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Notes on Job 3

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In a reading of Job's opening complaint in the third chapter of the Biblical book that avoids unnecessary emendation of the Hebrew text, it is suggested that the author attributes to Job the fatalistic belief that days are ordained to be good or evil and supernatural beings preside over such divisions of time. Accordingly, Job asserts that the sea monster Leviathan is destined to rise at the apocalyptic end of days and there are sorcerers whose spells are to raise him from the deeps. Along the same lines, the text introduces the striking image of edifices doomed even before their erection to become ruins. It is argued further that Job should be read as a satirical encounter with the Psalter in particular and with other, earlier texts of Scripture. Job is an eloquent, even witty tragic hero; his three friends, with their timid, conventional morality, resemble a Greek chorus: with introductions that look very like stage directions for characters, the book of Job displays a dramatic character, and can be compared in that respect to the classical Athenian theater. Passages from the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus are also cited in the discussion. At several points, lyrics of English and American Romantic poets are adduced that resonate with the imagination of the author of the oration.

Keywords: Job, fate, Psalms, theater, satire, Leviathan, ruins, Heraclitus of Ephesus, Bundahišn.

To Professor Alan Vincent Williams, lifelong friend and colleague, on his seventieth birthday.

Introduction

"The simplest undertaking is predicated upon a future that has no warrant"[1].

This writer lives in retirement in a town in the middle of the agricultural Central Valley of California. It is a largely conservative, church-going part of the

[1] *McCarthy C.* Stella Maris. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2022. P. 71.

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state, so it was not too much of a surprise, then, when some weeks ago one picked up from the ground a paper tray for French fries that had fallen in the driveway outside our house and found the legend "Proverbs 24:16" printed on the bottom. Scripture served up with fast food is not uncommon here in the Valley: a popular chain of cafés, Kuppa Joy, features Biblical quotations on its containers, too; its logo is an ornate throne for the Messiah with a steaming Kup of cappuccino (Joy) in a saucer on the seat, waiting for His destined return. (Much of this essay will deal with apocalyptic verbal images of destiny.) But one had been studying the first few chapters of the Book of Job with a friend just then, and the verse from the Book of Proverbs to which the citation on the stray carton refers is:

כִּי שֶׁבַע יִפֹּול צַדִּיק וָקָם וּרְשָׁעִים יִכָּשְׁלוּ בְרָעָה

"For a righteous man falls down seven times and stands up; and evil men stumble at [one] evil".

My friend and I were reading the verses in which Eliphaz the Temanite, the first to speak of that Greek chorus of three friends plus one who have come, ostensibly to console the suffering Job, says to him (5:19):

בְּשֵׁשׁ צָרוֹת יַצִּילֶךָּ וּבְשֶׁבַע לֹא־יִגַּע בְּךָ רָע׃

"In six troubles He will rescue you; and at seven, evil will not touch you".

Seven is a proverbial number of completeness[2]; the adage, already somewhat a cliché and bromide by the time of its use by Job's pious friend, assures one of total insurance coverage, as it were, by the Divine. Heptads are a ubiquitous feature of religious systems in antiquity, and the theme of seven successive losses runs through Jewish exegesis and storytelling[3]. Even so, the analogous Bible

[2] God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. Later on, after some of Creation posed a problem, He instructed Noah to take seven couples of each clean animal and seven couples of all the others, including the birds, on board the Ark. Later still, Pharaoh saw seven fat and seven lean cows in his dream. Seven priests blowing seven trumpets circled the walls of Jericho seven times on the seventh day of the siege of the city; the Israelites then took possession of the Promised Land, with its seven products (wheat, barley, wine, figs, pomegranates, olives, and honey). Wisdom has seven pillars; the golden Menorah in the Temple, seven branches. Giora Zvi (*Giora Zvi*. The magical number seven // Occident and orient: A tribute to the memory of Alexander Schreiber. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988. P. 175–176) cites studies according to which a subject who was shown a number of objects for a moment generally could count only up to seven of them. J. Godwin (*Godwin J.* The mystery of the seven vowels in theory and practice. Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press, 1991) discusses the natural correspondences made by the ancients and occultists and the uses to which they put the seven vowels (of Greek).

[3] Thus, *Pesiqta Rabbati* 26:7 relates that after the destruction of the Temple, the prophet Jeremiah encountered Mother Zion seated on a mountaintop in mourning: her house had caved in and killed her seven sons; cf. Jeremiah 15:9: אֻמְלְלָה יֹלֶדֶת הַשִּׁבְעָה נָפְחָה נַפְשָׁהּ "She who has borne seven is forlorn and disconsolate". See: *Schwartz H.* Gabriel's palace: Jewish mystical tales. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. P. 19 and no. 25. Job, one recalls, had seven sons, too; and they, too, died because of the collapse of their house: this but one of many cases of the sardonic re-use in the narrative of Job of incidents and images from pre-existing Scripture.

quote on the French fries box seemed peculiarly apposite and serendipitous; so much so, indeed, that the "coincidence" might perhaps be regarded, as a young Hasid once remarked, not as chance but as an eleven-letter Name of God[4].

1. The Text

Job fell, and then arose in protest, after the successive cruel blows that are laconically and concisely, even mechanically, enumerated in the first two chapters of the Book. Their prose form contrasts with the remainder of the text, which is in verse. They serve dramatically as a prelude; and textually, as a preface[5]. But the beleaguered hero remained steadfast in faith, enduring troubles over and over, falling repeated times, and pulling himself back up to his feet the proverbial seventh. Despite the urgings of his harridan wife, whom the celibate St. Augustine smugly declared a demonic character, he never cursed (the text repeatedly employs the euphemism "blessed" for this) his Creator; and at the end, he was rewarded with even greater wealth than he had had before, as well as a whole new set of children. And the Lord gave him abundant time to enjoy it, too: after his trials, he was given a bonus of twice the proverbial three score and ten years. That's Divine insurance coverage for loss, indeed.

Job seems to have been satisfied, both with these consolation prizes and with the certain, experiential knowledge (the Voice in the whirlwind after all the speeches are over) that his Redeemer lived. But the satisfaction of a literary character within a text is not necessarily intended to mollify the reader of that text. The resolution may, indeed, raise more questions than it settles. One finds the ending strangely forced and unnatural, thin and unconvincing — and suspects that others are left with similar qualms. Surely the pale ghosts of all the dead children buried under the rubble, hover over the shadowy finale, over the brittle felicity of the rewards. The mounds of ruins cast a long, dark shadow. One recalls the pallid aftermath of the unbearable drama of Euripides' *Alcestis*; and since Job, too, is a kind of play, and was perhaps even composed around the same time as the great classics of the Athenian theater, a comparison may be justifiable. One may recall that a Hellenistic Jew of Alexandria, Ezekiel, composed a play in Greek about the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. And the Hellenistic play *Menaechmus*, which figured so importantly in the beginnings of Latin drama, was originally composed in the Phoenician of Carthage, Punic— a language so close to Hebrew that the two are mutually intelligible. Alcestis, a dutiful wife, gave her life to save that of her husband Admetus when nobody else would: at the end she is allowed to ascend from Hades, returning to the living world, but of course

[4] Cited in: HaYom Yom: Tackling life's tasks, daily Chassidic teachings & glimpses into the spiritual lifestyle of Chabad-Lubavitch / ed. by A. M. M. Schneerson, the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe. Brooklyn, NY: Sichos in English, 5770/2009. P. 570 for the 28th day of the month of Cheshvan.

[5] Goethe imitated the colloquy between the Lord and the Satan in his prelude in Heaven to Faust. The German poet was keenly interested in Oriental literature, and the classical Sanskrit play *Śakuntala* inspired the additional prelude set on earth, in the theater.

nothing is the same. All the relationships, the strong ties of family, have been twisted or severed. There is a sense of filmy unreality, the unmentionable odor of death[6], and the unspoken shame of betrayal.

A Hellenic theatergoer, according to Aristotle's understanding of tragedy, might feel entitled to experience a catharsis of the emotions at the end of the play. But that does not mean he was intended by the playwright and cast to walk home from the amphitheater on the Athenian Acropolis or at Epidaurus with the complacent feeling of tidy resolution. The best plays often leave one with unsettling, often unanswerable, questions. Thus the rather unsatisfying end of the book of Job might have been correspondingly intentional: more an impetus to further existential pondering and wondering than a conclusion meant to wrap up and put away the hard issues of the book[7]. The Classical Greek drama is in verse, as is most of Job, and if one regards the speeches by Job, his wife, his four guests, and God as speaking parts — they are introduced at most points by a formulaic *va-ya'an*, "he replied", like a cue for the actor playing a given role — then Job could be considered as a play, a Hebrew tragedy, albeit without trained actors or a theater, at least that we know of[8]. The three ostensible friends of Job with their coda, the obnoxious young Elihu (cf. perhaps the self-assured adolescent Pen-

[6] The expression belongs to the poem by W. H. Auden "September 1st, 1939" — the date of the invasion of Poland by Nazi Germany and the beginning of World War II.

[7] God's self-revelation in the whirlwind comes with a catalogue of beasts, some evidently included because of their prodigious size as epitomes of their kind (Behemoth for land animals, Leviathan for sea creatures, and the ostrich for birds); others, still, because of their function in the general divine plan (the kindly stork, for instance). The ancients relied upon mnemonic lists for the transition of knowledge from one generation to the other: the Hebrew book of Genesis and the Zoroastrian book of creation, the *Bundahišn* (to be considered presently), are examples. But the list in Job is so patently irrelevant to the main theme of theodicy, the burning question of why the righteous suffer, as to seem almost satirical and comic: were one to provide it with a soundtrack, *Le Carnaval des animaux* of Camille Saint-Saëns might be appropriate.

[8] Drama existed in the ancient Near East long before Alexander; and Greek forms were readily introduced. As was noted above, a little under three hundred lines survive of a Greek play titled *Exagogē* by one Ezekiel, an Alexandrian Jew of the second century BC, on the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. See: *Jacobson H.* The exagoge of Ezekiel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. Interaction between east and west in ancient drama was a two-way street. Thus, a Carthaginian play in Punic about an itinerant merchant named Menaḥem in search of a lost nephew was translated into Greek and thence recast, by Plautus, into the early Roman play *Poenulus*, "The Little Phoenician". See: *Russell J. R.* Odysseus and a Phoenician tale // Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. Philosophy and Conflict Studies, vol. 34, no. 2, pp. 233–250. At Dura Europos, the rites of the goddess Azzanathkona seem to have been performed in a small space similar in design to the much larger Greek amphitheater. See: *Hopkins C.* The discovery of Dura-Europos. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979. P. 97. More to the point, the Greek term amphitheater is used of a synagogue in an inscription at Cyrene of the late Second Temple period. See: The synagogue in late Antiquity / ed. by L. I. Levine. Philadelphia, PA: The American Schools of Oriental Research, 1987. P. 13. A possible Hellenism in the text is the interesting expression *gerei veti*, literally, "strangers of my house" of chapter 19:15. It occurs in a list of Job's domestic relationships; and I would suggest that *ger bayit*, a typically Semitic construction, could be a rendering of Greek *xenos*, "guest friend" — that is, a non-citizen with whom one has a friendly relationship of reciprocal obligation that generally includes mutual hospitality.

theus in the *Bacchae* of Euripides, or even the naively ingenuous Telemachus, testing out his fledgling oratory skills in a gathering of the grownups on Ithaka), indeed remind of one of nothing so much as the "Greek chorus" of Attic drama: stuffily conventional in their banal piety, chiming in with their bromides to rub salt into the hero's wound[9].

The model of the theater is not the only form conjured up by this most enigmatic book. Though one would resist the glib neologism of intertextuality, it is still undeniably the case that the book of Job, from its overarching themes down to a myriad of lexical items, is a darkly sarcastic commentary on other books of the Hebrew Bible, particularly Psalms. In this country they say that if you play a country song backward, the performer's estranged wife has returned, his dog is alive, and his truck is working fine. Beneath the facile optimism of American popular culture runs a fatalistic, dark, fecund, and sardonic stream, whose most powerful musical expression, one that has exerted the principal influence upon what is now the global genre of rock, as well as the more local style of country music — is the African American art form of the Blues. That is what Job is to Biblical culture. And were a blues musician to sing the Psalms his own way, something very like the book of Job, with its caustic wit, sardonic irony, and weary fatalism, might be the result.

Job did not "bless God and die", that is, blasphemously pronounce a curse against the Almighty. But he did curse his *own* life and the day of his birth, inventively and at length, beginning with the bitter versified lament of chapter three that opens the flood of poetry — the aftermath of his misfortunes, his speeches and those of his friends, his ponderings, and God's self-revelation that make up most of the text. In this essay one will discuss aspects of that opening soliloquy, chapter three. Although Job is an obscure book at very many points and its translator is forced either to offer his own audacious etymological surmises, accept those of others, or leave the page blank, the canonical Masoretic redaction has taken more of a beating than it deserves. It has been emended and expanded upon even where this is perhaps unnecessary and unjustifiable. Letting key points of the text of the third chapter remain as they stand, and working from there, leads one to offer what seem to be a few new insights. These are of course subject to searching criticism and may or may not stand the test of time and future learning, but they are offered as what will be, it is hoped, a thought-pro-

[9] A good example is the scolding oration of Eliphaz the Temanite, who in 15:5 accuses Job: וַתִּבְחַר לְשׁוֹן עָרוּמִים *ve-tivḥar leshon ʿarumim*, "you choose the speech of the crafty". The word used for speech, *lashon*, has the literal meaning "tongue", as in other languages, but there is a subtle thematic, satiric play at work here, as so often in the book. The word *ʿarum*, "crafty, guileful", is used pre-eminently of the serpent in the garden of Eden in Genesis, and that text itself highlights the epithet by transferring it in its other meaning, "naked", to the hapless primordial couple after they eat the forbidden fruit. Some traditions identified the serpent — he of the forked *tongue* — with Satan. One recalls that it is Satan who accused the innocent Job in the first place, unbeknownst to poor Job and his chiding, wrongheaded Greek chorus of unhelpful friends. The Psalms are full of complaints about what is nowadays called "blaming the victim"; but this is perhaps the most brilliantly witty example in Scripture of that all-too-human kind of maddening effrontery, of *chutzpah*.

voking contribution to the ongoing discussion of this most unusual book of the Bible[10].

Job 3, the text:

וַיַּעַן אִיּוֹב וַיֹּאמַר׃
יֹאבַד יוֹם אִוָּלֶד בּוֹ וְהַלַּיְלָה אָמַר הֹרָה גָבֶר׃
הַיּוֹם הַהוּא יְהִי־חֹשֶׁךְ אַל־יִדְרְשֵׁהוּ אֱלוֹהַּ מִמַּעַל וְאַל־תּוֹפַע עָלָיו נְהָרָה׃
יִגְאָלֻהוּ חֹשֶׁךְ וְצַלְמָוֶת תִּשְׁכָּן־עָלָיו עֲנָנָה יְבַעֲתֻהוּ כְּמְרִירֵי יוֹם׃
הַלַּיְלָה הַהוּא יִקָּחֵהוּ־אֹפֶל אַל־יֵחַד בִּימֵי שָׁנָה בְּמִסְפַּר יְרָחִים אַל־יָבֹא׃
הִנֵּה הַלַּיְלָה הַהוּא יְהִי גַלְמ֫וּד אַל־תָּבוֹא רִנָּנָה בּוֹ׃
יְקֻבֻהוּ אֹרְרֵי־יוֹם הָעֲתִידִים עֹרֵר לִוְיָתָן׃
יֶחְשְׁכוּ כוֹכְבֵי נִשְׁפּוֹ יְקַו־לְאוֹר וְאֵין וְאַל־יִרְאֶה בְּעַפְעַפֵּי־שָׁחַר׃
כִּי לֹא סָגַר דַּלְתֵי בִטְנִי וַיַּסְתֵּר עָמָל מֵעֵינָי׃
לָמָּה לֹא מֵרֶחֶם אָמוּת מִבֶּטֶן יָצָאתִי וְאֶגְוָע׃
מַדּוּעַ קִדְּמוּנִי בִרְכָּיִם וּמַה־שָּׁדַיִם כִּי אִינָק׃
כִּי־עַתָּה שָׁכַבְתִּי וְאֶשְׁקוֹט יָשַׁנְתִּי אָז יָנוּחַ לִי׃
עִם־מְלָכִים וְיֹעֲצֵי אֶרֶץ הַבֹּנִים חָרְבוֹת לָמוֹ׃
אוֹ עִם־שָׂרִים זָהָב לָהֶם הַמְמַלְאִים בָּתֵּיהֶם כָּסֶף׃
אוֹ כְנֶפֶל טָמוּן לֹא אֶהְיֶה כְּעֹלָלִים לֹא־רָאוּ אוֹר׃
שָׁם רְשָׁעִים חָדְלוּ רֶגֶז וְשָׁם יָנוּחוּ יְגִיעֵי כֹחַ׃
יַחַד אֲסִירִים שַׁאֲנָנוּ לֹא שָׁמְעוּ קוֹל נֹגֵשׂ׃
קָטֹן וְגָדוֹל שָׁם הוּא וְעֶבֶד חָפְשִׁי מֵאֲדֹנָיו׃
לָמָּה יִתֵּן לְעָמֵל אוֹר וְחַיִּים לְמָרֵי נָפֶשׁ׃
הַמְחַכִּים לַמָּוֶת וְאֵינֶנּוּ וַיַּחְפְּרֵהוּ מִמַּטְמוֹנִים׃
הַשְּׂמֵחִים אֱלֵי־גִיל יָשִׂישׂוּ כִּי יִמְצְאוּ־קָבֶר׃
לַגֶּבֶר אֲשֶׁר־דַּרְכּוֹ נִסְתָּרָה וַיָּסֶךְ אֱלוֹהַּ בַּעֲדוֹ׃
כִּי־לִפְנֵי לַחְמִי אַנְחָתִי תָּבֹא וַיְהִתְכוּ כַּמַּיִם שַׁאֲגָתִי׃
כִּי פַּחַד פָּחַדְתִּי וַיֶּאֱתָיֵנִי וַאֲשֶׁר יָגֹרְתִּי יָבֹא לִי׃
לֹא שָׁלַוְתִּי וְלֹא שָׁקַטְתִּי וְלֹא־נָחְתִי וַיַּבֹא רֹגֶז׃

A working translation:

(1) After this Job opened his mouth and cursed his day.
And Job answered and said,
Let the day be lost that I was born in, / And the night of the saying, A male is born.
Let that day be darkness: / May God not seek it from on high
And may light not appear upon it. / Let darkness and the shadow of death reclaim it;
Let cloud dwell upon it / Let them terrify it like those who make day bitter[11].
That night — let gloom seize it / May it not be one of the days of the year.

[10] The questions Job poses are unanswerable, *pace* C. G. Jung's *Antwort auf Hiob* (1952); a more thoughtful treatment of the Biblical theme than the latter's is Joel and Ethan Coen's film "A Serious Man" (2009). Jung proposes that Jesus is a fusion of God and Job; and the Holy Trinity becomes a Quaternity, with Satan the fourth side or aspect of the Divine; cf. his addition of Synchronicity to a postulated triad of Cause, Time, and Space. Most of Jung's speculations of this kind seem to be a revival of gnosticism.

[11] *Japhet S.* Insights on Job 3, from a Medieval commentary: Rabbi Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam) on the Book of Job // Reading from right to left: Essays on the Hebrew Bible in honour of David J. A. Clines (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 373) / eds

Let it not enter the number of the months. / Lo![12] That night, let it be a lonely crag[13] —
May no happy song come into it. / They who damn a day, let them curse it:
Those who are destined to wake Leviathan. / Let the stars of its dawn go dark:
It hopes for light and there is none, / And may it not see through the eyelids of the morning.
(10) Because it did not close the doors of my womb / And hide labor from my eyes.
Why did I not die from the womb, / Come out of the belly and become a corpse.
Why did two knees wait upon me[14], / And what are two breasts for that I should suck.
Because now I would be lying down and silent, / Then I would be asleep and at rest
With kings and advisors of the land, / The builders of ruins for them.
Or with princes who have gold, / Who fill their houses up with silver.
Or why could I not be an abortion, hidden / like offspring who did not see the light.
There evil men cease from trouble, / And there those who strength is spent, rest.
Together, prisoners are at ease, / They do not hear the overseer's voice.
Small and great — there he is, / And a slave is free of his master.
(20) Why give light to the laborer; / And life, to the bitter in soul.
Those who wait for death and there is none, / And dig for it more than buried treasures,
The happy who rejoice in song / delight since they find a grave.
To the man whose road is hidden / and God has covered him over.
For before my bread comes my sigh / And my howls are poured out like water.
For the very fear I dreaded has come upon me, / And that of which I was terrified, has come to me.
I have no tranquility, I have no quiet, and I have no rest: / And trouble has come.

2. The Day

There is a common American idiom, "in the day" that means, not the day of one's birth or something that happened at one specific date, but the past viewed from the vantage point of age, the time when one was active and engaged with life. It is not a localized concept: Arabs look back with nostalgia to the past glory of *ʾayyām al-aʿrāb*, "the days of the Arabs". Looking vengefully into the future, the Psalmist says of the wicked man who is prospering today, *Adonai yiśaḥeq lo ki raʾah ki yavo yomo*, "The Lord laughs at him because He has seen that his day will come" (Ps. 37:13; we will have more to say presently about playing, laughing, and

J. Cheryl Exum and H. G. M. Williamson. London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003. P. 243, reads *kmryry ywm* as "the blackness of the day".

[12] D. N. Freedman (*Freedman D. N.* The structure of Job 3 // Biblica. 1968. Vol. 49. P. 508) suggests the initial *hinnēh* of verse seven should be regarded as "extra-metrical". Perhaps a dramatic insertion?

[13] See the discussion of *galmud* by E. L. Greenstein (*Greenstein E. L.* The language of Job and its poetic function // Journal of Biblical Literature. Winter 2003. Vol. 122, no. 4. P. 655–656), who suggests the deliberate use of an Arabic word (or loan) as a *double entendre*. Eliphaz, the Yemenite, uses it too in his speech in chapter 15: a felicitous usage from Arabia Felix. The Hebrew reader, if in a mood, might discern *gal(im)*, a pile of ruins, in the word as well. The theme of ruins pervades Job's oration, as we shall see in detail presently.

[14] The verb may darkly parody Psalm 21:4, כִּי־תְקַדְּמֶנּוּ בִּרְכוֹת טוֹב תָּשִׁית לְרֹאשׁוֹ עֲטֶרֶת פָּז: "for You anticipate him with blessings of good and place a crown of gold upon his head". There may even be an intended pun: note the similar spellings of ברכות "blessings" in the Psalm and ברכים "(two) knees" in Job: the only difference is the plural suffix!

ridiculing). In Ps. 34:13, by contrast, *Mi ha-ʾish he-ḥofeṣ ḥayim ʾohev yamim li-rʾot ṭov* "Who is the man who desires life: he loves days to see good". Job 7:8 seems directly to deny this, and, implicitly, again to want not life but death: *Lo tashuv ʿeini li-rʾot ṭov* "My eye will not return to see good", i. e., he will never see a good day again. Psalm 137, the famous lament by the waters of Babylon, speaks of *yom Yerushalayim*, "the day of Jerusalem", again as a general term for a time — the period the city experienced siege, conquest, and ruin.

In the first line of chapter three, then, Job curses his day — not the day of his birth specifically, though he will shortly return to that in embittered detail, but his day, simply: that is, the totality of his days, his lifetime. That is what the text says: let us consider it simply as that. It may serve as the *pars pro toto* for his lifetime and the destiny that informs it[15]. He situates it, as though in the calendrical wheel of an astrological chart, in the cycle of the months (v. 7) and the year (v. 6); the reference to the stars of its dawn in v. 9 reinforces the image of a life charted by a cosmic map. Verses 8 and 9 enlarge and underscore the sense of fate and (ill) fortune with what seems to be a reference to the inevitable disasters of the future: the raising of Leviathan from the terrifying deeps of the ocean[16]. This verse has been the subject of intensive study. *Yiqvuhu ʾorerei yom ha-ʿatidim ʿorer Livyatan*: one need not emend the second word, *ʾorerei* to something like "rouse" when it literally means "cursers of [the day]" and echoes the verb preceding it, "let them curse it". It does not seem necessary, either, to read the *yom* ("day") of the Masoretic text as *yam* ("sea") or Yamm, as is generally done[17]. One might treat *ʾorer* "cursing" (perhaps in the sense of pronouncing a magic spell) as a **pun** with the *ʿorer* "waking" of the complementary and parallel hemistich. We have already suggested in a note above that Job may containing a punning reference to the Psalms in *brkwt* "blessings" and *brkym* "knees". Certainly there is no paucity of verbal figures in the text: a fine example would be the beginning of one of Job's blisteringly sarcastic replies to his tormenting consolers. Chapter 12, verse two: אָמְנָם כִּי אַתֶּם־עָם וְעִמָּכֶם תָּמוּת חָכְמָה׃ *Amnam ki atem ʿam ve-ʿimakhem tamut ḥokhma* "After all, you all are the *vox populi* and wisdom will die with you", would be a vernacular rendering. Note the two figures: diminishing vowel-consonant pair a*mna*m > a*tem* > ʿam in the protasis; and, in the apodosis, both a metathesis

[15] Compare Job's complaint in 7:3f., *Ken hinḥalti li yarḥei shav' ve-leilot ʿamal minu li. Im shakhavti ve-amarti matai aqum u-midad ʿarev u-śavaʿti nedudim ʿadei nashef* "Truly I'm made to inherit months in vain, and they have meted out nights of toil to me. If I lie down, I say 'When will I get up?' And the night is measured out and I've had my fill of pacing till the dawn". It is an embodiment of the dire curse of Deuteronomy 28:67, בַּבֹּקֶר תֹּאמַר מִי־יִתֵּן עֶרֶב וּבָעֶרֶב תֹּאמַר מִי־יִתֵּן בֹּקֶר מִפַּחַד לְבָבְךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּפְחָד וּמִמַּרְאֵה עֵינֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּרְאֶה׃. "In the morning you shall say, 'If only it were evening!' and in the evening you shall say, 'If only it were morning!' — because of the fear of your heart and the sight of your eyes that you shall see".

[16] M. Jastrow (*Jastrow M., Jr.* The Book of Job. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1920. P. 207 and no. 50) translates the verses in question thus: "May those who rouse up the sea ban it, / Those who are ready to stir up the dragon", helpfully listing other Scriptural passages where Leviathan personifies the deep: Isaiah 27:1, and Psalms 74.14 and 104.26.

[17] *Gordis R.* The Book of Job: Commentary, new translation, and special studies. New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 5738/1978. P. 34–35.

figure of *m-kh* to *kh-m* in *ʿim*a*kh*e*m* "with you all" and *ḥo*khm*a* "wisdom" — as though the visiting friends were the mirror-image and opposite of wisdom, and the ironic repetition of *ʿm* "people" of the end of the first half of the verse, as the preposition *ʿm* "with" at the start of the second half (in the unvocalized paleo-Hebrew script of the original, and also in the later, unvocalized square character script, this would be a *visual*, *textual* pun).

But it must readily be admitted that there is good reason to stick with the oft-proposed emendation to Yamm (the proper name of a Canaanite sea god) or *yam*, "sea", as well. There is a formula repeated on Aramaic incantation bowls in which the enchantment of Yamm (*ym'*) is invoked together with that of "Leviathan the sea monster" (*lywytn tnyn'*)[18]. Greenstein argued that the word *yom* in the text was an intentional Punicism, rendering long *a* as an *o*, and was meant to lend a pagan Canaanite flavor (and, might one add, nautical) to the passage. As such it might be another pun, on Yamm the god and *yom* the day. The Aramaic spell is a binding and prohibition (*gzyrt'*, *'ḥrmt'*)[19]: very strong, certainly, but self-evidently meant to restrain and keep down, rather than to summon and bring up — which is what the conjurors in Job would be doing. BT Sukkah 53a-b and Sanhedrin 29a in the Jerusalem Talmud relate that when king David dug the pits on mount Moriah for the foundation of the Temple, the Abyss (*Tehom*, the ancient Mesopotamian Tiamat) rose and threatened to engulf the world. Aḥitophel, the clever and disloyal courtier, grudgingly advised David on how magically to suppress the waters: by engraving the divine Name upon a potsherd and casting it into the waters. There is also an Aramaic "spell and seal" (*'ysr' w-ḥytm'*) in the Lesser *Hekhalot* (i. e., texts on mystical ascent to the divine palaces) that both *ptḥ pwm ym' w stm my rqyʿ* "opens the mouth of the sea and closes the waters of the firmament"[20]. It would thus seem that magicians

[18] *Wikander O.* Job 3.8 — cosmological snake-charming and Leviathanic panic in an ancient Near Eastern setting // Zeitschrift für Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft. 2010. Vol. 122. P. 266–267, echoing the lucid, magisterial study the poetics of the language of Job: *Greenstein E. L.* The language of Job and its poetic function. P. 654–655.

[19] *Isbell Ch. D.* Corpus of the Aramaic incantation bowls. Missoula, Montana: Society for Biblical Literature, 1975. Text 2, lines 4, 6. P. 19–20. The spell on the bowl is intended to protect the household of a man named *P'bq*, i. e. Pābak: this is a Middle Persian name, the same as that of the father of Ardeshir, the third-century AD founder of the Sasanian dynasty.

[20] See the discussion by: *Sperber D.* Magic and folklore in rabbinic literature. Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan University Press, 1994. Chapter 8 "On sealing the abysses", pp. 47–54. Gideon Bohak (Hear, O Israel: The magic of the Shema / eds N. Benowitz, D. Mevorah. Jerusalem, Israel: The Israel Museum, 2021. P. 67) notes that pieces of the *afikoman* — the piece of matzah broken off and set aside at the Passover Seder — were used in various ways to quell storms at sea: he suggests that this practice might have derived from analogous magical uses by Christians of the bread of the Eucharist. (One notes that in the medieval period Jews were often accused of stealing and abusing the Host, which bled.) Now, if it was believed, as was the case with the ancient Armenian worshippers of Vahagn (q. v.), that storms could be caused by sea monsters thrashing about, then scattering one's magic bread upon the waters (Ecclesiastes 11:1; subsequently, Christ's miracle of the loaves and fishes, in all four Gospels) might feed and thus placate and calm them (in Hebrew, *rgʿ*, "calm", is an anagram of *gʿr* "rebuke, exorcise"). On feeding fish in the Near East: a local legend of Edessa, modern Urfa, holds that when Nimrod cast Abraham into the fire, the

generally claimed to be able to hold back the threatening waters; but also had spells to bring them on. Raphael Patai perhaps had such magicians in mind when he rendered Job 3:8 as "…curse the day, who were skilled in rousing up Leviathan"[21].

God's angry shout (*be-gaʿarati*) dries up the sea: this statement in Isaiah 50:2 could have been seen as a related spell for the conjuring of the deeps, since the verb *gaʿar* later acquired also the specifically magical technical meaning "to exorcise"[22]. The proof text for this usage, as exorcism, is surely the opening lines of the third chapter of the book of the prophet Zechariah. The context is almost the same as the *mise en scène* of Job, except that in this case the Lord restrains the Accuser. Job, again, is a satire, a thought game: What would happen if He *didn't* stop Satan? Zechariah 3:1–2: וַיַּרְאֵנִי אֶת־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל עֹמֵד לִפְנֵי מַלְאַךְ יְהוָה וְהַשָּׂטָן עֹמֵד עַל־יְמִינוֹ לְשִׂטְנוֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־הַשָּׂטָן יִגְעַר יְהוָה בְּךָ הַשָּׂטָן וְיִגְעַר יְהוָה בְּךָ הַבּוֹחֵר בִּירוּשָׁלִַם הֲלוֹא זֶה אוּד מֻצָּל מֵאֵשׁ: "He showed me Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, and the Satan standing at his right to accuse him (*le-śiṭno*). But the Lord said to the Accuser, 'The Lord rebuke (*yigʿar*) you, O Accuser; may the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! For is this not a brand plucked from the fire!'"

The text would seem to imply, if one's literal reading is to be pursued, that there might have existed in Israel by the time of the composition of Job a fatalistic belief in beings appointed to dominion over the great and small divisions of time: fates like the *Nakṣatras* — the Decans, that is, the personified 27 or 28 ten-day periods along the ecliptic, of Indian and subsequent Middle Eastern astrology, whose job it was to preside over days that were foreordained to be either propitious or inauspicious. There is evidence that such a belief did exist in the Ancient Near East, and Job 3:5 has been discussed with reference to it[23]. The apocalyptic surfacing of Leviathan from the abyssal depths of the sea is to take place on one of the latter, inauspicious appointed days, a catastrophic and inevitable apocalyptic event. The text, one would argue, suggests that Job bade the casters of spells hasten the accursed day, the fateful moment when the monster shall rise. Jewish magicians of late antiquity, as we have seen, claimed to

flames turned to water; and the burning logs, to fish. This writer duly visited Birket Ibrahim — the pool of Abraham (or, Halil Rahman Gölü) — below the ancient acropolis of the city, during a visit to historical Armenia. Local legend has it that Nimrod made a slingshot using the two pillars on the acropolis. Local Turkish hawkers sell pellets out of shoe polish cans to pilgrims to feed the large, sluggish carp, who could scarcely rouse a tempest, though they can stir up the surface of the water of their great tank when hungry: see the frontispiece and plates 9 and 10 of: *Segal J. B.* Edessa "The Blessed City". Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1970.

[21] *Patai R.* The children of Noah: Jewish seafaring in ancient times. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998. P. 110. It is a leap to translate Hebrew *ʿatid* as "skilled". The safest rendering is "ready"; I have climbed out on a post-Biblical, eschatological limb and propose "destined", cf. discussion *infra*.

[22] Hear, O Israel… P. 50. Note also the use of the verb in Psalm 9, to be discussed presently.

[23] See: *Noegel S. B.* Job III in the light of Mesopotamian demons of time // Vetus Testamentum. 2007. Vol. 57. P. 556–562.

possess spells, which were already very old, that could control the watery abysses generally — and their *kara deniz*en[24], the monster Leviathan, in particular. There are many obvious parallels to this in religious eschatology, from the reign of the beast at the end of days in the Christian book of Revelation to the emergence of the dragon-man Azhi Dahaka (the Zahhak of Ferdousi's *Shāh-nāmeh*, and the Armenian Aždahak) from his millennial imprisonment in Mt. Damavand on the eve of the coming of the Savior, in Zoroastrianism.

3. Leviathan

The appearance of the giant Leviathan was terrifying, like the Hydra. His Ugaritic precursor had seven heads (*ltn… d-šb't r'ašm*)[25]; and in Psalm 74:14 he has multiple heads, too: *Ata riṣaṣta ra'shei livyatan titenu ma'akhal le-ṣiyim* "You [God] crushed the heads of Leviathan; You give him as food for [those in] the desert wastes"[26]. Seven monstrous heads, Job's seven murdered sons, his sanctimonious interlocutor's seven tribulations: in enumerating seven evils one is reminded of the *utukki limnuti*, the seven evil spirits of ancient Mesopotamia, echoed in Konstantin Dmitrievich Bal'mont's translation (1908) of an Akkadian hymn that became Sergei Prokofiev's terrifying cantata of the next fateful decade, *Семеро их*, "Seven, they are seven!" And we have discussed other Biblical heptads *supra*. One deals here with a mythical monster, not a mere crocodile[27]. Leviathan's size was such that his back is mistaken for an island in *Paradise Lost*: in Book I, lines 200f., John Milton (1608–1674) moves the monster north from the Mediterranean — inspired to do so, perhaps, by the yarns of British and Scandinavian seafarers about whales and the legendary kraken:

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[24] Leviathan the Denizen: one cannot resist, with the reader's kind indulgence, a serendipitous Turkicism. *Ak Deniz* "the white sea" is the Aegean; *Kara Deniz*, the Black Sea (Pontos Euxeinos, "hospitable", a euphemistic and apotropaic Hellenism for Old Persian *axšaina-*, "dark blue", since that sea is inhospitably treacherous). *Ak para kara gün için*, "White (i. e., silver) money for a black day", advises the proverb: Job opts for the *kara deniz(en)* on his *kara gün*.

[25] Discussed by: *Kinnier Wilson J. V.* A return to the problems of Behemoth and Leviathan // Vetus Testamentum. 1975. Vol. 25, no. 1. P. 3; *Ayali-Darshan N.* The storm-god and the sea: The origin, versions, and diffusion of a myth throughout the ancient Near East. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020. P. 109.

[26] R. Patai (*Patai R.* The children of Noah. P. 110) renders the verse "Thou gavest him to be food for the sharks of the sea". N. Ayali-Darshan (*Ayali-Darshan N.* The storm-god and the sea. P. 182 and no. 83) agrees with this reading. But the idea of casting the carcass of the massy monster from the depths of the ocean so far that it lands in a waterless place seems a much more powerfully contrastive literary figure, akin to the declaration that Odysseus, the Hellenic seafarer *kat' exokhēn*, is destined to wander so far from Ithaca and the waters of the Mediterranean that he will find himself in a place where people think oars are winnowing fans. And more to the point, it is to be the fate of Pharaoh as Nilotic crocodile in Ezekiel 29 (see discussion *infra*) to be cast up on barren, dry waste land: the Prophet would thus be in harmony with the Psalmist.

[27] J. V. Kinnier Wilson (*Kinnier Wilson J. V.* A return to the problems of Behemoth and Leviathan. P. 3 f.) weighs the two explanations of Behemoth and Leviathan: as the hippopotamus and crocodile of nature or monsters of affrighted fancy.

That sea-beast
Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hugest that swim the ocean-stream.
Him, haply slumbering on the Norway foam,
The pilt of some small night-foundered skiff,
Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,
With fixed anchor in his scaly rind,
Moors by his side under the lee, while night
Invests the sea, and wished morn delays.

The poet here has inserted the Biblical creature into a folk-tale motif that seems to have migrated north and westwards over centuries from India and ancient Iran to Talmudic *Aggadah*, Eastern European Jewish lore, and farther afield: to the gray, cold wastes of the North Atlantic and the Irish legend of St. Brendan[28]. Seafarers see an island in mid-ocean and land, settling down to live there — building a village and tilling fields. But the island is really the back of a sleeping sea monster, and one day it wakes up and dives, drowning all the people and destroying their homes — to Jews, a monitory tale of the perennially parlous Diaspora.

Since the English poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892) esteemed *Job* as "the greatest poem of ancient and modern times"[29], it is fair to suppose that the passage in it about the *wakening* of Leviathan (if thus he understood the verse) might have inspired his famous sonnet of 1830 about the apocalyptic rising of the Kraken, a cephalopod monster of Norse mythology. It is perhaps the most vivid evocation of a Leviathan-like creature in literature.

The Kraken

Below the thunders of the upper deep,
Far, far beneath in the abysmal sea,
His ancient, dreamless, uninvaded sleep
The Kraken sleepeth: faintest sunlights flee
About his shadowy sides; above him swell
Huge sponges of millennial growth and height;
And far away into the sickly light,
From many a wondrous grot and secret cell
Unnumbered and enormous polypi
Winnow with giant arms the slumbering green[30].

[28] See: *Russell J. R.* Sasanian Yarns: The problem of the Centaurs reconsidered // Atti dei Convegni Lincei. 2001. La Persia e Bisanzio. Roma: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 2004. P. 411–438: in Russian folklore, one is to recall Yershov's Чудо-Юдо-Рыба-Кит, a Judaic cetacean!

[29] *Glatzer N. N.* The dimensions of Job: A study and selected readings. New York: Schocken, 1969. P. ix.

[30] The kraken seems to have an entourage here of busy submarine gardeners. God, as we know, crushes the multiple heads of Leviathan, and Job 9:13 mentions helpers of the similar sea monster Rahab, who fare no better: *taḥtav shaḥaḥu ʿozrei rahav* "Beneath Him the helpers of

There hath he lain for ages, and will lie
Battening upon huge sea worms in his sleep,
Until the latter fire shall heat the deep;
Then once by man and angels to be seen,
In roaring he shall rise and on the surface die.

The "latter fire" is here the universal conflagration at the end of days. After the Deluge, the Lord promised never again to inundate the world; but He offered no such assurance as to its incineration (an escape clause for the Divine insurance company). Cetaceans were the large sea animals best known to Viking mariners, and one Norse kenning — an elaborate metaphorical code name — for the sea is the whale-path. American seamen, too, knew whales and hunted them: Herman Melville's giant Moby Dick, for all his awe-inspiring power, is white and an emblem in a way of cosmic good against the black-clad captain Ahab's evil. But, powerful and dangerous as the whale can be, especially when men are trying to kill it, the seafarers of the north seemed to be most afraid of a giant cephalopod, the kraken. It is a figment of man's imagination, testimony to his ability to frighten himself out of his wits or to dissuade gullible fellow fishermen from poaching in what he considers his own territory. In sober reality Architeuthis,

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Rahab lie prostrate". In Job 26, God preserves order after striking down Rahab. In Isaiah 30:7, Rahab is mentioned in a reference to Egypt that may be read as *rahab hēm šabēt* "You're Rahab? Stand still!" See: Dictionary of deities and demons in the Bible / eds K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, P. W. van der Horst. Leiden: Brill, 1995. Cols. 1292–1295. Ezekiel 29 similarly likens the arrogance of Egypt to a sea monster whom God nonchalantly tames, the image of the hook paralleled in God's sarcastic question to Job as to whether he can hook Leviathan:

דַּבֵּר וְאָמַרְתָּ כֹּה־אָמַר
אֲדֹנָי יֱהוִֹה הִנְנִי עָלַיִךְ פַּרְעֹה מֶלֶךְ־מִצְרַיִם הַתַּנִּים הַגָּדוֹל הָרֹבֵץ בְּתוֹךְ יְאֹרָיו אֲשֶׁר אָמַר לִי יְאֹרִי וַאֲנִי עֲשִׂיתָנִי׃
[חַחִים](חחיים) וְנָתַתִּי
בִלְחָיָיִךְ וְהִדְבַּקְתִּי דְגַת־יְאֹרֶיךְ בְּקַשְׂקְשֹׂתָיִךְ וְהַעֲלִיתִיךְ מִתּוֹךְ יְאֹרֶיךְ וְאֵת כָּל־דְּגַת יְאֹרֶיךְ בְּקַשְׂקְשֹׂתָיִךְ תִּדְבָּקְנָה׃

"Speak these words: thus said the Lord God: Here I am upon you, O Pharaoh king of Egypt, mighty monster, sprawling in your channels, who said, my Nile is my own; I made it for myself. I will put hooks in your jaws, and make the fish of your channels cling to your scales; I will haul you up from your channels, with all the fish of your channels clinging to your scales". Other ancient sea monsters, such as the Hittite serpent Illuyankas, also have spawn. See: *Wikander O.* Job 3.8 — Cosmological snake-charming and Leviathanic panic… P. 269–270 (though one must be cautioned that the bibliographical source reference Wikander provides is inaccurate). As for the crocodilian Pharaoh, if one take the Christian reading of Psalm 100:3 (with לֹא read as "not", as in the Christian version, "The Old Hundredth" — "Know that the Lord is God indeed; / He formed us all without our aid" — rather than as "to Him", לו): "Know that the Lord he is God, He made us and not we [ourselves]", then both the childish vanity of Pharaoh, the fat crocodile lolling in the Nile that he stupidly thinks he himself created, and the rebuke to Rahab, find their context. The Egyptian god Atum, the only personage in the populous pantheon without parents, is called in Egyptian texts *kheper-djesef,* "the self-generated one", and this idea of an *autogenes* influenced later cosmogonical speculation. See: *Assmann J.* Creation through hieroglyphs: The cosmic grammatology of ancient Egypt // The poetics of grammar and the metaphysics of sound and sign (Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture 6) / eds S. La Porta, D. Shulman. Leiden: Brill, 2007. P. 18.

the giant squid, lives only in the deep ocean, too far down to trouble surface vessels, and is generally rather reclusive at that; while no octopus is known that could grow large enough to tackle a ship, even if it were so inclined — and octopodes are not generally aggressive creatures.

However, we have a sea monster; let us provide it with a suitable fearsome submarine lair. The American proto-Symbolist Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849) imagined a submarine metropolis ruled by Death — whom Tennyson's Kraken perhaps embodies — that he published first in 1831 as "The Doomed City" and in 1845 in its final form as "The City in the Sea":

Lo! Death has reared himself a throne
In a strange city lying alone
Far down within the dim West,
Where the good and the bad and the worst and the best
Have gone to their eternal rest.
There shrines and palaces and towers
(Time-eaten towers and tremble not!)
Resemble nothing that is ours.
Around, by lifting winds forgot,
Resignedly beneath the sky
The melancholy waters lie.
No rays from the holy Heaven come down
On the long night-time of that town;
But light from out the lurid sea
Streams up the turrets silently —
Gleams up the pinnacles far and free —
Up domes — up spires — up kingly halls —
Up fanes — up Babylon-like walls —
Up shadowy long-forgotten bowers
Of sculptured ivy and stone flowers —
Up many and many a marvellous shrine
Whose wreathed friezes intertwine
The viol, the violet, and the vine.
Resignedly beneath the sky
The melancholy waters lie.
So blend the turrets and shadows there
That all seem pendulous in air,
While from a proud tower in the town
Death looks gigantically down.
There open fanes and gaping graves
Yawn level with the luminous waves;
But not the riches there that lie
In each idol's diamond eye —
Not the gaily-jewelled dead
Tempt the waters from their bed;
For no ripples curl, alas!
Along that wilderness of glass —
No swellings tell that winds may be
Upon some far-off happier sea —

No heavings hint that winds have been
On seas less hideously serene.
But lo, a stir is in the air!
The wave — there is a movement there!
As if the towers had thrust aside,
In slightly sinking, the dull tide —
As if their tops had feebly given
A void within the filmy Heaven.
The waves have now a redder glow —
The hours are breathing faint and low —
And when, amid no earthly moans,
Down, down that town shall settle hence,
Hell, rising from a thousand thrones,
Shall do it reverence.

It was left to the American master of horror fiction, Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890–1937), to combine the religious motif of apocalyptic, Leviathanic doom with Poe's submarine corpse-city and Tennyson's giant cephalopod, in his story "The Call of Cthulhu", which was first published in 1928 and has spawned hundreds of subsidiary tales and entire novels. His invented mythology is so compelling in its coherence and imaginative power that since his death nearly a century ago an academic cottage industry has churned out learned disputations about the "Cthulhu mythos". Cthulhu — the name was intended, as Lovecraft explained shortly before his death in a letter to a young friend, to approximate in human speech twin stentorian grunts produced by alien organs — is a greenish, flabby, gigantic humanoid creature equipped with giant bat wings. He has squid-like tentacles where his face would be; and is endowed with the scales and claws of a dragon. Cthulhu is one of the Old Ones, beings from the stars who ruled the earth once, but now lies imprisoned in his tomb in the cyclopean city of R'lyeh, which sank to the bottom of the Pacific Ocean. His ill-intentioned worshippers are all too anxious to wake him, like Leviathan, and to bring apocalyptic chaos upon the world: their mantra is *Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn*, which means, "In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming". The implication is that Cthulhu waits for an appointed future day: he is *destined* to rise. The scriptural authority, as it were, for the assured future rising of Cthulhu and his kind is Lovecraft's invented book, a kind of demonic anti-Scripture called the *Necronomicon*, a pericope of which the writer provides in another story, "The Dunwich Horror" (written in the same year that "The Call of Cthulhu" was published): "Nor is it to be thought, that man is either the oldest or the last of earth's masters, or that the common bulk of life and substance walks alone. The Old Ones were, the Old Ones are, and the Old Ones shall be. Not in the spaces we know, but between them, They walk serene and primal, undimensioned and to us unseen. Yog-Sothoth knows the gate. Yog-Sothoth is the gate. Yog-Sothoth is the key and guardian of the gate. Past, present, future, all are one in Yog-Sothoth. He knows where the Old Ones broke through of old, and where They shall break through again. He knows where They have trod earth's fields, and where They

still tread them, and why no one can behold Them as They tread. By Their smell can men sometimes know Them near, but of Their semblance can no man know, saving only in the features of those They have begotten on mankind; and of those are there many sorts, differing in likeness from man's truest eidolon to that shape without sight or substance which is Them. They walk unseen and foul in lonely places where the Words have been spoken and the Rites howled through at their Seasons. The wind gibbers with Their voices, and the earth mutters with Their consciousness. They bend the forest and crush the city, yet may not forest or city behold the hand that smites. Kadath in the cold waste hath known Them, and what man knows Kadath? The ice desert of the South and the sunken isles of Ocean hold stones whereon Their seal is engraven, but who hath seen the deep frozen city or the sealed tower long garlanded with seaweed and barnacles? Great Cthulhu is Their cousin, yet can he spy Them only dimly. Iä! Shub-Niggurath! As a foulness shall ye know Them. Their hand is at your throats, yet ye see Them not; and Their habitation is even one with your guarded threshold. Yog-Sothoth is the key to the gate, whereby the spheres meet. Man rules now where They ruled once; *They shall soon rule where man rules now. After summer is winter; and after winter, summer. They wait patient and potent, for here shall They rule again* (emphasis mine. — *J. R.*)". One can but hope.

The invented language of the toponym R'lyeh and the ritual formula, bristling with apostrophes and odd consonantal clusters, are somewhat pseudo-Semitic in appearance, and in Lovecraft's story, it is a professor of Semitic languages at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, who first undertakes the academic study of the Cthulhu cult. The cult itself is old and secretive, and is populated by lower-class, non-white criminal types: Lovecraft was overtly racist and believed that immigrants were undermining the country that his Anglo-Saxon settler-ancestors had founded. Although the writer was married briefly to a Jewish woman from New York named Sonya Green, and encouraged some aspiring young Jewish writers, anti-Semitism pervaded American society and there is something of contemporary prejudices against Judaism in the Cthulhu cult. In the story, apocalypse is only narrowly averted: R'lyeh has been thrust to the surface by a marine volcanic eruption, and sailors unwittingly open the tomb. This detail may remind one of Leviathan the island, in *Paradise Lost*. Such is the afterlife in visionary fantasy literature of Job's single verse. Yet here, as in the remote Biblical original, the apocalyptic theme persists at the fore.

In Job, the waking of Leviathan is the substance of a curse. Talmudic legend imagines a Leviathan dozing on the ocean's surface: when he wakes, the hapless settlers living on his back meet their doom. In Lovecraft's tale, an earthquake raises a mountain from the sea bottom and the sailors open a tomb from which the dreaming monster is resurrected (cf. the risen Christ's emergence from His sepulcher, perhaps; or the more vengeful Parousia imagined by William Butler Yeats in his poem, "The Second Coming"). One has not yet mentioned Jonah, a sardonic tale somewhat akin to Job and standing at a decidedly odd angle to the Biblical universe (to paraphrase E. M. Forster's characterization of the modern Greek poet Constantine Cavafy). Ancient Near Eastern myths of sea monsters

sometimes mention that on which they feed[31]; here the frightening theme is made innocuous, subordinated to the purposes of the omnipotent God — for the big fish that swallows the reluctant prophet is just his ride to Nineveh.

The discussion of the raising or wakening of Leviathan presupposes that he has lain dormant; and the suggestion of an epic eschatological battle in which he is finally killed would suggest that for now the sea monster is asleep, or at any rate not as active as he will be on his and the world's fateful day. But he was apparently not always asleep, since God played with him daily, until the Temple was destroyed. Since then, the Lord has devoted that part of His day to teaching schoolchildren instead. For the Rabbis were to enlarge upon Psalm 104:26 (*Sham oniyot yehalekhun livyatan zeh yaṣarta le-śaḥeq bo*, "There go the ships; this Leviathan You formed to play with") and to assert that the great sea monster was God's plaything before the destruction of the Temple[32]. Leviathan is a divine plaything among the lovely wonders of a largely peaceful kingdom. Perhaps the Sages thought with these later, expanded, and learned legends to render innocuous a vividly terrifying feature in cosmological mythology, a relic of pagan epic that figured prominently in the beliefs and poetics of the poet of *Job*. Or maybe with Israel in exile and the Lord's House in ruins, the creature that once was a sort of numinous pet for the God of storms Who rides upon cherubim has now subsided into a sullen state of expectancy before the vengeful violence of the end times. But there is some ambiguity about Leviathan in the book of Psalms: in Psalm 74:14, God is praised for crushing the multiple heads of the creature elsewhere evoked as his pet. Even allowing for the heterogeneous character of the material of Psalms, the discrepancy is arresting. But then, natural creatures are inconsistent and contradictory; why must dragons be banal?

Indeed, God in a later chapter of *Job* mocks our hero, asking whether Job will play with Leviathan as with a bird, or whether fishermen will make a banquet of him (40:29–30). The answer implicit in the question is No for Job and Yes for the Creator — hence the later Rabbinic tales. Only God is big enough to toy with such a prodigious creature. The Septuagint translates Job 40:19–20, הִוא רֵאשִׁית דַּרְכֵי־אֵל הָעֹשׂוֹ יגֵּשׁ חַרְבּוֹ: כִּי־בוּל הָרִים יִשְׂאוּ־לוֹ וְכָל־חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה יְשַׂחֲקוּ־שָׁם: "He [i. e., Leviathan] is the first of God's ways; his Maker can draw the sword against him. The mountains yield him produce, where all the beasts of the field play" as τοῦτ᾽ ἔστιν ἀρχὴ πλάσματος Κυρίου, πεποιημένον ἐγκαταπαίζεσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν ἀγγέλων αὐτοῦ. ἐπελθὼν δὲ ἐπ᾽ ὄρος ἀκρότομον ἐποίησε χαρμονὴν τετράποσιν ἐν τῷ ταρτάρῳ. The first verse can be rendered "This one is the beginning of the Lord's shaping, made to be played with [*enkatapaizesthai*, also "to be laughed

[31] See: *Ayali-Darshan N.* The storm-god and the sea. P. 198.

[32] On Job's Leviathan in art, see: *Russell J. R.* On the language of heaven and creation, the Book of Job, and William Blake // Judaica Petropolitana. 2023 [forthcoming]; on God playing with Leviathan, see: *Russell J. R.* The lyre of King David and the Greeks // Judaica Petropolitana. 2017. Vol. 8. P. 29, to which add the reference by R. Patai (*Patai R.* The children of Noah. P. 130), to Midrash Jonah (*Jellinek A.* Bet ha-Midrasch. Leipzig: A. M. Colditz, 1853. Vol. 1. P. 98), where it is explained that the Holy One, Blessed be He, comes down from heaven to the sea for the last three hours of the day to play with Leviathan.

at"] by His angels"[33]. However one construe the verb "play" (constructed from *pais*, "child") with its prefixes here, this is the same Leviathan of Psalm 104 which Rabbinic storytelling elaborated, both an amusing pet and a pelagic monstrosity conjured by dire curses and fated to heave up and rear over the fleeing waves at doomsday.

The Greek of LXX, with its stress on play, recalls to one the fragment of the Presocratic philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus, αἰὼν παῖς ἐστι παίζων, πεσσεύων· παιδὸς ἡ βασιληίη. "A lifetime is a boy playing, playing with knuckle-bones; the kingdom is of a child"[34]. Leviathan is a plaything to God, but a menace to Job, whose plight is echoed by the words of blinded Gloucester wandering on the stormy heath, in *King Lear* IV. i.37–38: "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods; They kill us for their sport". Superhuman play is not at all fun for puny man; nor ought one anachronistically to suppose that Heraclitus idealized a sentimental state of childhood state in the manner of such Romantics as the English poet William Wordsworth. Heraclitus seems to be warning that children are but defective, vulnerable adults; and unless men are illuminated by his philosophy they will not mature and whatever they undertake will be childish and random[35].

As for banquets involving Leviathan, whether for sharks or Bedouin, there is a well-known legend: R. Yehuda says in the name of Rav in BT Baba Batra 74b that if the male and female Leviathan had copulated they would have destroyed the world; so God castrated the male and killed and salted the female for the

[33] Discussed by: *Kinnier Wilson J. V.* A return to the problems of Behemoth and Leviathan. P. 8, no. 1.

[34] B 52 DK in: *Heraclitus of Ephesus*. The entire inheritance, in the languages of the original and in Russian translation / ed. S. N. Muraviev. Moscow: Ad Marginem Press, 2012. P. 166, fragment 52. (In Russian); and see discussion by Ch. H. Kahn on fragment 94 (*Kahn Ch. H.* The art and thought of Heraclitus: An edition of the fragments with translation and commentary. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979. P. 227–229). Aeon seems to mean a human lifetime here, rather than a long cosmic era. See: *Kirk G. S.* Heraclitus: The cosmic fragments, edited with an introduction and commentary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954. P. 65–66, on fragment 52; the game the child is playing involves moving pieces: one translator has, anachronistically, "chess".

[35] See: *Most G. W.* Heraclitus Fragment B 52 DK (on *OF* 242) // Tracing Orpheus: Studies of Orphic fragments in honour of Alberto Bernabé / ed. by M. Herrero de Jáuregui. Berlin, De Gruyter, 2011. P. 105–109. The Apostle Paul seems to echo this thought in I Corinthians 13:11, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things". (KJV) The Greek of "child" here is *nēpios* — the same word Athena, disguised as Mentes, uses in the first book of the *Odyssey* when gently admonishing Telemachus that he is not a child anymore and must take charge of his household and the search for his returning father, the hero Odysseus. Wordsworth in his *Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* took a more mystically sentimental view:

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting; / The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star, / Hath had elsewhere its setting / And cometh from afar; / Not in entire forgetfulness, / And not in utter nakedness, / But trailing clouds of glory do we come / From God, who is our home: / Heaven lies about us in our infancy! / Shades of the prison-house begin to close / Upon the growing Boy, / But he beholds the light, and whence it flows, / He sees it in his joy; / The Youth, who daily farther from the east / Must travel, still is Nature's priest, / And by the vision splendid / Is on his way attended; / At length the Man perceives it die away, / And fade into the light of common day".

righteous to feast upon in the World to Come[36]. Armenian mythology anticipates the same problem and deals with it in another way. The Heraclean hero-god Vahagn (Zoroastrian Verethraghna) is a dragon-slayer like his Persian prototype and Vedic cousin Indra; but he has also the special epithet *višapakʻał*, "dragon-reaper", because he does not kill just one monstrous sea serpent. Rather, he periodically dives into lake Van when the spawn of the dragon grow big enough that they will swallow the earth if unchecked. He wrestles them to the surface and casts them into the sun. The combat serves as an aetiological myth also for the sudden storms that vex the vast, deep lake[37].

One has translated עֲתִידִים עֹרֵר לִוְיָתָן, *ha-ʿatidim ʿorer livyatan*, as "Those who are destined to wake Leviathan". The usual translation is, accordingly, something like "those who are ready to wake Leviathan" — as though sorcerers were at the ready to cook up a storm, grimoires and athames in hand, just waiting to be summoned (and, presumably, paid), rather like the operators that late night television advertisements assure one are waiting for one's toll-free call, or like the Weird Sisters of the Bard's Scottish play. In Biblical Hebrew, *ʿatid* generally means "ready"; only in post-Biblical usage, it is commonly accepted, does the word acquire the added nuance of future necessity, and later still, simply of the future (as in the rather plaintive name of the Israeli political party *Yesh ʿAtid*, "There Is a Future"). *ʿAtid* clearly means "ready" in Job 15:24, which imagines *melekh ʿatid la-kidor*, "a king ready for the attack"; but in that same chapter, 15:28, the verb in its *hitpaʿel* form is used with what is clearly its post-Biblical sense of fated future necessity, when Eliphaz of Teman prophecies darkly of the wicked man, *Va-yishkon ʿarim nikhḥadot batim lo-yeshvu lamo asher hitʿatedu le-galim* "He will dwell in cities that have been wiped out, in houses that nobody inhabits, that were destined to be heaps of ruins"[38].

One thus understands the sense of Job's imprecation this way: Days are appointed for good or ill; and since Job's fate has been decreed to be bad, as it seems, why not spare him further tribulation and bring on apocalypse now? There are people — sorcerers, it would seem — who are destined when the fateful day arrives to pronounce spells that will raise the sea monster from the deeps. They seem well equipped to do as he asks. But Job 15:28 also mentions destroyed cities and houses destined to collapse into piles of ruins: let us now consider the subtlety of the image of ruins in Job's initial complaint in chapter three. On the

[36] Cited by: *Patai R.* The children of Noah. P. 129.

[37] See: *Russell J. R.* Carmina Vahagni // Acta Antiqua. 1989. Vol. 32, fasc. 3–4. P. 317–330.

[38] Hebrew *galim*, literally a heap of rocks. (The Hebrew reader, as suggested above, might have seen *gal* in *galmud.*) Wu Hung (*Wu Hung*. A story of ruins: Presence and absence in Chinese art and visual culture. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012. P. 19, 23) notes that the classical Chinese word for ruins, *qiu*, meant originally a mound or hillock — rather like the Scythian kurgans that dot the south Russian steppe. The early ideograph for *qiu* consists of two triangles standing on their bases next to each other: perhaps the remaining walls of a ruined city. Jerusalem is described in Psalm 79:1 as reduced to *ʿiyyim*, "mounds of ruins": *Mizmor le-Asaf Elohim ba'u goyim be-naḥalatekha ṭim'u et-heikhal qadshekha śamu et Yerushalaim le-ʿiyyim* "A Psalm of Asaph. God! The nations have come into Your inheritance and Your holy hall; they have made Jerusalem into heaps of rubble".

stage, if you will, the mound of ruins that had been his children's home loomed before him — suitable for him to gesture at — as he began his embittered monologue, and he was seated on a smaller heap of rubbish and ashes. Ruins were his immediate past and present reality[39].

4. Ruins

One has let oneself be guided in this essay on a powerfully imaginative Biblical poem, not only by the sober writings of staid savants, but also by the instinctive reactions to its themes in the visionary flights of poets. Let us pursue this manner of inquiry a bit longer, citing another famous poem in the hope of elucidating yet another verse in the third chapter of Job. Poe's poem combines the themes of doom and the sea with the added image of great and proud edifices reduced by time and fate to ruins. The English Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822) published these famous verses in 1818 on the works of haughty tyrants that were intended to endure forever, but were destined from the beginning, inexorably, to decay. Shelley was a revolutionary, a sympathizer with the French Revolution who despised the autocratic despots of the time of his brief sojourn on earth, and in this poem one tastes his vengeful spite. It is precisely those monuments that tyrants erect for eternity that become ruins, *sub specie aeternitatis*, even before they are finished. The destructive power of time, of destiny and decay, makes a mockery of the posturing of human potentates.

Ozymandias

I met a traveller from an antique land,
Who said — "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert… Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal, these words appear:

[39] The Greeks sensibly conceived of the past as spread out before them, *emprosthen*; the future, which it is impossible to see, was accordingly behind (*opisthen*). This is the opposite of the perhaps unduly optimistic present-day image of the future as a road stretching out before us some whose perils we are therefore equipped to anticipate. Roland Barthes wrote, "The Greeks entered into Death backward: what they had before them was their past". There is a human tendency to dwell on past glories: Pausanias' description of Greece all but ignores his own times — the second century AD, when Greece was a province of the Roman Empire — and dwells on ruins, on "the imaginary wholeness of a Greece that was". See: *Porter J. I.* Ideals and ruins: Pausanias, Longinus, and the Second Sophistic // Pausanias: Travel and memory in Roman Greece / eds S. E. Alcock, J. F. Cherry, J. Elsner. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. P. 63, 67. For Job, ruins are neither witnesses to a former greatness that acts of vision and imagination can restore, nor the objects of the wistful and sentimental gaze of a traveler. They are simply what the inexorable operations of time and fate will make of all: death and decay.

My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away"[40].

Let us consider in this light Job 3:14, עִם־מְלָכִים וְיֹעֲצֵי אֶרֶץ הַבֹּנִים חֳרָבוֹת לָמוֹ *ʻim melakhim ve-yoʻaṣei areṣ ha-bonim ḥaravot lamo*, which I translate literally, again, "With kings and advisors of the land, / The builders of ruins for them". Jastrow has, "With the kings and counsellors of the earth, / Who build themselves mausoleums", and explains, "[this is a] sarcastic reference to the vanity of kings in building huge mausoleums — literally 'deserted places' — like pyramids". Aside from the fact that Hebrew *ḥaravot* does not precisely mean "deserted places", mausoleums — like the Egyptian pyramids — often long outlast other, less massively constructed buildings, which would rather go against what is, one thinks, the Biblical poet's implied suggestion of doomed impermanence[41]. Another translator has, "With kings and *counselors* of the earth / who rebuild ruined cities for themselves"[42]. The main objection one has to the latter interpretation of the verse is that while Hebrew *bonim* can and often does mean "re-builders", its primary meaning is just "builders".

For the sense of *re*building, the ruined royal capital of Israel, Jerusalem, is as literally as can be the *locus classicus*: many congregations (though not users of the *Siddur* of the Arizal) incorporate a verse of an important penitential prayer, Psalm 51:20, into a plaintive litany chanted before the removal of the Torah scroll from the Ark: *Av ha-raḥamim, heiṭiva vi-reṣonekha et ṣiyon; tivneh ḥomot Yerushalayim. Ki vekha levad bataḥnu, melekh El ram ve-niśaʼ, adon ʻolamim* "Father of mercy, do good by Your will to Zion: (re)build the walls of Jerusalem. For in You alone we trust, O King, God high and exalted, Lord of the ages"[43]. Psalm 69:36–37 declares that God will save Zion and will build (*ve-yivneh*) the cities of Judah, and His people will settle there to live and will inherit the land. This could mean either building new cities or, more likely, rebuilding old ones laid waste. The Messiah, with God's guidance, is to rebuild the ruined walls of the

[40] Although structures made deliberately to look like ruins began to grace European gardens as early as the 16th century, the sentimentalization of the broken, decayed architectural remnants of the past — what the 20th-century Viennese art historian Alois Riegl termed the "modern cult of ruins" — began only in the 18th century. See: *Wu Hung*. A story of ruins. P. 13–14. The cult reached its dilapidated zenith with the Romantics and Tintern Abbey, though Shelley's is here clearly a voice outside the chorus.

[41] *Jastrow M., Jr*. The Book of Job. P. 208, with n. 56.

[42] *Gordis R.* The Book of Job. P. 28.

[43] The Koren Siddur / intro., transl., and comm. J. Sacks. Jerusalem, Israel: Koren Publ., 2009. P. 499. Examples could be multiplied; cf. also the two concluding verses of Psalm 69, 36–37: *Ki Elohim yoshiʻa ṣiyon, ve-yivneh ʻarei Yehuda, ve-yashvu sham vi-yreshuha. Ve-zeraʻ ʻavadav yinḥaluha, ve-ohavei shemo yishkenu vah* "For God will save Zion, and will (re)build the cities of Judah, and they will settle there and inherit it. And the seed of His servants shall inherit it, and those who love His Name shall dwell in it".

City of the Great King, Jerusalem. The walls here are significant: a walled city has a completely different status from a settlement without walls around it; and in a sense its walls define a city, as *pars pro toto*. As is well known, Psalm 48:13–14, סֹבּוּ צִיּוֹן וְהַקִּיפוּהָ סִפְרוּ מִגְדָּלֶיהָ׃ שִׁיתוּ לִבְּכֶם ל חֵילָהּ פַּסְּגוּ אַרְמְנוֹתֶיהָ לְמַעַן תְּסַפְּרוּ לְדוֹר אַחֲרוֹן׃ *Sobu Ṣiyon ve-haqifuha sifru migdaleha. Shitu libkhem le-ḥeila pisgu armenoteha le-ma'an tesapru le-dor aḥaron* "Walk around Zion, circle it; count its towers; take note of its might; go through its palaces, that you may recount to the generation after", is a parallel paraphrase of the beginning and end of the epic of Gilgamesh, where the reader is bidden to circumambulate the walls of Uruk and to marvel at the splendors of the city. These are poignant lines: Gilgamesh and his comrade Enkidu are mortal — Enkidu's death so devastated Gilgamesh that he traveled to the ends of the earth on a fruitless quest for immortality — and the city alone, with its archive containing the written memory of their quest, endures[44].

The utter ruin of cities never to be rebuilt, their consignment to oblivion, is a mark of Divine vengeance in Psalm 9:6–7:

גָּעַרְתָּ גּוֹיִם אִבַּדְתָּ רָשָׁע שְׁמָם מָחִיתָ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד׃הָאוֹיֵב תַּמּוּ חֳרָבוֹת לָנֶצַח וְעָרִים נָתַשְׁתָּ אָבַד זִכְרָם הֵמָּה׃

Ga'arta goyim ibadta rasha' shemam maḥita le-'olam va-'ed. Ha-oyev tamu ḥaravot la-neṣaḥ ve-'arim natashta avad zikhram hema "You rebuked [*ga'arta* — that special term for exorcism and the booming, dooming Divine roar that we have discussed above] the nations, You caused the evil man to perish; You wiped out their name forever. The enemy — his ruins are gone forever; and You forsook cities, their memory is lost"[45]. Both the content and wording of Job 12:14 (הֵן יַהֲרוֹס וְלֹא יִבָּנֶה יִסְגֹּר עַל־אִישׁ וְלֹא יִפָּתֵחַ׃) comment upon or echo (or both) Psalm 28:5 (כִּי לֹא יָבִינוּ אֶל־פְּעֻלֹּת יְהוָה וְאֶל־מַעֲשֵׂה יָדָיו יֶהֶרְסֵם וְלֹא יִבְנֵם׃): *Hen yaharos ve-lo yibaneh yisgor 'al ish ve-lo yipateaḥ* "Lo, He will destroy and it will not be (re)built; He will close a man in and it will not be opened" (Job) and *ki lo yavinu el-pe'ulot Hashem ve-el ma'aśeh yadav yehersem ve-lo yivnem* "for they do not apply their understanding to the deeds of the Lord and to the work of His hands: He destroys them and does not (re)build them" (Psalms). In both these cases, the word "build" is clearly meant in the sense of "rebuild".

In all these cases, though, nobody builds city walls calling them ruins, intending them to become ruins, or even foreseeing the inevitability of their becoming ruins by fate (unless the architect is either designing Chinoiserie for a very rich man's garden or is having a Job-like bad day). The passage in Job 3,

[44] See: *Kovacs M. G.* The Epic of Gilgamesh. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989. P. 3, 107–108.

[45] Rashi comments that though the enemy comes to an end, his fallen cities endure — and gives the examples of Constantinople, Antioch, Rome, and Alexandria. But the cities of the wicked, such as Rome (the "Eternal City"), are destined to be destroyed on Judgment Day. See: *Gruber M. I.* Rashi's commentary on Psalms. Philadelphia, PA, The Jewish Publication Society, 2007/5768. P. 140–141. M. Dahood (*Dahood M.* Psalms I: 1–50. Anchor Bible. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1986) translates *'arim* "cities", in Psalm 9 as protective pagan divinities, arguing a derivation based upon Ugaritic *ġyr* "protect"; A. A. Anderson (*Anderson A. A.* The Book of Psalms. Vol. 1: Psalms 1–72. Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1989. P. 109) rejects this emendation, favoring the simple, literal reading.

if we read the literal "build" and not a metaphorical "rebuild", adds a fatalistic *frisson*, one thinks: the walls that the builders erect are fated to be ruins, even before they arise. Human labor is thus a Sisyphean task, and is for nought; man's hopes, mere vanity. It is as though not only Gilgamesh is gone, but so also are the cuneiform tablets into which the scribe incised his epic, depositing it in a strong box in Uruk, whose walls, Job would assert, were erected only to crumble away. There is a hint of this in a *midrash* about the servitude of the Israelites in Egypt: no sooner did the Hebrew workmen complete the structures of Pharaoh's store cities, Pithom and Rameses, than they collapsed or were swallowed up by the earth[46]. That is, the builders saw, over and over, that their work was in vain from the beginning — that they were building piles of ruins!

Despite examples of ancient cities that were repeatedly rebuilt on their original foundations, like the Second Temple in Jerusalem, or the many strata of Troy in Anatolia, it was as often the practice in the Near East to let ruined cities lie, rather than rebuilding them. The Sasanian Persians erected one of their capitals at Stakhr, near the ruins of Persepolis (whose very name, *Pārsa*, they had apparently forgotten, calling it in their inscriptions *Sad Stūn*, "(the place of a) Hundred Columns"), but never rebuilt the Achaemenid city itself. (Nor did they rebuild nearby Pasargadae with its tomb of Cyrus the Great, whose name was also forgotten to native Iranian chronicles.) In a section of the *Khamsa* of Nizami (12th cent.), the Sasanian king Khusrō I Anūshīrvān (sixth century AD, traditionally styled in later, classical Islamic Persian tradition *ʿādel* "the Just") sees a village "ruined like the heart of an enemy" (*chūn del-e doshman kharāb*). Two birds (*morgh*; later in the text they are specified as owls, *jughd*) are talking there: one has given his daughter to the other in marriage and wants this ruined village (*deh-e vīrān*) and a few others like it as a dowry. The bird replies that it should not be a problem, since with this king there will be a hundred thousand ruined villages to give away. The king repents of his tyrannical ways[47].

One's argument, again, is that Job in the third chapter of the Biblical book expresses a belief in an inevitable and deleterious fate, whose operation he would speed in order that he meet death soon and be spared further suffering. This fate guarantees that the builder of a wall is in fact making as ruin. There may be a parallel to Job's thinking in a strain of pre-Islamic Iranian thought. The personification of Time as destructive old age is found in the Zoroastrian scripture, the Avesta; in a

[46] See: *Ginzberg L.* The legends of the Jews: in 7 vols. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 5730/1969. Vol. 2. P. 249, citing BT Soṭah 11a. See: Ibid. Vol. 5. P. 392, no. 7. Dalia Yellin of Naḥlaʾot, Jerusalem, Israel, called my attention to this learned tradition, in a pleasant conversation about Job.

[47] For text, *Nezāmī*. Kolliyāt-e Khamse-ye Ḥakīm Nezāmī Ganjeʾī, Tehrān: Amīr Kabīr, 1351. P. 56–58; translation: *Nezāmi of Ganjeh*. Makhzan ol-Asrār: The treasury of mysteries / transl. Gholām Hosein Dārāb. London: Arthur Probsthain, 1945. P. 157–160. I am indebted to Prof. Wheeler Thackston for his helpful comments on Nizami and Persian owls. The Persians were not alone in their association of owls with ruins: in Psalm 102:7 the speaker, overcome by his affliction, declares *hayiti ke-khos ḥaravot*, "I have become like the owl of ruins".

later period this figure, *Zurvān*[48], seems to have become the central figure or concept in a fatalistic philosophical strain of Zoroastrianism. Scholars have disputed with bitterness and passion whether the Zurvanite school was ever a full-fledged cult. But it is indisputable that a powerfully fatalistic strain persisted in the *carpe diem* verses of Persian and Arab poets after the Islamic conquest. In the Zoroastrian book of scriptural commentary on cosmology, *Bundahišn* ("Creation"), we read, *čiyōn gōwēd pad dēn ku zamān ōzomandtar az har dōān damān dām ī Ohrmazd ān-iz ī gannāg mēnōg zamān handāzag ō kār ud dādestān zamān pursišnīgtar zamān az ayābagān ayābagtar zamān az pursišnīgān pursišnīgtar ku wizar pad zamān šāyēd kardan zamān ī mān abganīhēd brīn pad zamān pēstag frāz šikanīhēd kas az ōy nē bōxtēd az hangām gyān mardōmān nē ō ul vazēd nē ka ō nigūnīh čāh kanēd nišīnēd nē ka azēr ī xān ī ābān sard wardēd*[49] "As it is said in the Religion[50]: Time is more powerful than all of the two [kinds of] creations: the creation of Ahura Mazda and that of Ahriman. Time is better at reckoning both deed and judgment; time is better informed. Time is more acquisitive than the acquisitive. Time is better informed that the [well-]informed: one must make choices by means of time. Through time is a house ruined: division is by means of time, and variegated ornament is dissolved, scattered. Nobody is saved from it, the soul of man from [its] season, neither if one flee swiftly upwards nor if one dig a deep well and sit there, nor when one turn [to hide] beneath a spring of cold waters"[51].

The Iranist and Semitist Henrik Samuel Nyberg perceived in these lines a hymn to Zurvān, and divided them metrically in an article that also notes their close kinship to the Avestan funerary litany *Aogəmadaēčā*, whose text is provided with translation. He compares the verses of the latter to Psalm 139:7–10,

[48] Iranian thought considers two forms of eternity: the destructive kind of forever in which one just gets older and more decrepit, like Tithonus; and the happy state of being forever young.

[49] The Būndahishn: Being a facsimile of the TD manuscript no. 2 brought from Persia by Dastur Tīrandāz and now preserved in the late Ervad Tehmuras' Library / ed. by Ervad Tahmuras Dinshaji Anklesaria, intr. by B. T. Anklesaria. Bombay (Mumbai): British India Press, Byculla, 1908. P. 10, line 8 to P. 11, line 1; transliterated in: *Anklesaria Behramgore Tahmuras*. Zand-Ākāsīh: Iranian or Greater Bundahišn. Bombay (Mumbai): Rahnumae Mazdayasnan Sabha, 1956. P. 13–14, fol. 7a 9–7b 1 (para. 43). Variant readings of the rebarbative manuscript in Zoroastrian Book Pahlavi have led to differences in translation. R. C. Zaehner in a massive and disputed monograph sought to establish Zurvanism as the central cult belief of Sasanian Zoroastrianism; for his translation of the passage see: *Zaehner R. C.* Zurvan: A Zoroastrian dilemma. New York: Biblo & Tannen, 1972. P. 315–316 and discussion on P. 297–298. For the most recent rendering, see: The Bundahišn: The Zoroastrian Book of Creation, a new translation / transl. by D. Agostini, S. Thrope. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. P. 9 [1:41].

[50] This expression in the sacerdotal Middle Persian called Zoroastrian Book Pahlavi generally introduces a direct citation, in translation, of a passage in the Avesta itself. Verses of the Avestan-language litany *Aogəmadaēčā*, to be mentioned presently, are closely parallel to the Middle Persian here and presumably derive from the same (now lost) scriptural source.

[51] Certain springs, like the celebrated fountain of youth of fable, were believed to confer health and strength. In an Armenian folk epic, there is a spring whose waters emboldened men to become heroes (*Russell J. R.* An Armenian epic: The heroes of Kasht (Kašti kʻaǰer). Ann Arbor, MI: Caravan Books, 2000. P. 9 f.). The verses to Zurvan perhaps allude to such beliefs in order to dismiss their folly.

citing the Hebrew text. Nyberg also cites the imagery of Psalm 104:1–2, again in Hebrew, in comparison to the descriptions in Zoroastrian texts of the vestments of the chief God, the "Lord Wisdom" Ahura Mazda[52]. R. C. Zaehner, an Oxford Iranist and historian of religions[53], rather peremptorily[54] rejected Nyberg's suggestion that the pericope in Middle Persian was a hymn, on the grounds that the corresponding part of the *Aogəmadaēčā* is not in verse. Zaehner's logic is questionable: one can rephrase and recapitulate an inspiring prose passage as verse. It can go the other way around, too. Frank Moore Cross observed that rendering a poetic passage into prose while still having lines that scan like poetry is not an isolated occurrence in ancient Israel[55]. The same can be said of Iranian literature, surely, considering the strongly prosimetric character of much Persian literature. With its two absurdly terse initial chapters in prose and the rest in verse, Job is in a sense prosimetric as well. Even if there was no Zurvanite cult *per se* and these lines were not a *"Hymnus auf Zervān"*, the lines in the Zoroastrian book of Creation could still be poetry. As such, they would stand at the beginning of a very long and rich corpus: one need only think of the many

[52] *Nyberg H. S.* Ein Hymnus auf Zervān in Bundahišn // Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft. 1928. Bd. 82. S. 220, 229. For an edition, translation, and study of the relevant parts of the *Aogəmadaēčā*, see: *Kaikhusroo M. JamaspAsa.* Aogəmadaēčā: A Zoroastrian Liturgy. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1982 (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, Sitzungsberichte 397). P. 70 (Avestan, paras. 57–60), who suggests that the text was an *Āfrīn* ("blessing") recited for the soul of the departed just before the dawn of the fourth day after physical death. This is the day on which the soul, having pondered her thoughts, words, and deeds in the life just completed, ascends on the rays of the rising sun to judgment.

[53] The year of Professor Zaehner's death, 1974, this writer was just starting his postgraduate study of Armenian and other subjects at Oxford. My classmate and friend Alan Williams, who was reading Persian and Arabic — we were later to do our PhD's in Zoroastrianism together at SOAS in London under the tutelage of Prof. Mary Boyce — took me to attend a lecture — in fact, more of a performance — on Sufism by the late Prof. Annemarie Schimmel, who was visiting from Harvard. Zaehner chain smoked throughout and, glaring balefully at a Parsi Zoroastrian classmate of ours, growled at the end that there would be no questions since "the lunatic fringe" tended to flock to such events. Zaehner taught a term-length tutorial that covered a list of ideas about God and would conclude the course with his own summation: "But I, my dear — I think God is a thug". His book *Our Savage God*, published that same fateful year, fleshes out this interesting theory, which one imagines Job might have considered himself.

[54] Nyberg unabashedly related Zoroastrian to Hebrew literature in an environment where the Iranian prophet had become Nietzsche's superman Zarathustra. This fictional construct was celebrated by the crypto-Nazi *Mazdayasnan Botschaft* of Otto Haenisch and later by the German state as the pre-eminent spiritual hero of the "Aryan race". Nyberg's comparison of Zarathustra to Siberian shamans was angrily ridiculed by German Iranists inside and outside Nazi Germany who were unwilling to see their idol discussed in the context of "primitive" religious practices. When this writer was a postgraduate student studying Pahlavi from the assigned textbook by Nyberg, the instructor — the abovementioned Mary Boyce, of blessed memory — sometimes dismissed this or that reading of Nyberg's with the fastidiously disdainful comment that Nyberg was mainly a Semitist. More than half of written Pahlavi consists of heterographs… in Aramaic!

[55] *Cross F. M.* The epic traditions of Early Israel: Epic narrative and the reconstruction of Early Israelite institutions // The poet and the historian: Essays in literary and historical biblical criticism / ed. by R. E. Friedman. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983. P. 23.

Classical Persian and Arabic *carpe diem* poems and songs about *dahr* and *zamān* — time — and *baxt* — fate.

Whether or not the lines about Time from the Pahlavi book of Creation are in verse, they present an eloquent parallel to Job's fatalistic, original, and startling image of the viziers resting in death who in life had built — not *re*-built — ruins for their liege lords. They had done so, not because they wished their edifices to be transient emblems of decay, but because such is the nature of sovereign time and the grim, destined lot of mortal man[56]. The rising of Leviathan from the depths is likewise destined and inevitable. The theme of deleterious fate is thus seen to reverberate through Job's opening speech, in this drama, the grimmest and most perplexing, but also wittiest, of the books of the Hebrew Bible.

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[56] And all that was even before God demonstrated to Job how utterly unimportant and uninformed he was. Towards the beginning of this essay one cited a phrase belonging to a great modern English poet. Here at the end, it is both opposite and apposite to quote him again. In his "Letter to Lord Byron", W. H. Auden, without even the abstract consolation of an overwhelming theophany, might react in the disenchanted terms of this latter age: "It is a commonplace that's hardly worth / A poet's while to make profound or terse, / That now the sun does not go round the earth, / That man's no centre of the universe; / And working in an office makes it worse".

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Заметки о третьей главе Книги Иова

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Книга Иова представляет собой драму, в которой задается вечный вопрос: если Бог справедлив, почему невинные страдают? Текст книги начинается двумя главами в прозе, в которых Бог обращает внимание Сатаны на праведника Иова и дьявол держит пари, что если Иов сильно пострадает, то потеряет веру. Господь позволяет Сатане причинить Иову беду, но не убить его. Читатель знает об этом, а сам герой остается в неведении. Последующие главы, начиная с третьей, написаны стихами: представляются речи действующих лиц в форме «Ответил X и сказал», как будто перед нами лежит рукопись классической афинской трагедии. В третьей главе выступает Иов со своей жалобой, на которую реагируют три его друга, своим высокомерным отсутствием сочувствия напоминающие, в свою очередь, хор в греческом театре. Лексика текста пестрит заимствованиями с арамейского и арабского языков и словами, встречающимися только здесь. Редакторы вносили по-

правки, но дословное чтение жалобы Иова без изменений древнееврейского текста дает интересные результаты. Оказывается, что автор, вероятно, верил в силу сверхъестественных существ, олицетворяющих отдельные дни и времена года и определяющих судьбу человека, к лучшему или к худшему, в этих временных промежутках. Соответственно, полагалось, что Левиафан, спящий великан морей, должен проснуться и взойти на поверхность океана в предрешенный день Апокалипсиса, и тому способствуют мрачные заклятия астрологов и языческих жрецов. Согласно этому же представлению о судьбе, автор книги, если мы читаем его правильно, также заявляет, что еще не воздвигшиеся здания обречены стать руинами. В книге имеются сатирические черты, особенно в отношении к Псалтири. При изложении аргументов привлечены цитаты из литературы Эллады и зороастрийского Ирана: Гераклита Эфесского и среднеперсидской книги Бытия (Бундахишн).

Ключевые слова: Иов, судьба, Псалтирь, театр, сатира, Левиафан, руины, Гераклит Эфесский, Бундахишн.

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