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AMAR ANNUS Tallinn

Ninurta and the Son of Man

Nobody can tell exactly how and when the title Son of Man came into being in Judaism and why that designation was chosen for denoting the Messiah and the Divine Judge. A part of this designation, in particular, the *mythology* of Son of Man, is in my opinion explicable against the background of Mesopotamian literary influences on the Bible. The Son of Man first occurs as a designation in Daniel's vision (Dan 7:1ff) and subsequently in the deuterocanonical works, which passages I want to discuss and analyse in this paper.

So far scholars have turned their attention only to Ugaritic affinities (KTU 1.2) in searching for parallels to Daniel's revelation in Daniel 7 (Collins 1993b), and compared it to the text named *Underworld Vision of an Assyrian Prince*, of which the most recent edition is SAA 3 32 (see Kvanvig 1988). I cannot consider SAA 3 32 as a parallel to Daniel's vision, because it is a literary composition and contains no myth. However, the "common roots of apocalyptic" (the first person narration of his vision) cannot be denied, and apocalyptic is always very fond of various kinds of monsters appearing to a dreamer. The text SAA 3 32 could have some more significant parallels to Dan 7, perhaps, in the damaged parts of the text.

There exists consensus to some extent among biblical scholars that the imagery of the beasts from the sea and the figure "one like a son of man" in Dan 7 derives from the Canaanite mythology of the second millennium BC (see Collins 1993b). And yet traces of the same myth (the Thundergod's

battle against the Seamonster) have been found also in the texts of Old Babylonian Mari (Durand 1993) and even in the texts from Ebla (Fronzaroli 1998) of the third millennium BC. In the last two cases, the protagonist of the myth is the god Adad (of Aleppo), who is religio-historically similar to, perhaps even identical with, Ugaritic Baal. The same theme and motifs occur also in the Babylonian *Epic of Creation*, where the protagonist is the god Marduk. This mythologem has been argued to be of 'West-Semitic' (Jacobsen 1968), or even of 'Amorite' origin (Durand 1993).

On the other hand, the great antiquity of this myth in Mesopotamia can be shown on the basis of the Sumerian Ninurta mythology. And the Babylonian *Epic of Creation* consists mainly of the mythology of Ninurta (see Lambert 1986), who is not otherwise mentioned by name in the Epic. The main theme of this Epic describes how the god Marduk became the king of the gods by slaying Tiamat, the Sea, thus invoking exactly the same motifs as in the Ugaritic epic "Baal and Yamm." This subject is further shared by literary compositions such as the "Anzu Epic" (see Vogelzang 1988), the "Labbu-myth" and more elaborately by the Sumerian hymn *Lugal-e* (van Dijk 1983).

All these compositions relate how a young god, in most cases "the Son of Great Mountain Enlil, Ninurta" killed his enemy, who had previously affected badly and endangered the world order by stealing the Tablet of Destinies and other precious objects. After that the hero is elevated to the King of the Gods.

Recent scholarship has also richly at-

tested Ninurta in the West (Artzi 1999, Fleming 1992). The Sumerian logographic writing for an unknown Syrian god is ^dNIN.URTA at Emar in the late Bronze Age. This *Ninurta* is the city-god of Emar, and remarkably also “son of Dagan,” like the Ugaritic Baal. The god Dagan is identified with Sumerian Enlil, father of Ninurta, already in Old Babylonian times and they share the logogram BAD. In any case, it was conscious syncretism which introduced Sumerian writing for the West-Semitic god:

Whatever the correct Semitic reading of the name ^dNIN.URTA at Emar, the writing might be accounted for by this parallel with the Mesopotamian pantheon. Since the Emar god has the same relationship to Dagan as Ninurta has to Enlil, the equivalence of Dagan and Enlil ... could lead scribes trained in the Mesopotamian system to use this Sumerian writing. (Fleming 1992: 249.)

The constant epithet of Marduk in *Enuma Elish* is Bêl ‘Lord,’ which is also Ninurta’s common epithet, and points to a connection with West-Semitic Baal. Marduk came to replace Enlil in the Mesopotamian pantheon, so he took over conjointly the position of the father Enlil and the mythology of his son Ninurta. Similarly Dagan in the West was partly manifested by his son Baal. Fleming argues that

description of Baal as “the son of Dagan” might reflect inland Syrian use of the title Ba’lu for Dagan. When the Emar scribes write their city god’s name as ^dNIN.URTA, they make him Dagan’s son by relation to Enlil, and the substitution of ^dNIN.KALAM in one case might reveal an old Baal-title beneath the Sumerian ^dNIN.URTA. When ^dNIN.URTA is found with Dagan’s wife Išhara, it may be neither adultery nor incest but reappearance of the father Dagan himself, in the oedipal guise of a son, through a title that takes on an independent existence (1993: 98).

So the religio-historical background of the main characters in the Epic of Anzu and the Creation Epic, in spite of their different names, are identical. It should be emphasised here that both Epics (KTU 1.2 and *Enuma Elish*) contain the same motifs from the *same* tradition. For full discussion, see Smith 1994:58-114. He comes up with the following conclusion:

The Mari letter A. 1968 [= Durand 1993] would suggest that the West Semitic conflict-myth existed within the larger Mesopotamian cultural sphere. Therefore, it is plausible that the complex development of the rendering of Marduk and Tiamat in *Enuma Elish* involved primarily East Semitic elements, but possibly West Semitic elements as well.

So if biblical scholars want to see Dan 7 as influenced by Ugaritic mythology, they should also seriously consider corresponding Mesopotamian material.

We may now analyse how the Babylonian literary motifs may have influenced the imagery of the vision of Daniel.

Dan 7:2:

I, Daniel, saw in my vision by night the four winds of heaven stirring up the great sea”¹

The “four winds of heaven” correspond exactly to four winds, created by Anu and delivered to his son Marduk in *Enuma Elish* I 105-6:

*ibnî-ma šār erbetti uallid Anum
qātušu umallā mārî šî išlî*

He created four winds, Anu begot these he filled his hands, (saying) “whirl these, my son!”

Marduk starts immediately to disturb Tiamat with these winds in the following lines (107-9):

¹ The translations of the Bible are all taken from “The New Oxford Annotated Bible” 1987.

*ibšîm epra mehā ušazbal
ušabšî agamma udallah Tiāmat
dalhat Tiāmat-ma urra u mūša idullu*

He formed dust, let it carry by the storm-wind,
he created the storm-wave and disturbed Tiamat,
Tiamat was disturbed, stirred up in day and night.

This is the starting point of the anger of the old gods, and here is the event which begins the story, as in the revelation of Daniel. Tiamat's next action is creating monsters for fighting with Anu.

Dan 7:3:

“and four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another.”

These monsters are, of course, with similarities to the enemies of Ninurta or of Marduk in *Enuma Elish*, which are traditionally numbered eleven (e.g. *Enuma Elish* I 146 *et passim*). The last monster in Daniel's vision has comparably eleven horns. That there are only four monsters in Daniel's vision, is dictated by the political message of Daniel.²

The main enemy of Ninurta in Mesopotamian mythology is considered the eagle Anzu, which becomes one with Ninurta, his symbol, after Ninurta has conquered him. Then it is not by chance that the Second Esdra Book in chapter 11:1f, which is literally dependent on Daniel's vision, has before a man an eagle raising from the sea:

On the second night I had a dream: I saw rising from the sea an eagle that had twelve feathered wings and three heads. I saw it spread its wings over the whole earth, and all the winds of heaven blew upon it, and the clouds were gathered around it.

In Mesopotamian mythology, after vanquishing the eagle Anzu, Ninurta becomes one with the bird. As the god of thunderstorms, Ninurta's preantropomorph was Thunderbird Anzu (Jacobsen 1987:327). Th. Jacobsen puts it beautifully:

He was envisioned originally as the thunder cloud, seen as an enormous bird; and because its thunderous roar could come only from a lion's maw it was given a lion's head. The two forms, bird and lion, tended to compete in the image of the god, who was sometimes the lion-headed bird, sometimes a winged lion with bird's tail and talons, sometimes all lion. In time the animal forms were rejected in favor of imagining the god in human form only, yet down to the time of when this work [*Lugal-e*] was presumably composed he still retained some of the theriomorphic features such as the bird wings. In his human form his image was that of a young warrior-king riding to battle in his loudly rumbling war chariot (1987:235).

Then, paradoxically, Ninurta is equated with his slain enemy, Thunderbird Anzu, who becomes his symbol. The same applies to Marduk and Tiamat – after vanquishing her, she becomes the abode and vehicle for Marduk and for all the other gods. The underlying principle has been well formulated by M. Vogelzang:

In a combat myth, a destructive creature, once killed, can be made constructive by means of transformation. If the killed creature is being transformed, use is made of its still extant power, a power which is distinguished and instead of *destructive* (or unutilized = neglected) is being applied in a *constructive* way. Marduk creates the universe out of Tiamat's dead body; Ea calls his new abode, after Apsu's death, “the Apsu”; Ninurta curses the inimical stones in *Lugal-e*, yet assigns them new duties, etc. (1989-90:72.)

² See, e.g., the commentary of The New Oxford Annotated Bible: “The winged lion represents the Babylonian empire, the bear the Medes, the four-headed winged leopard the Persians, the dragon-like beast the Greeks,

whose ten horns represent the ten rulers who succeeded Alexander. The little horn (compare 8:9) is Antiochus Epiphanes, who gained his throne by uprooting others.” (p. 1138.)

Yet in the tradition of apocalyptic the divine hero can also behave like his demonic counterpart. In the Second Esdra Book the Son of Man rises from the Sea and then prepares for the battle ‘against multitudes’ on the mountain, thus resembling the demon Azag in the Sumerian *Lugal-e* hymn:

2 Esdra 13:2ff:

And lo, a wind arose from the sea and stirred up all its waves. As I kept looking the wind made something like the figure of a man come up out of the heart of the sea. And I saw that this man flew with clouds of heaven; and wherever he turned his face to look, everything under his gaze trembled... And I looked and saw that he carved out for himself a great mountain, and flew up on to it... I saw only how he sent forth from his mouth something like a stream of fire and the flaming breath and the great storm [cf. Sumerian *ud-gal*, one of Ninurta’s weapons, his “word” in *An-gim* 17, see Cooper 1978: 60], and fell on the onrushing multitude that was prepared to fight, and burned up all of them, so that suddenly nothing was seen of the innumerable multitude [cf. Ninurta’s weapon *šár-ùr* “the Slayer of the Multitudes”] but only the dust of ashes and the smell of smoke. When I saw it, I was amazed.

In Dan 7:4 the first beast is described: “The first was like a lion and had eagle’s wings. Then, as I watched, its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a human being; and a human mind was given to it.”

The plucking of the wings recalls the Mesopotamian Adapa myth, where the sage curses the evil south-wind who has capsized his boat while he was fishing, and more

closely the Etana-myth, where the “bad Anzu” is punished by the snake in the same way. The Sumerian sage Adapa has many similarities with the Hebrew Enoch - and the latter is equated in the Book of Enoch (71:14) with the ‘Son of Man’ (see Kvanvig 1988). In the Akkadian Anzu Epic the wind carries the feathers of the vanquished Anzu to convey the good news (like evangelium) to the father Enlil (see Lambert 1986: 59).³

Dan 7:5-6:

Another beast appeared, a second one, that looked like a bear. It was raised up on one side, had three tusks in its mouth among its teeth and was told, “Arise, devour many bodies!” After this, as I watched, another appeared, like a leopard. The beast had four wings of a bird on its back and four heads; and dominion was given to it.

In the fifth verse the monster’s teeth are emphasised, as in the catalogue of wild beasts fashioned by Tiamat in Enuma Elish I 135 (the big serpents). They have a similar command from their creatress in Enuma Elish I 139-40. The monster is “raised up on one side, had three ribs in its mouth.” It may reflect similar cosmology as in Enuma Elish (V 9 ff): “He (Marduk) opened big gates of her (Tiamat) both side of her ribs and put the bars on the right and left. Into her abdomen he put the upper side (of the Universe).”

To the third beast “is given dominion” (verse 6). One may ask, over whom and by whom it is given? It seems that the answer lies again in the plot of Enuma Elish - when Tiamat prepares for the battle, she gives domination amongst the gods to her new husband Qingu (I 147ff) and gives him the ‘tablet of destinies,’ saying to him (I 153-

³ Cf. also the Marduk Ordeal texts SAA 3 35 and 34 (ll. 58ff). The first states (ll. 52 ff): “[When Assur] s[ent Ninurta to vanquish] Anzu, Qingu and Asakku, [Nergal announced before Assur]: ‘Anzu, Qingu and Asakku are

vanquished.’ [(Assur) said: ‘Go and] give the good news [to all the gods]!’ He gives the news, and they [rejoice] about it and go.”

54):

*addî tâka ina puhri ilâni ušarbîka
malikût ilâni gimratsunu qâtuka ušmallî*

“I will cast your spell, I will make you great
in the assembly of the gods,
the kingship over all the gods I will give to
your hands.

After vanquishing Tiamat and Qingu, from the latter’s blood Marduk creates mankind (Enuma Elish VI 33ff). Similarly Ninurta in the *Lugal-e* myth makes his “new creation” from the material of the subdued Azag and his stones. Thus the kingship of the antagonist ends up in the new creation.

The last of the beasts is (vv. 7-8) “different from all the beasts that preceded it, and it had ten horns. I was considering the horns, when another horn appeared, a little one coming up among them; to make room for it, three of the earlier horns were plucked up by the roots.”

A Neo-Assyrian mystical text (SAA 3 39) mentions also the horns of the “dromedary” of Tiamat (rev. 13ff), which is not evidenced at all in the Epic, but certainly was part of the myth: “The dromedary is the ghost of Tiamat. Bel defeated [her]. Bel cut off her horns, clove her [fee]t and docked her tail.” The same text mentions also a particular horn, which is somehow identified with Tiamat herself: (SAA 3 39, rev. 1ff): “[The ...] ... of *mûsu*-stone on the horn is Tiamat. Bel defeated [her]. He smote her, established her destiny and split her into two parts like the fish of the drying place.” As in the *Lugal-e* hymn Ninurta sentenced (established destiny) after his victory, different kinds of stones.

A very similar figure in Daniel 7:7-11, who “speaks arrogant words,”⁴ is also fi-

nally sentenced by the court presided over by the Ancient One (which corresponds to Ugaritic El *ab šnm*, ‘father of years,’ see Collins 1993b:127): “the beast was put to death, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire.” (v. 11, cf. 12.)

Van Henten has compared the ‘eleventh horn’ figure to Hellenistic-Egyptian texts dealing with Seth-Typhon and summarized as follows:

In the verses on the eleventh horn we came across analogies with the most divergent texts on Seth-Typhon: the characteristic features of the villain, the boasts, the brutal and lawless conduct and the hostility toward gods and men. The figure of the eschatological arch-enemy in Dan 7 is probably inspired by a cluster of motifs from the myths about Seth-Typhon. (van Henten 1993:242-43.)

Egyptian Seth was identified with the Greek Typhon from the sixth century BC onwards (van Henten 1993:232). In Greek mythology the monster Typhon was the last enemy of Zeus in his striving after the kingship over the gods. The myth is preserved in Hesiod’s *Theogony* and discussed with its Hurro-Hittite counterparts by M. L. West (1997:276-86, 300-304). These myths have several motifs in common with the Babylonian Creation Epic:

“The parallelism [of Enuma Elish] with the Hesiodic narrative is not as close as in the case of the Hurro-Hittite account. Nevertheless, there are some unmistakable similarities, and they include some that are absent from the Song of Kumarbi.” (West 1997:282.)

The name Typhon itself probably derives from Ugaritic *Spn* (Greek Kasios), which was the name of Baal’s holy mountain.⁵

⁴ Cf. Enuma Elish IV: 72 in the encounter of Marduk and Tiamat: *ina šaptāša lullā ukāl sarrāti* “in her lips she held falsehood and lies.”

⁵ As the Assyrian king was considered as incarnation of

the god Ninurta, the “Ptolemies adopted the traditional ideology about the pharaoh as incarnation of the god Horus. Just as Horus through his victory over the ungodly (*asēbos*) and violent Seth revenged his father Osiris, so

What we have in Daniel 7 contains only fragments of this myth transformed into a theological-political message and prophetic description, how the persecutor of the Jews, Antiochus Epiphanes, is sentenced to death, and the subsequent advent of the Jewish Messiah.

Part of this message, the Son of Man, is introduced next. He comes with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient One and he is presented before him. To him is given everlasting dominion, glory and kingship. All peoples, nations and languages should serve him. The closest parallel here is Ugaritic “Baal and Yamm” with Baal guaranteed eternal kingship after victory and, it must be noted that Ugaritic Baal is ‘Rider of the Clouds’ (*rkb ‘rpt*), as Yahweh sometimes is in the Old Testament in the context of his slaying of a watermonster such as Leviathan or Rahab (e.g. in Ps 89:7-11). In the Mesopotamian Labbu-myth (in the reading of the name *reb-bu* is also possible, which would connect that monster with Biblical Rahab) the victorious hero also comes from heaven in the midst of a storm and attacks Labbu, “the progeniture of the river.”

I find in Dan 7 evidence of a Near Eastern myth so clear that it compels the assumption of a literary loan. Further one may consider, whether the Son of Man figure has other kinds of affinities with the Mesopotamian Ninurta, who is the most ancient protagonist of this myth. J. Collins has argued that

“one like a son of man” in Dan 7 should be understood as a heavenly saviour figure, probably the archangel Michael, who has also other appellations like Melchizedek and Prince of Light in Qumran documents (Collins 1993a:304-10). On the identity of the archangel Michael with Mesopotamian Nabû/Ninurta, see Parpola’s discussion (1997:xxii-xxiii, notes 196, 41, 211). Compare also Collins 1975:602:

The schema of the four beasts, symbols of chaos, represent various nations who are enemies of Israel just as the princes of Greece and Persia represent them in Dan x-xii. The triumph of order over chaos coincides with the elevation of the one like son of man over the beasts or the triumph of Michael and his people over the princes of Greece and Persia and their peoples.

The Son of Man figure exists already in the Hebrew Psalms and it denotes the future Davidic king (Ps 80:17). The king David in the Hebrew tradition is a prophetic ideal, “seed of royalty” or “shoot of justice” and Messiah (Weinfeld 1995:46-48). In Psalm 110 (cf. Ps 2) there is a description of a similar figure as in Dan 7, named Melchizedek, who is the king (v. 2).⁶ In general then it seems plausible to equate the messianic Son of Man with the future eschatological Davidic King (as Ninurta became the king of the gods), who as the Judge and ultimate “King of Justice” (Akkadian *šar mišarim*, Hebrew *Melchizedek*) will establish eternal justice for Israel. In Dan 7 the Son of Man

the triumphant king – as the incarnation of Horus – proved his love for Osiris by means of the execution of rebels” (van Henten 1993: 224). Antiochus as the most serious threat to the Ptolemies became the embodiment of a “typhonic king” in Egyptian propaganda (ibid. 225). And in the “Ptolemaic ideology of the king, the motif of the battle between Horus and Seth regularly turns up, in the line with the adoption of the pharaoh-ideology. The celebration of the death of Seth-Typhon in Memphis during the coronation ritual of the Ptolemies demonstrates how the king was represented as defender against the unrest and the confusion by Seth-Typhon.” (ibid.

241). In the magical papyri Seth-Typhon is evil demon, depicted with ass’s head (ibid. 233). On Christ’s fusion with Egyptian Horus, see J. Gwyn Griffiths “The Conflict of Horus and Seth” (Liverpool 1960), pp. 112-15.

⁶ Cf. Ps 80:14-17: “Turn again, O God of hosts; look down from heaven, and see; have regard for this vine, the stock that your right hand planted, and upon the one whom you made strong for yourself. They have burned it with fire, they have cut it down; may they perish at the rebuke of your countenance. But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand, the one whom [*!-bn-’dm*] you made strong for yourself.”

is subordinate to Ancient of the Days, and in this context it is interesting to note “that the Melchizedek scroll from Qumran understands the *elohim* of Ps 82 to refer, not to Yahweh, but to Melchizedek, a heavenly being subordinate to Yahweh” (Collins 1993b:133). P. Mosca has demonstrated that Canaanite Baal is transferred to the Davidic king in Ps 89 (1986:513) and the latter was regarded as an *elohim* under Yahweh in Ps 45:7 (Collins 1993b:134). According to Mosca, the Son of Man equates in the interpretative section of Dan 7 with the ‘holies of the Most High’ (vv. 18, 22, 25) and reflects David’s new title ‘*elyôn* in Ps 89:28 (1986:515).⁷

This interpretation conforms with the role played by the Son of Man in the Book of Enoch, where he is the eschatological Saviour standing next to God’s throne, the Davidic Messiah, who “has righteousness and lives in righteousness” (Enoch 46:3) and after having judged his enemies, gathers all holy ones together (62:13) and becomes a king of Paradise.

In the New Testament the Son of Man is explicitly equated with the Messiah (Mk 8:29-31). He has also the appellation “king” in Mt 25:34. In some passages the Son of Man occurs as the divine judge, who comes at the end of days, riding on the clouds, and also in some cases in the context of a deluge, Mt 24:37-39 and Lk 17:22-37. The last two cases are especially telling, be-

cause Ninurta himself is also “(a great) deluge,” and causes a flood in Atrahasis (Lambert & Millard 1969:86, l. 52), in the Epic of Gilgamesh (XI:103) and very many times in Sumerian texts (in Gudea’s inscription, in *Lugal-e* and others): “In Ninurta texts, Ninurta is (like) deluge, brings the deluge, and uses the deluge as a weapon” (Cooper 1978:112).

The logia, which predicate the death and resurrection of the Son of Man on the third day, may be, of course, compared to the Descent of Inanna, a myth of Sumerian origin,⁸ but also to the episode inherent in all dragon-slaying myths, namely the initial failure of the hero to defeat his enemy (*Lugal-e*, 162ff, KTU 1.2.iv), after which a (superior) god has to save him from death and/or give him more appropriate weapons. The motif is present also in the myth “Ninurta and the Turtle.” In the first meeting Marduk falls back in disarray, Enuma Elish IV 67-68 (Lambert 1986:56). This episode is also present in the Greek mythographer Apollodorus’ account of Zeus and Typhon grappling on Mount Kasios, where Typhon cuts the sinews from the hands and feet of Zeus and carries him to the Corycian cave, where he needs the help of Hermes and Aigipan (West 1997:304).

With the victory over the forces of chaos Ninurta became the king of the universe, like the kerygmatic Christ. Under monotheistic pressure, the Jewish Messiah could

⁷ In the prophetic text from Mari (Durand 1993), the god Adad of Aleppo speaks through his prophet to the king Yahdun-Lim: “Let me re[sto]re to you the thr[one of your father’s house.] I will give you back the weapon[s] by which I slew the Sea (*tēmtum*). I have given to you the oil of my triumph (*šamnu ša namrirūtiya*).” According to Durand, the last statement refers to the unction ritual by the enthronement of the king (1993:53). This statement is immediately followed by the exhortation for the king to render justice to his subjects (see Durand 1993:45). Durand comments: “In the same way as Order has triumphed over Chaos, the king has his first task to render justice.” (1993:54). See also Lafont 1998:162-63.

⁸ S. N. Kramer relates in his autobiography (*In the World*

of Sumer 1988):

In April 1941 I read a twenty-minute paper before the annual meeting of the [American Philosophical] society on a translation of the myth “Inanna’s Descent to the Nether World” ... The response was enthusiastic. William Albright was visibly stirred. He rose and pointed out the significance of the myth – to take but one instance, the parallelism of Inanna’s resurrection after three days and nights with aspects of the Christ story. (Pp. 66, 69.)

Despite this early recognition, very few scholars have since ventured to make any further comparisons, see Parpola 1997: xxxi-xxxvi, n. 108.

not be a god, like Ninurta. But he could be a man, and possibly in the context of speculations about patriarchs, he was given the appellation “the Son of Man.”

Along with traditional material, Jewish exegesis of the first chapters of Genesis was also involved in elaboration of the messianic ideas. “The son of man” could have been originally imagined as the son of Adam, or Enosh. G. Stroumsa has noted “that various Gnostic traditions showed a distinct tendency to identify Adam – or rather his heavenly counterpart, the First Adam, the ἄνθρωπος *par excellence* – with the supreme God.” (1984:76.) Through the Gnostic exegesis of Gen 1:26, God came to be called “Man,” and according to Gen 5:3 Adam’s son Seth was born “according to his [Adam’s] likeness, to his image” and Seth is considered to be the savior of mankind (Stroumsa: *ibid.*). This shows very clearly the virtual identity between the titles “son of man” and “the son of (supreme) god.” The same applies to the patriarch Enosh:

Syncellus also noted ([*Chronographia*] 17-18) that according to Africanus, since Enosh (Seth’s son) means “man” in Hebrew, the savior, being called “son of Man,” was also son of Enosh (“the real man,” who had been “the first to hope to call on the name of the Lord God,” Gen 4:26). Jesus was thus the perfect offspring of Seth. See Pseudo-Mala-

las 9: “Enoch was (of the line of) the righteous Seth, from whom Christ is descended, whose genealogy the holy and pious Luke traces back to Seth and Adam and God.” See Luke 3:38. (Stroumsa 1984:109-10, n. 119.)

A new important mythological era has its beginning in the defeat of the preceding one by divine weapon (e.g. deluge, like in Gen 6:1-8 or Dan 2:31-35) and in the judgement over its inhabitants. This motif is universal, it occurs in the Sumerian *Lugal-e* myth (Ninurta’s judgement over the stones and the “new creation”), to which the closest parallel is the Greek Deucalion myth (see van Dijk 1983:42-44 and on the ages in general West 1997:312-19). In the ancient world, the new cycle was marked generally by material which was constituent for that era (stone, gold, silver etc.), as in Dan 2:31ff. In the vision of Daniel 7, the monsters are an allegory of ages or of ‘the kingdoms’ (Dan 7:17 – “the four kings shall arise out of the earth”) of which the last is that of the Son of Man, the Everlasting. As Ninurta is the saviour of the divine world order and creator of the new one, similarly the Son of Man is expected to establish justice and to restore the perfect world order (Dan 7:14 – “His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed,” cf. Enuma Elish V 138).

The Ghost of Tiamat and Habakkuk 3:15

In the Neo-Assyrian mystical text SAA 3 39 there is an interesting passage, which mentions the “ghost of Tiamat” (GIDIM *Tiāmat*), rev. 13ff:

The dromedary (ANŠE.A.AB.BA) is the ghost of Tiamat. Bel cut off her horns, clove her [fee]t and docked her tail. Bel vanquished her and displayed her to mankind, lest she be forgotten. Its name is *tamriqātu*, as it is said among the people: *êtamar qātāia* (“He

learned from my example”)

In obv. 24ff of the same text there is stated something similar:

The Elamite chariot, which has no seat, carries inside it the corpse of Enmešarra. The horses which are harnessed to it are the ghost of Anzu. The king who stands in the chariot is the warrior king, the lord Ninurta.

The eminent Estonian biblical scholar

Kaide Rätsep has considered the possibility that in Habakkuk 3:15 one should read the consonantal text *hamor* instead of *homer* and last phrase of the verse should be translated “donkey of the big waters” (Rätsep 1990:73). Some other scholars have also considered this possibility.⁹

This thesis of Rätsep may be excellently confirmed with the help of these Neo-Assyrian texts. We learned above that Ninurta’s chariot is drawn by the ghost of Anzu, and Marduk rides, one may infer, on the ghost of Tiamat who is named logographically “donkey of the sea” (ANŠE.A.AB. BA) after the triumph over his enemy. Perhaps the logographical value of the word should be preferred in the translation to the usual meaning *gammālu* “dromedary,” because this text is a mystical one.

We know very well that the donkey is considered the vehicle of the Jewish Messiah, “the king of peace” from Zach 9:9 and Mt 21:5.¹⁰ This mythologem also has its predecessor in Old-Babylonian Mari, as is shown by Sophie Lafont (1998:164-65). At Mari the donkey also has symbolic value as the riding animal of the victorious king and symbol of his legitimate kingship, cf. 2 Sam 16:1ff. Humility of the riding king, indicated in Zach 9:9, is religious and political obedience, obedience of the subjects towards their just king and that of the king towards his god (Lafont 1998:165).

Jesus, having vanquished the forces of sin and death, just as the Mesopotamian Ninurta and Marduk in Enuma Elish vanquished Anzu and Tiamat, correspondingly comes riding on his symbolic vehicle, “for from his example to be learned” (cf. John 12:15-16).

In the Assyrian recension of the Atrahasis Epic, Adad rides “on the four winds, [his] asses” (*parēšu*). Ninurta, in his turn, “went on and [made] the dykes [overflow].” (Lambert & Millard 1969:122-24.) We can see that clouds, the traditional vehicle of rain-gods, can take on imaginary forms of equids.

In Sumero-Akkadian lexical texts, the Thunderbird Anzu is said to be *imēru šamē* “Donkey of Heaven.” The exact connotation of this designation is obscure (Hruška 1975:35, 204). But in Assyrian iconography, the thunderbird Anzu is represented as a winged horse, based on the “philological” equation ANŠU.KUR.RA = ANZU.KUR.RA “donkey of the mountain/of the Netherworld = Anzu of the mountain/of the Netherworld.”¹¹

Some Hellenistic authors tell of Jews, mocking that they worship donkeys (Apion, Poseidonius, Apollonius Molon), others mention only the worship of the donkey’s golden head (Tacitus *Hist.* 5 3-4; Plutarch *Symp.* 4-5; Florus; Minucius Felix; Damocritus) and Antiochus Epiphanes is said to have found the golden head of a donkey in the Temple of Jerusalem (Josephus *Contra Apionem*, II 7.80). Serapion relates that Christians worship the God of the Old Testament, the Donkey. In commenting on these passages, scholars have usually referred to the donkey-headed Hellenistic Seth-Typhon (Rätsep 1990:72). The myth of Zeus slaying Typhon contains similar motifs as the Mesopotamian Ninurta-Anzu myth, as is briefly noted above. We may now discuss the Old Testament evidence of the “donkey of the waters.”

Nahum 1:12 reads in the LXX as *kyrios*

⁹ Robert D. Haak, *Habakkuk* (SVT 44, 1992, p. 102) on the basis of the arguments in O’Connor’s *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns 1980) p. 239 takes this interpretation as self-evident (cf. 2 Kgs 7:7, 10; Prov 26:3).

¹⁰ In Zach 9:9 the “daughter of Zion” is mentioned.

According to Weinfeld (1995: 66), Zion as the royal city is the city of justice and equity, like Baltil in Assyria.

¹¹ Personal communication, S. Parpola. Astronomically, the *anzū*-star is identified with the “horse-star”; see E. Weidner, “Ein astrologischer Sammeltext aus der Sargonidenzeit,” *AfO* 19 (1959-60) 107, l. 21.

katarchôn hydatôn pollôn as an apposition of Yahweh, corresponding to Hebrew *mšl mym rbym* “Lord, ruler of the big waters” in possible connection with Yahweh as the slayer of the watermonster. It can further be assumed that in Hab 3, verse 8 originally preceded verse 15 (Rätsep 1990:74):

Hab 3:8
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?
3:15
You trampled the sea with your horses, (and
with) the donkey of the big waters.

More generally the whole chapter can be juxtaposed to the Mesopotamian myth *Enuma Elish* and the Ugaritic “Baal and Yamm.” Also Psalm 77:20 states that Yahweh’s path is in the “big waters” (Rätsep 1990:74).¹²

Unfortunately we do not have the Qumran *peshet* on Hab 3:15, but judging from the general methods used by this *peshet*, there is no doubt that Hab 3:15 was interpreted messianically. We may thus assume

that the reading “donkey of the big waters” in Hab 3:15 is right and it meant originally the storm clouds on which Yahweh is riding, which were also named “storm-chariot,” harnessed with horses, as in the Neo-Assyrian sources quoted above.

It is tempting also to compare here the Greek myth of the hero Bellerophon (Semitic *Bʿl rpʾn* “Healing Baal,” see Astour 1965:254ff) who on the back of Pegasus fought the monster *Chimaira*, whose name may have something to do with Semitic **ḥmr* (cf. Astour 1965: 263-4). The Semitic word for donkey (Arabic *ḥimār*) has laryngeal ḥ, and Akkadian *imēru* also has a variant spelling *himēru* (CAD s.v. *imēru*).

The Jewish Messiah will come when times end, from the sea, whom he had vanquished and carved, he is like a (Son of) Man, he rides on his “donkey of the big waters” (the ghost of Tiamat) or in a chariot, drawn by horses, the ghost of Anzu. The scattered evidence seems thus to point to a common stream of tradition of the Saviour, which is also applied to the Jewish Messiah, the Son of Man.

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¹² Compare what is said to the Davidic King, son of God, by Jahweh in Ps 89:25: “I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers,” and Hebrews 7:2b, where the name Melchizedek is explained: In the first place, [it]

means “king of righteousness”; next he is also king of Salem, that is, “king of peace,” thus he is “pacifique et triomphante” as in Zech 9:9 (see Lafont 1998:165).

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