, is symptomatic of the tension that characterizes all poetry: "submission to reality *and* fabulous invention," and through that tensive relationship, teaches us to see the world in a new way. Furthermore, in redescribing the world, the *muthos* indeed helps create that world. "Expression creates being." We already discussed how the sin as debt metaphor created a world in which the hand of paupers

⁵⁷ Ibid., 245.

became the altar of God. We now turn finally to how the sea *muthos* as a metaphor for history creates a new world.

Before turning to the creative aspect of the biblical sea *muthos*, it is worth pausing to note briefly the implications of the above discussion concerning the mediating role of *muthos* between poetry and the world for the Hebrew Bible. We discussed throughout the dissertation that the history of Israel as it is written down, primarily in the Enneateuch, and as they are assumed, in the prophetic literature, for example, is in many cases structured according to the sea *muthos*. In saying this, we recognize the participation of biblical compositions in the tension between “submission to reality *and* fabulous invention.” I say this not to dismiss the denominative and referential dimension of biblical historiography but to bring it into sharper focus and to clarify its relation to the overall purpose of the Hebrew Bible. And I say this without forgetting, rather highlighting, the poetic aspect of the Hebrew Bible. Whether we are dealing with the patriarchal narratives, the history of the Judahite monarchy, or the poetry of Job, the Hebrew Bible faithfully describes the world and, at the same time, fabulously creates a new one. The ways in which the compositions that make up the Hebrew Bible navigate this tensive relationship are various, but all engage in the noble project of “saying what is” and of “making up,” of description and invention. Thus, the Hebrew Bible can be a source for the reconstruction of critical history, social milieu, literary tradition, etc. And it can also be a witness to worlds that deviate in subtle and radical ways from the one in which the ancients found themselves.

Let us turn finally to the topic of the sea *muthos* and its contribution to the imagination, description, and creation of a biblical world. How does the sea *muthos* teach us to “see” the world “as” that which the *muthos* displays? And how does “seeing as” lead to a new creation?

We can safely assume that the history of Israel was far more complex than we know and certainly more so than what we find in the Hebrew bible. We need not belabor this point. We have labored, however, to show that the biblical writers time and again chose to see history through the filter and lens of the sea *muthos*. The result, as we discussed, is a history that is punctuated by reactualizations of the sea myth and a total history that is shaped by the sea *muthos* and marches toward a final enactment of the same. Israel’s enemies are thus repeatedly imagined and described as sea monsters, in effect equated to God’s enduring watery foe, with the result that God does not long allow Israel’s enemies to endure. Rather, he inevitably battles and defeats them, who are ultimately his enemies, with the assured result that creation is renewed, God’s kingship demonstrated, and the divine temple, the navel of the cosmos and the throne of God, reestablished. According to the sea *muthos* tradition, history reliably moves from conflict to battle to goodly consequences in repetition of the sea *muthos*. For it not to do so would mean that God is other than what the sea *muthos* displays. Divine character and biblical history are inextricably linked in the sea *muthos* tradition.

The main idea of the sea *muthos* tradition appears to be that God has triumphed over chaos in the mythic past and throughout history, just as he will in the end of time. Thus an important achievement of the sea *muthos* tradition is that it has described the cosmos and its history in a consistent manner. However, the achievement of the sea

muthos tradition is not only that of description but also of invention, the invention of a hermeneutics and through that hermeneutics, a new world. I would like to close our discussion with this point.

The hermeneutical achievement of the sea *muthos* tradition can be divided into two. First, the sea *muthos* becomes a flexible paradigm for the theological interpretation of a wide range of historical situations, periods, and eras. When the inspired poet of the Song at the Sea chose to see the Sea Event through the filtering and structuring work of the sea *muthos* and to describe it using the *lexis* borrowed from the sea myth, he could not have anticipated that the decision to bring myth and history together would inspire generations of future sages, priests, prophets, and visionaries to do likewise.

Nevertheless, his generic innovation stands at the source of such a biblical tradition.

Once unmoored from myth, the sea *muthos* became available for later biblical writers to use as a metaphor to interpret, conceptualize, and describe many historical events. Thus, we considered above the Yahwist's and the Priestly writers' work on the exodus tradition, Deutero-Isaiah's and, to a limited extent, the Psalmists' work on the exile, and the work of the prophet of the Isaiah Apocalypse and Daniel on the eschaton. We have also mentioned in passing the use of the sea imagery in early Jewish and Christian literatures.

The sea *muthos* and the sea *lexis* served as a conduit for biblical and extra-biblical traditions to steal from myth its patterns and symbols for thinking and writing about history. In this way, the horizons of the sea *muthos* became unbound and unlimited.

The second hermeneutical achievement of the sea *muthos* tradition has to do with the translation of history into theology. This achievement is clearest in Deutero-Isaiah. Deutero-Isaiah, as we saw, equated creation, exodus, and Israel's return from exile by

identifying the authoring hand behind these events: the one who defeats the chaos monster is the one who brings the Israelites out of Egypt is the one who brings the exilic community back to Israel. If the poet of the Song at the Sea taught us that God acts in history, Deutero-Isaiah teaches us that God reveals his character through his acts in history. History is theology. This hermeneutical insight, that divine character is revealed in history, undergirds the universalizing claims made about God. It has made it possible to claim that the God of the exodus favors the poor and the oppressed, not only in the case of Israelite slaves in ancient Egypt, but also in the here and now. The reasoning is that God is not a God who did these things in the past but a God who always does this kind of thing. By reconceiving what God did as what God does, Deutero-Isaiah made it possible to discover essential divine qualities in historical particularities. That God acted in such and such a manner once or, better, twice in the past means that he acts habitually in that manner.

Awake, awake, put on strength, Arm of YHWH.
Awake as in days of old, generations long ago.
Is it not you, the Hearer of Rahab, the Piercer of Dragon?
Is it not you, the Drier of the Sea, the waters of the Great Deep,
The One who makes a path in the depths of the sea for the redeemed to pass over,
The Redeemer of the oppressed, the Destroyer of tyrants?

Deutero-Isaiah's theology transforms history into a theological textbook. It is a theology that is enriched by history and enriches history in return. God reveals himself in history, and it is possible to discover enduring divine attributes in history if only we pay attention to the patterns of his activity.

The total hermeneutical achievement of the sea *muthos* tradition is, then, a unified understanding of theology and history, a God whose actions define history and a history

that defines God. This unity is based on a hermeneutical circle: History unfolds according to the sea *muthos* because God acts in a way that conforms to the sea *muthos*, and God acts in this way because he is defined by such a history. But the circle does not dissolve into a useless tautology because it has a beginning outside the circle in myth and an end when theology and history perfectly align in the eschaton. In any case, the sea *muthos* tradition adumbrates a comprehensive worldview that can account for most, if not all, historical periods – each interpreted as a period of chaos, conflict, or triumph – and one that opens a hermeneutical door into the knowledge of God and his ways. It teaches us to see history and God as that which the sea *muthos* displays.

Finally, how does “seeing as” help create a new world? We can safely assume that not everyone who heard or read the visions of history and God shaped by the sea *muthos* were convinced of their accuracy. For many, these visions deviated too far from their all too real experiences of a complex and chaotic reality. Does God truly have the kingly power to defeat the monstrous empires of the world, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Medes, and the Greeks of world history? Does God reign? Who can believe that Zion is God’s sanctuary, the seat of his power, the navel of the cosmos, when she sits there, ruined? Will Zion be comforted and sing the songs of joy and gladness once more? Who is this God who is to bring us up out of the land of slavery? Can God redeem?

It is possible that, by the time of the United Monarchy, few questioned the authority of the exodus tradition, which formed a basis of Israel’s corporate identity. However, not a few among Deutero-Isaiah’s exilic contemporaries and the Jews living under the tyranny of Antiochus IV questioned the trustworthiness of the prophet’s promise of an imminent return and the Danielic vision of an apocalyptic reversal in the

realm of world history. For those who did not believe, the oracles of creative redemption and the visions of a humane kingdom to come must have appeared to be hallucinations – seductive hope but far from assured reality.

Nevertheless, we know that there were a small number who believed in the world the prophet and the sages saw and described, for whom that world was an established fact. For those who believed, the incredible history and the incredible God were real, real enough not only to believe in but also to live in, and die for. To paraphrase a biblical adage, For those who believed, it was established.

Joseph Blenkinsopp argued that the fourth Servant Song (Isa 52:13–53:12) is a threnody or panegyric about the “Servant” written by the disciples of the “Servant.”⁵⁸ He also argued that the Servant in this Song is Deutero-Isaiah himself.⁵⁹ The authoring disciple, Blenkinsopp proposed, first understood the Servant’s suffering and death as divine punishment for his personal sins: He was “stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted” because he had sinned (53:4b). However, the disciple later came to believe that “the Servant bore the burden of the community’s sin” as “a reparation- or trespass-offering (*’āšām* 53:10a).”⁶⁰ The disciple did not think that the Servant accepted this sacrificial role voluntarily.⁶¹ Rather, he described the punishment the Servant suffered as willed and imposed on the Servant by God: “YHWH laid upon him the iniquity of us all... YHWH was pleased to crush him...” (53:6b, 10a). The Servant was a passive participant

⁵⁸ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 349.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 356.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 350–51.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 350.

in God's redemptive purpose. However, the disciple also imagined the Servant as an active agent in the midst of a situation in which he unwittingly found himself:

^{7b} He did not open his mouth...

¹¹ The righteous one, my servant, will make the many righteous,
And he will bear their iniquity...

¹² He exposed his life to death...

He bore the sin of many,
And interceded for transgressors. (53:7b, 11, 12)

The picture is of a servant of God who, not having sought out suffering but nevertheless finding it, actively submits to it in order to uphold the integrity of his message. He willingly bore the burden of the sin of many, which he found already placed on his shoulders, and by this means made "the many" righteous.

According to Blenkinsopp, "the many" in this message may refer to a small group of the Servant's disciples. "The many" is a quasi-technical term that refers to the disciples of the Servant who take up his mantle and call themselves "servants" and "tremblers" at God's word.⁶² They, like the authoring disciple, came to place their trust in the prophet's message and decided to carry on his uncompleted mission after a brief period of disenchantment after the death of the Servant. They came to see as the prophet saw, to believe in his account of imminent events and his understanding of YHWH as the authoring power, and to live and to preach his message.

The proof of their conviction lies in their willingness to suffer for their belief. It appears from Trito-Isaiah that the disciples of Deutero-Isaiah suffered persecution from the community, possibly even excommunication (Isa 66:5), for their minority belief in the

⁶² Ibid., 80, 349–50. See also Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56–66* (AB 19B; New York: Doubleday, 2003) 299–301.

rightness of Deutero-Isaiah's vision of history and God.⁶³ Their acerbic sectarian rhetoric likely contributed to the souring of their relationship with authorities of the Second Temple, among potentially others (see Isa 65:13–14; 66:24).⁶⁴ The disciples' willingness to suffer, in part, was fueled by their belief that they will be vindicated and rewarded in the future for their present suffering (65:13–14), even as the Servant will be (52:13; 53:12a). However, we have every reason to believe that the core reason they were willing to part with their community, possibly even with their family and former friends, was that they saw, believed, and lived in a world in which YHWH alone reigns as king, just as Deutero-Isaiah had preached. For them, their fellow Jews needed to repent and stop their social injustice (Isaiah 58) and their syncretistic religious practices (Isaiah 65) before the coming of the new heaven and the new earth (66:22). They believed that sin was the barrier between the lamentable state of the post-exilic community and the saving arm of God (Isa 59:1–2), between what appears to be reality and the really real to be unleashed when God comes in redemption. For the few that believed, the really real world of God's kingdom was already established. And for that, for the right to live in that reality, they were willing to part with family and friend or, if required, even their lives, as the Servant had done.

There were also, among the Jews living under the persecution of Antiochus IV, those who believed in the Danielic vision of a coming redemption and were willing to die for their belief. They were the “wise” (Dan 11:33; 12:3). They believed in, and were

⁶³ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40–55*, 80, 356; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56–66*, 299–300.

⁶⁴ The identity of the opponents of the “servants” is not clear. Blenkinsopp (*Isaiah 56–66*, 282, see also 294–96) argues that the opponents included “the religious authorities – in other words the men who controlled the Jerusalem temple” – who excommunicated the servants (see Isa 66:5).

likely the authors of, the Danielic vision of history in which God destroys the monstrous beasts from the sea, the world empires, to usher in a time of renewed creation and kingship. Because they believed that God alone could and would fight the beastly empires, they preached nonviolent resistance against Antiochus IV. As Portier-Young put it, nonviolent resistance comprised of “setting their heart to gain understanding, including studying the scriptures; humbling themselves, including fasting, prayer, and penitence; teaching God’s message to the people; defying the decrees of Antiochus and persevering in the practices of their faith *even at the cost of their lives*; giving an example to others; and giving strength to others.”⁶⁵

At the same time the wise preached nonviolence, they also expected violent persecution in return:

The wise among the people will instruct the many, but they will fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder, for some days. (Dan 11:33)

Furthermore, the wise, who seem to have understood themselves as heirs to the Servant in Isaiah 52–53,⁶⁶ expected that some would even die while waiting for the appointed time of God’s deliverance. The one passage scholars generally agree refers to the resurrection of individuals in the Hebrew Bible reads,

² Many from those who sleep in the dusty earth will awake,
Some to everlasting life...

³ The wise will shine like the brightness of the firmament,
And those who make the many righteous like the stars,
Forever and ever. (Dan 12:2–3)

⁶⁵ Portier-Young, *Resistance*, 262, emphasis added.

⁶⁶ See *ibid.*, 272–76.

The explicit discourse is about resurrection, but the passage assumes death. In fact, in articulating a doctrine of resurrection for the wise and their followers, the passage provides a rationale for martyrdom. Those who die while resisting empire and holding fast to the teachings of the wise will awake to “everlasting life,” and the wise themselves will become like the heavenly stars.⁶⁷ The wise and those who believed in their vision of history and depiction of God as that which the sea *muthos* displays willingly suffered persecution and were even willing to die in order to live in that other world in which God battles the sea monsters, is victorious, and exalts those who remain faithful to him.

Deutero-Isaiah and the author of Daniel saw world history and understood God as that which the sea *muthos* displays. They believed that God acts in history and that when he does he does so to defeat forces of evil and chaos for the sake of his people, to renew creation, demonstrate his kingship, and reestablish his temple. And they succeeded in teaching a small minority to see with them, believe with them, and to live in the same theologically constituted world with them. For the sake of what they saw and believed, in order to demonstrate that they lived in that other world rather than the mundane world, they were willing to suffer a great deal and even to die. Now, that someone would die for a belief, to part with life, does not prove that the object of their belief is real, any more than someone’s willingness to part with money proves that the hand of a pauper is the altar of God. However, it does demonstrate the power of “seeing as.” If we are willing to dethrone the tyranny of things and admit that the world of human existence is not only a world of objects but also of words, plastic to human discourse – we might begin to see in one’s willingness to part with money and in another’s to part with life windows onto a

⁶⁷ The stars are associated with the angels. See Collins, *Daniel*, 393 and n. 220.

new world that remains in contact with but somehow transcends the objective world. We might see in them evidence that redescribing the world can really recreate it. For those who see history as that which the sea *muthos* displays and believe in it, the kingdom of God, the new heavens and the new earth, are already established, real enough to live in and die for. Thus, the sea *muthos*, as a metaphor for reality, is an invitation. It is an invitation to see a bizarre world in which God battles sea monsters and, by defeating them, reestablishes order in the cosmos with him as king who has and continues to reign. It is also an invitation to enter into that world – to embark.

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