

Dragon Slayers: Indra, Marduk, Yahweh, and Baal A Literary Comparison

By A.D. Wayman

Introduction

"Vritra seized the celestial lord who had performed a hundred sacrifices. And filled with wrath, he whirled Indra and threw him into his mouth. And when Indra was swallowed up by Vritra, the terrified senior gods, possessed of great might, created Jrimbhika to kill Vritra. And as Vritra yawned and his mouth opened the slayer of the Asura, Vala contracted the different parts of his body, and came out from within."¹

"The lord shot his net to entangle Tiamat, and the pursuing tumid wind, Imhullu, came from behind and beat in her face. When the mouth gaped open to suck him down he drove Imhullu in, so that the mouth would not shut but wind raged through her belly; her carcass blown up, tumescent,. She gaped- And now he shot the arrow that split the belly, that pierced the gut and cut the womb."²

"You divided the sea by your might; you broke the heads of the dragons in the waters. You crushed the heads of Leviathan; you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness. You cut openings for springs and torrents; you dried up ever-flowing streams. Yours is the day, yours also the night; you established the luminaries and the sun. You have fixed all the bounds of the earth; you made summer and winter." [[Psa 74:13-17 NRSV](#)]

"One lip to the earth, one lip to the heavens; he will stretch his tongue to the stars, Baal must enter inside him; he must go down into his mouth, like an olive cake, the earth's produce, the fruit of the trees.' Baal the Conqueror became afraid; the Rider on the Clouds was terrified: 'Leave me; speak to Ers son Death, repeat to Ers Darling, the Hero: 'Message of Baal the Conqueror, the word of the Conqueror of Warriors: Hail, Ers son Death! I am your servant, I am yours forever.'"³

Scholars of mythology and anthropology, within the last century, have forged many new trails through the landscape of the metaphor. It is the contribution of these scholars that bring to light new forms of research, which allows readers of such studies to see much deeper into the human forms of expression than ever before. Scholars like George Frazer, Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell, David Bindy, Stanley Hyman, Haskell Block, and Karen Armstrong with her research concerning comparative religion; create a window into the somewhat mystical environment of abstract expression. It is in this environment that worlds are created, enemies slain, death conquered; resurrections and rebirths are common themes. It is hoped that the reader of this essay, by comparing such works of literature, will realize that the myth needs not to be defined by historical facts, or landmarks for them to function. The four texts above, as the reader will see, are from four different cultures, but have the same themes and motifs present.

The Birth of Indra and Its Relevance

Starting with the god Indra, he like the other gods that we will research, was the god of the storm, sea, and war. His birth is debatable as it should be, there are a few explanations given in the Rig Veda, some of the oldest hymns of the Hindu religion. Below are the three ways from the Vedas on the birth of Indra. The first, Symbolized as a Bull he springs into existence already a warrior and conquer. It may be proper to point out that also, Marduk, Yahweh, and Baal were also storm gods and symbolized as bulls.

Soon as the young Bull sprang into existence he longed to taste the pressed-out Soma's liquor. Drink thou thy fill, according to thy longing, first, of the goodly mixture blent with Soma. That

¹ Udyoga Parva Kisari Mohan Ganguli. The Mahabharata Book 5: Section 9, tr. 1883-1896 <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/m05/m05009.htm>

² Sandars, Nancy K. Poems of Heaven and Hell from Ancient Mesopotamia. New York: Penguin, 1971

³ Coogan, Michael David. Stories from Ancient Canaan. The Westminster Press. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 1978. p.107

day when thou wast born thou, fain to taste it, drankest the plant's milk which the mountains nourish. That milk thy Mother first, the Dame who bare thee, poured for thee in thy mighty Father's dwelling. Desiring food he came unto his Mother, and on her breast beheld the pungent Soma. Wise, he moved on, keeping aloof the others, and wrought great exploits in his varied aspects. Fierce, quickly conquering, of surpassing vigour, he framed his body even as he listed. E'en from his birth-time Indra conquered Tvastar, bore off the Soma and in beakers drank it. Call we on Maghavan, auspicious Indra, best Hero in the fight where spoil is gathered; The Strong, who listens, who gives aid in battles, who slays the Vrtras, wins and gathers riches.⁴

Next we come to another account Where Indra is seen to grow so large in the womb that he, upon birth, almost causes the death of his mother. Though a ready born warrior he is forsaken by the gods and is hid by his mother, after being hit in the jaw by Vyamsa, who some believe to be his father, Indra battles with the serpent, and appears to be overwhelmed. He later raises to victory and takes his place as a dominate player by the conclusion of the hymn below.

This is the ancient and accepted pathway by which all Gods have come into existence. Hereby could one be born though waxen mighty. Let him not, otherwise, destroy his Mother. Not this way go I forth: hard is the passage. Forth from the side obliquely will I issue. Much that is yet undone must I accomplish; one must I combat and the other question. He bent his eye upon the dying Mother: My word I now withdraw. That way I follow. In Tvastar's dwelling Indra drank the Soma, a hundredworth of juice pressed from the mortar. What strange act shall he do, he whom his Mother bore for a thousand months and many autumns? No peer hath he among those born already, nor among those who shall be born hereafter. Deeming him a reproach, his mother hid him, Indra, endowed with all heroic valour. Then up he sprang himself, assumed his vesture, and filled, as soon as born, the earth and heaven. With lively motion onward flow these waters, the Holy Ones, shouting, as 'twere, together. Ask them to. tell thee what the floods are saying, what girdling rock the waters burst asunder. Are they addressing him with words of welcome? Will the floods take on them the shame of Indra? With his great thunderbolt my Son hath slaughtered Vrtra, and set these rivers free to wander. I cast thee from me, mine, -thy youthful mother: thee, mine own offspring, Kusava hath swallowed. To him, mine infant, were the waters gracious. Indra, my Son, rose up in conquering vigour. Thou art mine own, O Maghavan, whom Vyamsa struck to the ground and smote thy jaws in pieces. But, smitten through, the mastery thou wonnest, and with thy bolt the Dasa's head thou crushedst. The Heifer hath brought forth the Strong, the Mighty, the unconquerable Bull, the furious Indra. The Mother left her unlicked Calf to wander, seeking himself, the path that he would follow. Then to her mighty Child the Mother turned her, saying, My son, these Deities forsake thee. Then Indra said, about to slaughter Vrtra, O my friend Vrtra, stride full boldly forward. Who was he then who made thy Mother widow? Who sought to stay thee lying still or moving? What God, when by the foot thy Sire thou tookest and slewest, was at hand to give thee comfort? In deep distress I cooked a dog's intestines. Among the Gods I found not one to comfort. My consort I beheld in degradation. The Falcon then brought me the pleasant Soma.⁵

The above hymn was given in full by the author of this essay to point out several other comparisons. First, it is here we find that Indra is referred to by other names Maghavan being one. Such a practice was common also in the ancient Near East. We find such examples such as The Hymn of the Fifty Names of Marduk, Yahweh-Elohim and Aliyn- Baal. Secondly, this hymn shows Indra claiming legitimacy among the gods. This process occurs in the texts concerning Marduk, Yahweh, and Baal as we soon shall see.

The last Hymn to be given here concerning the birth of Indra, shows the god Purusa, bringing forth creation and the birth of Indra by his mouth, which possibly may mean the spoken word. We find Purusa having a thousand heads and a thousand eyes, and a thousand feet, which like the Hebrew deity, knows, sees, and is a creator of all. Purusa has no beginning nor end and such is the case also with the Hebrew, Elohim, that some translations in the English start the creation story with " When Elohim begin to create the heavens and the earth.."⁶ Below we also read of the gods themselves offering sacrifice.

⁴ Griffith, Ralph T.H. Rig Veda Book 3 Hym 48 <http://www.hinduwebsite.com/sacredscripts/>

⁵ Rig Veda Book 4 Hym 18 <http://www.hinduwebsite.com/sacredscripts/>

⁶ See: Hebrew-English Tanakh : the traditional Hebrew text and the new JPS translation. Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1999.

A thousand heads hath Purusa, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet. On every side pervading earth he fills a space ten fingers wide. This Purusa is all that yet hath been and all that is to be. The Lord of Immortality which waxes greater still by food. So mighty is his greatness; yea, greater than this is Purusa. All creatures are one-fourth of him, three-fourths eternal life in heaven. With three-fourths Purusa went up: one-fourth of him again was here. Thence he strode out to every side over what cats not and what cats. As soon as he was born he spread eastward and westward o'er the earth. When Gods prepared the sacrifice with Purusa as their offering, Its oil was spring, the holy gift was autumn; summer was the wood. They balmed as victim on the grass Purusa born in earliest time. With him the Deities and all Sadhyas and Rsis sacrificed. From that great general sacrifice the dripping fat was gathered up. He formed the creatures of-the air, and animals both wild and tame. From that great general sacrifice Rcas and Sama-hymns were born: Therefrom were spells and charms produced; the Yajus had its birth from it. From it were horses born, from it all cattle with two rows of teeth: From it were generated kine, from it the goats and sheep were born. When they divided Purusa how many portions did they make? What do they call his mouth, his arms? What do they call his thighs and feet? The Brahman was his mouth, of both his arms was the Rajanya made. His thighs became the Vaisya, from his feet the Sudra was produced. The Moon was gendered from his mind, and from his eye the Sun had birth; Indra and Agni from his mouth were born, and Vayu from his breath. Forth from his navel came mid-air the sky was fashioned from his head Earth from his feet, and from his car the regions. Thus they formed the worlds. Seven fencing-sticks had he, thrice seven layers of fuel were prepared, When the Gods, offering sacrifice, bound, as their victim, Purusa. Gods, sacrificing, sacrificed the victim these were the earliest holy ordinances. The Mighty Ones attained the height of heaven, there where the Sidhyas, Gods of old, are dwelling.⁷

Indra and the Dragon

Now turning to the battle between Indra and the dragon we find a detailed battle described in the Rig Veda. The text below is one of the few texts that describe the battle at length. It is given in full to help the reader realize its significance in metaphoric terms.

I WILL declare the manly deeds of Indra, the first that he achieved, the Thunder-wielder. He slew the Dragon, then disclosed the waters, and cleft the channels of the mountain torrents. He slew the Dragon lying on the mountain: his heavenly bolt of thunder Tvastar fashioned. Like lowing kine in rapid flow descending the waters glided downward to the ocean. Impetuous as a bull, he chose the Soma and in three sacred beakers drank the juices. Maghavan grasped the thunder for his weapon, and smote to death this firstborn of the dragons. When, Indra, thou hadst slain the dragon's firstborn, and overcome the charms of the enchanters, Then, giving life to Sun and Dawn and Heaven, thou foundest not one foe to stand against thee. Indra with his own great and deadly thunder smote into pieces Vrtra, worst of Vrtras.

As trunks of trees, what time the axe hath felled them, low on the earth so lies the prostrate Dragon. He, like a mad weak warrior, challenged Indra, the great impetuous many-slaying Hero. He, brooking not the clashing of the weapons, crushed-Indra's foe-the shattered forts in falling. Footless and handless still he challenged Indra, who smote him with his bolt between the shoulders. Emasculate yet claiming manly vigour, thus Vrtra lay with scattered limbs dissevered. There as he lies like a bank-bursting river, the waters taking courage flow above him.

The Dragon lies beneath the feet of torrents which Vrtra with his greatness had encompassed. Then humbled was the strength of Vrtra's mother: Indra hath cast his deadly bolt against her. The mother was above, the son was under and like a cow beside her calf lay Danu. Rolled in the midst of never-ceasing currents flowing without a rest for ever onward. The waters bear off Vrtra's nameless body: the foe of Indra sank to during darkness. Guarded by Ahi stood the thralls of Dasas, the waters stayed like kine held by the robber. But he, when he had smitten Vrtra, opened the cave wherein the floods had been imprisoned. A horse's tail wast thou when he, O Indra, smote on thy bolt; thou, God without a second, Thou hast won back the kine, hast won the Soma; thou hast let loose to flow the Seven Rivers. Nothing availed him lightning, nothing thunder, hailstorm or mist which had spread around him: When Indra and the Dragon strove in battle, Maghavan gained the victory for ever. Whom sawest thou to avenge the Dragon, Indra, that fear possessed thy heart when thou hadst slain him; That, like a hawk affrighted through the regions, thou crossedst nine-and-ninety flowing rivers? Indra is King of all that moves and moves not, of creatures tame and horned, the Thunder-wielder. Over all living men he rules as Sovran, containing all as spokes within the felly.⁸

⁷ <http://bit.ly/1mUCywV>

⁸ Rig Veda Book 1 Hym 32 <http://www.hinduwebsite.com/sacredscripts/>

The use of weaponry, such as the elements, the severing of limbs, the release of the waters, all are repeated in the literature concerning Marduk, Yahweh and Baal. The creation of Sun, Dawn, and Heaven, are all metaphors and themes that readers of such literature find common. In the hymn above, not only is the dragon defeated and creation formed but also the god claims legitimacy. In the texts of ancient Near Eastern literature the god at times demands a temple to be built. Next we will look at some Babylonian literature and examine some common elements and motifs in the literature concerning Marduk.

* * *

The Primal Beginning

With in the Babylonian Creation Epic of *Enuma Elish*, Marduk was already in line to become the leader of the gods. Resting in the fresh waters of the god Apsu. As in the Hebrew creation account in Genesis, the world and creation is unformed covered in a mixture of fresh water (Apsu) and mixing with the salt water (Tiamat).

When there was no heaven,
no earth, no height, no depth, no name,
when Apsu was alone,
the sweet water, the first begetter; and Tiamat
the bitter water, and that
return to the womb, her Mummu,
when there were no gods-

When sweet and bitter
mingled together, no reed was plaited, no rushes
muddied the water,
the gods were nameless, natureless, futureless, then
from Apsu and Tiamat
in the waters gods were created, in the waters
silt precipitated⁹

It can be a mystery to those not familiar with the metaphors of the ancient Near East but the account of the birth and battle of Marduk and the creation were of most important and resonated as a powerful epic battle that was internalized every year through an reenactment ritual.¹⁰ Here in just a few sentences we view the imagery of a chaotic scene. Fresh water and salt water mixing, no sky, no earth, nor universal order. The story goes on to account for the creation of the land gods, sky gods, and various assistants. We then come to a point where the Creator God Ea overtakes Apsu and his visor. There is much more to this account, and the reader is encouraged to read this text in full. For this essay however we will be discussing the themes of comparison.

The Birth of Marduk

Then Ea ripped off his flaming glory coat and took his crown, he set on himself the aureole of the king. When Ea has bound Apsu he killed him, and Mummu, the dark counselor, he led by the nose and locked away.

Ea has defeated his enemies and trodden them down. Now that his triumph was completed, in deep peace he rested, in his holy palace Ea slept. Over the abyss, the distance, he built his house and shrine and there magnificently he lived with his wife Damkina. In that room, at the point of decision where what is to come is predetermined, he was conceived, the most sagacious, the one from the first most absolute in action.

In the deep abyss he was conceived, MARDUK was made in the heart of the apsu, MARDUK was created in the heart of the holy Apsu. Ea begot him and Damkina bore him, father and mother; he sucked the paps of goddesses, from his nurses he was fed on the terrible leanness that filled him.¹¹

⁹ Sandars, Nancy K. *Poems of Heaven and Hell from Ancient Mesopotamia*. New York: Penguin, 1971. "Enuma Elish". Tablet 1.

¹⁰ Dally, Stephanie. *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood Gilgamesh, and Others*. Oxford University Press Inc., Oxford, New York 1989. p.231

¹¹ Sandars. "Enuma Elish". Tablet 1.

Here in this translation, we find the war between the gods. A creator god binds the primal water god and Mummu, the evil counselor, is led away by the nose and confined. Here we have the binding of the visor, which we may note in passing, has evolved into the more modern text of the binding of the accuser in the Hebrew texts or "Ha Satan". Here also it is through the creator god Ea within the primal fresh water god Apsu that Marduk is brought forth and bore by his mother Damkina. We also see that Ea after is quest of overcoming Apsu rests and builds a temple. As we remember Yahweh also rests and it is Baal after over coming the god Yam, as we shall see later, lobbies the heavenly council for a temple in his honor. Marduk is weaned and the text relates that at birth his is most perfect.

When Ea who begot him saw him he exulted, he was radiant, light-hearted, for he saw that he was perfect, and he multiplied his godhead, the one to be first and stand highest.

His limbs were immaculate, the making a fearful mystery beyond comprehension; with four eyes for limitless sight, and four ears hearing all; when his lips moved a tongue of fire burst out. Titanic limbs, standing so high he overtopped the tallest god; he was strong and he wore the glory of ten, and their lightnings played round him.

'My son, my son, son of the sun, and heaven's sun!'¹²

The Birth of Marduk denotes an important change in thinking. Tiamat the primal sea, salt water, is now viewed as a coiling serpent. She sends the other gods cowering. It is foreshadowed above that Marduk will become the dominant god and will lead the journey and battle that will bring order to the cosmos. We see in the text above that already at his birth he is associated with being a storm god, all seeing and all hearing with his multiple eyes and ears while shooting fire from his mouth when he speaks. In passing we see Ea ordain the young Marduk with an acknowledgment 'My son, my son, son of the sun, and heaven's sun! which brings us forward to the saying of Yahweh from the clouds at the baptism initiation of the one later called Jesus.

The Conquest

The gods in the heavenly council are afraid of the now raging Tiamat and her fierce army that she has collected and each of the gods have come back shaking at her knees. Marduk is chosen by the council to go and do the battle.

Now Kingu, thus exalted, having received the power of Anu,
Decreed the fate for the gods, her sons, saying:
'Let the opening of your mouth quench the Fire-god;
Whoso is exalted in the battle, let him display his might!'
I sent Anu, but he could not withstand her;
Nudimmud was afraid and turned back.
But Marduk hath set out, the director of the gods, your son;
To set out against Tiamat his heart hath prompted him.
He opened his mouth and spake unto me, saying:
'If I, your avenger,
Conquer Tiamat and give you life,
Appoint an assembly, make my fate preeminent and proclaim it.
In Upsukkinaku seat yourselves joyfully together;
With my word in place of you will I decree fate.
May, whatsoever I do remain unaltered,
May the word of my lips never be changed nor made of no avail.'
Hasten, therefore, and swiftly decree for him the fate which you bestow,
That he may go and fight your strong enemy!
Lahmu and Lahamu heard and cried aloud
All of the Igigi [The elder gods] wailed bitterly, saying:
What has been altered so that they should
We do not understand the deed of Tiamat!
Then did they collect and go,
The great gods, all of them, who decree fate.
They entered in before Ansar, they filled...
They kissed one another, in the assembly...;

¹² Sandars. "Enuma Elish". Tablet 1.

They made ready for the feast, at the banquet they sat;
They ate bread, they mixed sesame-wine.
The sweet drink, the mead, confused their...
They were drunk with drinking, their bodies were filled.
They were wholly at ease, their spirit was exalted;
Then for Marduk, their avenger, did they decree the fate.¹³

Later we shall see the storm god Baal making such an address to the heavenly council when Mot, the lord of the underworld comes to call. Yahweh addresses the Divine Council in [Psalm 82](#), threatening to make the gods human for their injustice. In [Habakkuk 3](#) we read the holy war hymn of the victorious Yahweh doing battle with the sea.

I saw the tents of Cushan under affliction; the tent-curtains of the land of Midian trembled. Was your wrath against the rivers, O Lord? Or your anger against the rivers, or your rage against the sea, when you drove your horses, your chariots to victory? You brandished your naked bow, sated were the arrows at your command. (Selah) You split the earth with rivers. The mountains saw you, and writhed; a torrent of water swept by; the deep gave forth its voice. The sun raised high its hands; the moon stood still in its exalted place, at the light of your arrows speeding by, at the gleam of your flashing spear. In fury you trod the earth, in anger you trampled nations. You came forth to save your people, to save your anointed. [Hab3:7-13]

In the text above concerning Marduk, With the decree from the heavenly council, called "*Upsukkinaku*" his fate is sealed. He sets out on his quest to face the dragon. He will venture into unknown territory, into the belly of the serpent and hope to return, setting order to the disorder, and calmness to the raging waters of the dragon.

Tiamat has amassed a large army of howling, fierce, and battle hardened demons. They have amassed to her aid and to her bidding. They have made weapons of war that no god in the council has seen before, and she comes taunting the gods.

With all her force she rageth, full of wrath.
All the gods have turned to her,
With those, whom ye created, they go at her side.
They are banded together, and at the side of Tiamat they advance;
They are furious, they devise mischief without resting night and day.
They prepare for battle, fuming and raging;
They have joined their forces and are making war.
Ummu-Hubur, who formed all things,
Hath made in addition weapons invincible; she hath spawned monster-serpents,
Sharp of tooth and merciless of fang.
With poison, instead of blood, she hath filled their bodies.
Fierce monster-vipers she hath clothed with terror,
With splendor she hath decked them; she hath made them of lofty stature.
Whoever beholdeth them, terror overcometh him,
Their bodies rear up and none can withstand their attack.
She hath set up vipers, and dragons, and the monster Lahamu,
And hurricanes, and raging bounds, and scorpion-men,
And mighty tempests, and fish-men, and rams;
They bear merciless weapons, without fear of the fight.
Her commands are miahty; none can. resist them;
After this fashion, huge of stature, hath she made eleven monsters.¹⁴

Marduk and the Serpent

So with his fate sealed Marduk faces the Dragon. In the texts concerning Indra and Yahweh the details are somewhat watered down by metaphor and symbolism. Although we do have some descriptions from the Vedas and biblical texts, it is with in this story of Enuma Elish, and the Baal Epic from Ugarit that we have blow by blow commentary. These texts are so detailed that they give us descriptions on the seriousness of the battle. Even the modern apocalyptic text Revelation is no match for the details given in the two mentioned texts. Marduk gathers his weapons of war and sets off.

¹³ King. L.W. "ENUMA ELISH THE EPIC OF CREATION" The Seven Tablets of Creation. London 1902. Tablet 3.

¹⁴ King. "Enuma Elish". Tablet 3.

They robed him in robes of a king, the scepter and the throne they gave him, and matchless war-weapons as a shield against the adversary.

'Be off. Slit life from Tiamat, and may the winds carry her blood to the world's secret ends.'

The old gods had assigned to Bel what he would be and what he should do, always conquering, always succeeding;

Then Marduk made a bow and strung it to be his own weapon, he set the arrow against the bow-string, in his right hand he grasped the mace and lifted it up, bow and quiver hung at his side, lightnings played in front of him, he was altogether an incandescence.

He netted a net, a snare for Tiamat; the winds from their quarters held it, south wind, north, east wind, west, and no part of Tiamat could escape.

With the net, the gift of Anu, held close to his side, he himself raised up...¹⁵

Like the mighty Indra, Marduk now wages a fierce war he mounts the storm chariot, takes his bow with him the Killer, the Pitiless, Trampler, and Haste, all knowing how to both plunder and murder; he rides out to meet the mighty Tiamat and finds her in full rage.

When Tiamat heard him her wits scattered, she was possessed and shrieked aloud, her legs shook from the crotch down, she gabbled spells, muttered maledictions, while the gods of war sharpened their weapons.¹⁶

The speech that Marduk gives to Tiamat is most interesting. In the Ugarit account of the battle between Mot and Baal; Baal's speech to Mot is somewhat different in that it is a speech of submission to the dragon Death. Baal of the Ugarit accepts his fate. However, in the case of Indra and Marduk and also in the texts of Yahweh, they use their wit to conquer. The speech below can make us relate to the speech David gave to the taunting Goliath. All of this is relevant because the Hero's Journey, for the most part follows the pattern.

Then the lord raised the thunderbolt, his mighty weapon,
And against Tiamat, who was raging, thus he sent the word:
Thou art become great, thou hast exalted thyself on high,
And thy heart hath prompted thee to call to battle.
... their fathers...,
... their... thou hatest...
Thou hast exalted Kingu to be thy spouse,
Thou hast... him, that, even as Anu, he should issue decrees.
thou hast followed after evil,
And against the gods my fathers thou hast contrived thy wicked plan.
Let then thy host be equipped, let thy weapons be girded on!
Stand! I and thou, let us join battle!¹⁷

Like the mighty Indra we find Marduk entering the mouth of Tiamat and traveling to her innards he splits her gut like a shell fish. Parting her separating the waters from the sky.

Then they met: Marduk, that cleverest of gods, and Tiamat grappled alone in singled fight.

The lord shot his net to entangle Tiamat, and the pursuing tumid wind, Imhullu, came from behind and beat in her face. When the mouth gaped open to suck him down he drove Imhullu in, so that the mouth would not shut but wind raged through her belly; her carcass blown up, tumescent,. She gaped- And now he shot the arrow that split the belly, that pierced the gut and cut the womb.¹⁸

After the return Marduk, the Bull, is crowned King of Kings and the gods set him as ruler of all gods. From the remains of the fierce Tiamat; Marduk creates the earth, cycle of Days, and

¹⁵ Sandars. "Enuma Elish". Tablet 4

¹⁶ Sandars. "Enuma Elish". Tablet 4

¹⁷ King. Enuma Elish. Tablet 4.

¹⁸ Sandars. "Enuma Elish". Tablet 4

years. Once more where there was disorder there is order. After his battle, with order restored, creation completed and his temple built he rests. The heavenly council (the Igigi shouts with Joy the works of the mighty Marduk.

They stood in front of him, low they bowed and they shouted

'He is king indeed!'

When all the gods in their generations were drunk with the glamour of the manhood of Marduk, when they has seen his clothing spoiled with the dust of battle, then they made their act of obedience...

He bathed and put on clean robes, for he was their king... A glory was round his head; in his right hand he held the mace of war, in his left grasped the scepter of peace, the bow was slung on his back; he held the net, and his glory touched the abyss...

He mounted the throne raised up in the temple. Damkina and Ea and all the Great Gods, all the Igigi shouted,

'In time past Marduk meant only "the beloved son" but now he is king indeed, this is so!'

They shouted together¹⁹

In the next portion of our study we will examine similar battles when discussing the dragon slayer of the Hebrews, the storm god, bull of heaven, Yahweh. We have seen, as the culture shifts, the mythology and rituals also demand a change. For if frozen the metaphors no longer are relevant and archetypes no longer work for the believer. So the shift from one god to the next, allows the attributes of the imagery to be used and internalized. Rituals are reworked to serve the needs of the evolving cultural pattern. From farming, to raiding, then to city states, we see the change in the literature from Agni to Indra, from Apsu to Marduk, from El to Yahweh, and from El to Baal.²⁰

* * *

The Primal Beginning

In contrast to the texts of Indra and Marduk, the texts of Yahweh in [Genesis 1](#), creating order out of chaos is now somewhat tame. This account of the battle with the sea is unlike the violence in the other creation stories and it is due to good reason. Some scholars believe that the text of Genesis 1 was redacted during or just after the Babylonian exile. Here the priestly author wishes to remove all violence from the creation account in contrast to the Epic of *Enuma Elish*, that we discussed earlier. Here Eloheim issues creation through spoken word, effortlessly, as opposed to fighting a battle.²¹

When God began to create heaven and earth the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water God said, Let there be light; and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, a first day. God said, Let there be an expanse in the midst of the water, that it may separate water from water. God made the expanse, and it separated the water which was below the expanse from the water which was above the expanse. And it was so. God called the expanse Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day. God said, Let the water below the sky be gathered into one area, that the dry land may appear. And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering of waters He called Seas. And God saw that this was good. ([Gen 1:1-10 NJPS](#))

It is also important to note that this text also contrasts with the text of Indra that we viewed in an earlier essay from the Vedas. It was after much suffering and pain that the texts were cleared of violence. We see this transition happening through out religious literature. Not only in the ancient Near East but also from mythology in other parts of the globe.

¹⁹ Sandars. "Enuma Elish". Tablet 5

²⁰ See: Karen Armstrong's *The Great Transformation: The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions..* Anchor books 2007.

²¹ Armstrong, Karen. *The Great Transformation.* Anchor Books, New York, NY. 2007. pg.209.

The Birth of Yahweh

It is impossible to pin point the exact origin of how the idea of Yahweh came about . The end result is multi-cultural Mesopotamian influence. However the text below might give us a clue on one aspect of the formation of Yahweh from the neighbors of Israel. The Ugaric texts, when found recently, has shed new light on the writing styles and themes used in religious literature from that time period. Many times such literature , when cross referenced can show striking similarities to older Hebrew texts. Below we have a deity with a double name being created. El announces "The name of my son is Yw-El []". Here also we have the double name being used which was common in the Ancient Near east. The attributes of both deities were combined when tribes and states were assimilated into one another. It is appropriate to not the reference of rams , lambs and cattle being slain as a sacrifice requirement.

—his son(s), Thor []
And Ltpn, God of Mercy, replies: []
"The name of my son is Yw-El []."
And he proclaims the name of Sea [].
They reply: "- - - []
Thou art named 'Lord' []
I am Ltpn, God [of Mercy,]
On the hands, thou art named []
Thy name is El's Darling, [Sea]
My house of silver which []
In the hands of Aliyan Ba[al]
A pitcher of wine - - - []
Drive him out from the se[at of his kingship]
[From the dais, the throne,] of his sovereignty
[]
And they, even to []
He will smite thee like []
El, sacrifice []
to name []
Slaughter great [and small cattle]
[Kill] oxen and [fallings of rams]
[Yearling bullocks]
[Little] lambs, [kids]²²

Like their neighbors a clear pantheon existed in the literature although denied in the theology. Archeology, along with the literature as uncovered at least a four pantheon. Yahweh and Asherah being at the top level, then those deities who provide assistance or do assigned tasks. Yahweh as El addresses these deities in Psalm 89, and meets with them over the fate of Ahab in [1 Kings 22:19](#). On the next level we have the deities of specialties such as the "Nehushtan" or the serpent of healing that was created as an image as raised by Moses in [Numbers 21:8-9](#). The next level would be angles who seem not to make choices but do the bidding of the deity and lastly we have the King and prophets. The king and prophets were seen as intermediaries of the deity and were not viewed as a deity or man god to the extent as for example in Egyptian literature.²³ Such a pantheon also survived among the Canaanites and Babylonians. The "Elohim" in Hebrew literature or "council of the gods" reference the good council of the gods in Babylonian literature where we find them termed as the "Igigi".²⁴ In the Vedas this pantheon is referred to as "Sadhyas".²⁵

The Conquest

"When locks are long in Israel, when the people offer themselves willingly— blessthe Lord! "Hear, O kings; give ear, O princes; to the Lord I will sing, I will make melody to the Lord, the God of Israel. "Lord, when you went out from Seir, when you marched from the region of Edom, the

²² Gordon, Cyrus , Ugarit and Minoan Crete: The bearing of their texts on the Origins of Western Culture. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1966. pg.61.

²³ Edelman, Diana. The Triumph of Elohim. Kok Pharos Publishing House Kampen, Netherlands 1996. pg. 27-45.

²⁴ Sandars, Nancy K. Poems of Heaven and Hell from Ancient Mesopotamia. New York: Penguin, 1971. "Enuma Elish". Tablet 1.

²⁵ Griffith, Ralph T.H. Rig Veda Book 10 Hym 90 <http://www.hinduwebsite.com/sacredscripts/>

earth trembled, and the heavens poured, the clouds indeed poured water. The mountains quaked before the Lord, the One of Sinai, before the Lord, the God of Israel. "In the days of Shamgar son of Anath, in the days of Jael, caravans ceased and travelers kept to the byways. The peasantry prospered in Israel, they grew fat on plunder, because you arose, Deborah, arose as a mother in Israel. When new gods were chosen, then war was in the gates. Was shield or spear to be seen among forty thousand in Israel? My heart goes out to the commanders of Israel who offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless the Lord. "Tell of it, you who ride on white donkeys, you who sit on rich carpets and you who walk by the way. To the sound of musicians at the watering places, there they repeat the triumphs of the Lord, the triumphs of his peasantry in Israel. "Then down to the gates marched the people of the Lord. ([Jdg 5:2-11 NRSV](#))

The above text is possibly, one of the best examples of Yahweh the warrior. Here like the other deities we have discussed is using the elements, earthquakes, and in other places fire. Yahweh was viewed as such as the early tribal leagues were conquering the hill country of Palestine. Yahweh is seen as "The rider of the Clouds" and other such names that describe heroic deeds that were performed. Here is a text from [Isaiah 51:9-10](#)

Awake, awake, clothe yourself with splendor. O arm of the LORD! Awake as in days of old, As in former ages! It was you that hacked Rahab in pieces, That pierced the Dragon. It was you that dried up the Sea, The waters of the great deep; that made the abysses of the Sea A road the redeemed might walk.

It was quite easy to identify with such a deity, but as in the Vedas and in the Babylonian texts, the warrior god Yahweh would transform into a small still voice as his followers settled down in communities and took to agriculture. This change occurs in the literature in I Kings 19. Through out the literature of this time period Yahweh is routinely infused with attributes of his rival Baal. This confrontation comes to a head when we read the text of [I Kings 18](#).

Yahweh and the Serpent

As Indra and Marduk waged battles to bring order to the universe to Yahweh. Many texts throughout Jewish literature is filled with the Holy war motif. From Judges 4 – 5, the Psalms to the texts written by Habakkuk we find Yahweh the warrior, rider of the clouds slaying his enemies and ruling from his holy mountain. In order to keep a common theme we will address the text of Yahweh's fight with the dragon Yam or the sea. The text below is one of the older holy war hymns attributed to the works of the warrior god Yahweh.

I will sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously; Horse and driver He has hurled into the sea. The LORD is my strength and might; He is become my deliverance. This is my God and I will enshrine Him; The God of my father, and I will exalt Him. The LORD, the Warrior — LORD is His name! Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has cast into the sea; And the pick of his officers are drowned in the Sea of Reeds. The deeps covered them; They went down into the depths like a stone. Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power, Your right hand, O LORD, shatters the foe! In Your great triumph You break Your opponents; You send forth Your fury, it consumes them like straw. At the blast of Your nostrils the waters piled up, The floods stood straight like a wall; The deeps froze in the heart of the sea. The foe said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; My desire shall have its fill of them. I will bare my sword — My hand shall subdue them." You made Your wind blow, the sea covered them; They sank like lead in the majestic waters. Who is like You, O LORD, among the celestials; Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in splendor, working wonders! You put out Your right hand, The earth swallowed them. In Your love You lead the people You redeemed; In Your strength You guide them to Your holy abode. The peoples hear, they tremble; Agony grips the dwellers in Philistia. Now are the clans of Edom dismayed; The tribes of Moab — trembling grips them; All the dwellers in Canaan are aghast. ([Ex 15 1b-15 NJP](#))

The text above loaded with imagery was not only about the crossing of the sea of reeds and the destruction of the pursuing Egyptian army. The imagery and metaphors above speak of the cosmic battle and is echoed in the Canaanite *Baal Epic*.²⁶

In the next and final essay in this series we will look at some literature from the Ugarit and discuss the similarities of the Canaanite pantheon and compare such texts as the Baal Epic to

²⁶ Cross, Frank. *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*. Harvard University Press. Cambridge, Massachusetts 1997. pg. 117-125.

the literature that we have previously viewed. It is hoped that such similarities of the warrior gods Indra, Marduk, Yahweh, and Baal can be highlighted in this manner. Many times the public do not have access to these texts or one never takes the time to read such literature and settles for the traditional explanations. However, when one digs deeper in this type of literature, we realize that just when we thought we were alone we are in fact united with the world.

* * *

Bringing this series of essays to a close we now turn to the god Baal, who was a dominate god in the land of the Canaanites and Hebrews. Baal at times had the same characteristics as Yahweh and at times the Hebrews would implement aspects from both deities into their rituals and religious practice. Below we will discuss the dragon slayer Baal and how he like Yahweh battled the sea god Yam. After the battle he set up his temple on his holy mountain to rule supreme.

The Primal Beginning

The Ugaritic account of creation has still not yet been found or was lacking but the text that alludes to such a creation is written in an erotic poem with imagery that remind us of the Song of Solomon. In the text El sleeps with two wives. During the time of fertility they are wives and during sterile times they are daughters. Also there are some illusions to the deity, El, mating with human wives. From the text one can conclude that the creation sprung from this union.

Word is bought to El: "The wives of El have borne! What have they borne?" "My two children Dawn and Dusk ! Lift up, prepare for Lady Sun and for the stars []." He Bends, their lips he kisses lo their lip are sweet. From kissing there is conception From embracing there is childbirth they again [] count to five[] the combination of the twain: "They go into travail and they bear they Bear the Good Gods The Islanders, Sons of the Sea, Who suck the nipples of the Lady's breasts!" Word is brought to El: "My two wives, O El, have borne! What have they borne?" "The Good Gods [] The Islanders, Sons of the Sea Who suck the nipples of the Lady's breasts!" A lip to earth A lip to heaven But there do not enter heir mouth Birds of heaven And fish from the Sea.²⁷

The speaker of the last section of this text is the human husband, of the wife, that the god El had impregnated. Such an account may also have comparisons with the Hebrew text of the "Sons of Men" mating with the daughters of the earth. We see here that birth is given to the two opposites dawn and dusk. In Hebrew literature "___ and ___" is a "merism" which means opposites are connected with "and" which was used in texts to represent "everything"; such as the use in [Gen 1:1](#) "Heaven and Earth" meaning the world.²⁸

El appears to be the creator deity in the pantheon based on texts found at Ras Shamra and other sites. It also appears that he lost his power once creation was completed. He is very diplomatic and seems to lack control. It is hypothesized by some that there may be a text concerning the war of the gods but no such text has been found.

The Birth of Baal

Contrary to popular belief there is no account of the birth of Baal. In the Ugaritic texts he is referred to as "The Son of Dagon" which raises questions on how he became so dominate in the Canaanite pantheon. Also some writers hypothesize that there was a war between the gods and that Baal overtook El, castrated him, and took the fertility rites to himself as supreme lord, pushing El to the background.²⁹ It is important to point out that no such texts of these accounts have been found in literature of the Ugaritic texts. Some also hypothesize that El forms a coalition with Yam, god of the Sea, to remove Baal from the throne. If such were the case Baal would not need El's approval for a temple after the battle.³⁰

The Conquest

²⁷ Gordon, Cyrus H. Ugarit and Minoan Crete: The Bearing of Their Texts on the Origins of Western Culture. New York: Norton, 1966. pg 96-97

²⁸ Brettler, Marc. How to Read the Jewish Bible. NY: Oxford Univ Press, 2007. pg. 45.

²⁹ <http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/~tomshoemaker/StudentPapers/canaanite.html>

³⁰ André Caquot and Maurice Sznycer, Ugaritic Religion 1980 pg. 11-13.

Like Indra, Marduk, and Yahweh, Baal also fights the dragon, and like the three other deities it is also the sea. Below we see from a translation of the Ugaritic text the messengers of the god Yam coming before the heavenly council or the 'eloheim' to demand that Baal be turned over. Baal is furious at the disrespect and decides to fight the sea god Yam.

"Leave, lads, do not turn back;
now head toward the Assembly in council,
at the center of the mountain of night.
Do not fall at El's feet,
do not prostrate yourselves before the Assembly in council;
still standing speak your speech,
repeat your message;
and address the Bull, my father El,
repeat to the Assembly in council:
'Message of Sea, your master,
your lord, Judge River:
El, give up the one you are hiding,
the one the masses are hiding;
give up Baal and his powers,
the son of Dagon: I will assume his inheritance.'
" The lads left; they did not turn back;
they headed toward the center of the mountain of night,
the Assembly in council.
There the gods had sat down to eat,
the holy ones to a meal;
Baal was standing by El.
As soon as the gods saw them,
saw the messengers of Sea,
the mission of Judge River,
the gods lowered their heads
to the top of their knees,
and onto their princely seats.
Baal rebuked them:
"Gods, why have you lowered your heads
to the top of your knees,
and onto your princely seats?"³¹

Here we may draw some comparisons of this text and also to the texts concerning Marduk, and the fear of the gods in the council to fight Tiamat. Also in Hebrew literature Yahweh takes the place of El and rebukes the gods, as seen in psalm below.

Elohim stands in the congregation of Ēl; He judges in the midst of the elohim. How long would you judge perversely, And show partiality to the wrong? Selah. Give right-ruling to the poor and fatherless, Do right to the afflicted and needy. Rescue the poor and needy; Deliver them from the hand of the wrong. They do not know, nor do they understand, They walk about in darkness. All the foundations of the earth are shaken. I, I said, "You are elohim, And all of you are sons of the Most High. "But as men you die, And fall as one of the heads." Arise, O Elohim, judge the earth, For You shall possess all the nations. ([Psa 82:1-8 TS 1998](#))

After the council, Baal goes to fight Yam and with the help of Kothar-wa-Hasis, a craftsman who helps Baal by making weapons, he does battle with the Sea.

Baal and the Sea

Baal confronts the Sea in battle and the two deities battle for dominance and inheritance.

Sea was strong; he did not sink;
his joints did not shake;
his frame did not collapse.³²

³¹ Coogan, Michael David. *Stories from Ancient Canaan*. The Westminster Press. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 1978. pp. 86-87.

³² Coogan. pp. 88.

Baal then uses the club to smash Yam on the head and finally the god of the sea falls. We hear Baal proclaimed the victor.

And the club danced in Baal's hands,
like a vulture from his fingers.
It struck Prince Sea on the skull,
Judge River between the eyes.
Sea stumbled;
he fell to the ground;
his joints shook;
his frame collapsed.
Baal captured and drank Sea;
he finished off Judge River.
Astarte shouted Baal's name: "Hail, Baal the Conqueror!
hail, Rider on the Clouds!
For Prince Sea is our captive,
Judge River is our captive."³³

The battle with the sea is at times compared to the Song of the Sea found in Exodus 15 1b-18, however another text that may be proper also is the holy war hymn of Habakkuk.

God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. (Selah) His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. The brightness was like the sun; rays came forth from his hand, where his power lay hidden. Before him went pestilence, and plague followed close behind. He stopped and shook the earth; he looked and made the nations tremble. The eternal mountains were shattered; along his ancient pathways the everlasting hills sank low. I saw the tents of Cushan under affliction; the tent-curtains of the land of Midian trembled. Was your wrath against the rivers, O Lord? Or your anger against the rivers, or your rage against the sea, when you drove your horses, your chariots to victory? You brandished your naked bow, sated were the arrows at your command. (Selah) You split the earth with rivers. The mountains saw you, and writhed; a torrent of water swept by; the deep gave forth its voice. The sun raised high its hands; the moon stood still in its exalted place, at the light of your arrows speeding by, at the gleam of your flashing spear. In fury you trod the earth, in anger you trampled nations. You came forth to save your people, to save your anointed. You crushed the head of the wicked house, laying it bare from foundation to roof. (Selah) You pierced with their own arrows the head of his warriors, who came like a whirlwind to scatter us, gloating as if ready to devour the poor who were in hiding. You trampled the sea with your horses, churning the mighty waters. I hear, and I tremble within; my lips quiver at the sound. Rottenness enters into my bones, and my steps tremble beneath me. I wait quietly for the day of calamity to come upon the people who attack us. ([Habakkuk 3:3-16 NRSV](#))

After the battle with Sea, Baal calls on the goddess Anet to place a request to El, for a temple to be built. This was done not only to show legitimacy but also to set up his kingdom on his mountain of Zaphon.

Much could possibly be added to this series of essays concerning the dragon slayers for there were many not mentioned. And if the global mythology were to be collected on such a subject it may take up volumes of pages. Deities such as Zeus and the Christ, from the Christian mythos, as found in the apocalyptic texts of Revelation, could also be added. When such texts are compared and contrasted one starts to realize the multifunctional purpose the literature served at a time without modern means of copying and printing. Historical fiction, poetry, history, folk tales, fables, lessons, allegory, and law codes were all used to convey an epic that could be passed on to later generations. When read properly, these texts can impact how we view the world and ourselves. If we look deeper we may find that we may all be "slayers of the dragon". Below is a quote from Joseph Campbell an anthropologist who contributed much to research the field mythology and religion.

"There's a certain type of myth which one might call the vision quest, going in quest of a boon, a vision, which has the same form in every mythology. That is the thing that I tried to present in the first book I wrote, [The Hero With a Thousand Faces](#). All these different mythologies give us the same essential quest. You leave the world that you're in and go into a depth or into a

³³ Coogan. pg 89.

distance or up to a height. There you come to what was missing in your consciousness in the world you formerly inhabited. Then comes the problem either of staying with that, and letting the world drop off, or returning with that boon and trying to hold on to it as you move back into your social world again."³⁴

* * *

Fontes:

1. <http://religionthink.wordpress.com/2007/07/18/dragon-slayers-indra-marduk-yahweh-and-baal-a-literary-comparison/>
2. <http://religionthink.wordpress.com/2007/07/23/dragon-slayers-indra-marduk-yahweh-and-baal-part-2-of-4/>
3. <http://religionthink.wordpress.com/2007/08/24/119/>
4. <http://religionthink.wordpress.com/2007/11/25/dragon-slayers-indra-marduk-yahweh-and-baal-pt-4-of-4/>

³⁴ [The Power of Myth](#) with Bill Moyers.