

“YOU DIVIDED SEA BY YOUR MIGHT”:
THE “CONFLICT MYTH” AND THE BIBLICAL TRADITION

BY

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES AT BROWN UNIVERSITY

PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

MAY 2012

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This dissertation by Debra Scoggins Ballentine is accepted in its present form
by the Department of Religious Studies as satisfying the
dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank my advisor Saul Olyan for providing a model of scholarship that I will ever strive to emulate, for reading several drafts of each chapter, and for investing in my academic training over the past seven years. I would like to thank my readers Matthew Rutz, Ross Kraemer, and Stan Stowers, as well as Michael Satlow, for their time, valuable suggestions, and guidance through the writing process and graduate program. I wish to thank Alice Slotsky, with whom I studied Akkadian, for her ongoing encouragement and friendship. I must also thank the professors who inspired me to pursue graduate studies in this field: Ted Lewis, David Williams, and Thomas Slater.

I am grateful for my colleagues from Brown University, especially Jordan Rosenblum, Dan Ullucci, Steve Larson, Kevin McGinnis, Jennifer Singletary, Alissa MacMillan, Paul Robertson, and Heidi Wendt. Finally, I wish to thank my family—Brian, Cooper, and Emery Ballentine; Dan, Doris, Jane, and Annie Mae Scoggins; Dana and Paul Sibley; and Rosemary and Lilith Johnson.

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CHAPTER 1: THEORIZING MYTH IN ANCIENT WEST ASIAN STUDIES

Myths elaborate sets of relationships among characters. The significance and connotations of these relationships change as mythic stories are repeatedly retold and reshaped when various individuals, groups, and generations create new meaning with those stories. These sets of relationships may be described as fluid taxonomies that are available for innovative interpretation. A myth offers a taxonomy of characters in narrative form. A taxonomic classification system is inherently hierarchical in that it organizes items in relation to one another according to characteristics that are considered to be markers of difference. Likewise, any set of relationships of characters in a myth is hierarchical because the narrative organizes characters in relation to one another according to characteristics that the myth presents as signifying some status, such as a dominant or subservient position, or a behavior understood as errant or appropriate. A taxonomy, whether scientific or narrative, presents its hierarchical classification as if it is a “natural” organization, that is, it presents a culturally constructed system of relationships as if it is a given universal and organic system of relationships. In a mythic narrative, the taxonomy of relationships serves as a template for people to create and express meaning, that is, to express something about their world. This *something* may be placed along a spectrum of explanatory value and ideological value. For example, a myth relating events involving a fertility deity and a chthonic deity might explain something

about how crops work in various seasons.¹ By ideological value, I mean that the myth performs social and/or political work in support of or in opposition to a (dominant or non-dominant, real or imagined) power structure. Any telling of any myth may be more or less ideological. Every myth can be described as explaining “how things are” or “how things came to be,” but the more ideological a particular telling of a myth is, the more this explanation serves the interests of some group, individual, or institution.²

¹ The following myths feature some type of fertility deity and chthonic deity whose interactions have been interpreted as explaining seasonal vegetation patterns: Egyptian traditions about Isis and Osiris; Mesopotamian stories about Dumuzi/Tammuz; the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle*; and Greek stories about Demeter, Persephone, and Hades. In each of these traditions a deity associated with vegetation or fertility dies or descends to a netherworld, and as a consequence crops suffer but then recover upon the return of the deity from the netherworld to life. An interesting myth for comparison is the Hittite myth of Telepinu, a vegetation deity who disappears, causing crops to suffer until he returns. The Hittite myth offers a similar explanation for seasonal phenomena, that is, the absence of an essential deity, but the specific reasons for the absence differ.

² My understanding of “ideology” is informed by Terry Eagleton’s discussion of the range of meanings that “ideology” connotes, and I am sensitive to the problems he raises regarding most scholarly, and certainly popular, uses of the term (Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* [New York: Verso, 1991]). As Raymond Williams illustrates, most definitions have a negative valence, which may be traced back to Napoleon’s use of *idéologie*, as well as Marx and Engels’ influential use of the term (Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1985], 153-157). Émile Durkheim criticized the resulting notion that *others* have ideology but *we* do not, and shifted the discussion of ideology to focus on power and domination (Émile Durkheim, *Les règles de la méthode sociologique* [Paris: University of France Press, 1907], 61). John B. Thompson’s definition is useful: ideology is “the ways in which meaning (or signification) serves to sustain relations of domination” (John B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984]). However, I must add that ideology may sustain or challenge hegemonic powers, and these may be dominant or non-dominant, real or imagined power structures. Finally, I agree with Eagleton that “the term is forceful and informative only if it helps us to distinguish between those interests and power conflicts which at any given time are fairly central to a whole social order, and those which are not” (Eagleton, *Ideology*, 10). In the traditions that I discuss, the ideologies promoted via the conflict topos are certainly central. They are concerned with asserting which deity is the most powerful and who (what person and/or what group) is endorsed by that most powerful deity.

In this project I analyze ancient West Asian myths that describe combat between a warrior deity and an enemy, most often the sea or a sea dragon, in which the warrior deity is victorious. These myths are extant in whole narratives from the literature of Babylonia, Assyria, and Ugarit. We also have epitomes and references to such a conflict in the corpora of Mari, Israel, Judah, and Elephantine. Scholars often refer to this ancient West Asian narrative topos as the “combat myth.” I argue that the theme of combat was meaningful for particular authors in particular contexts, and that it was useful for ideological purposes, for saying things about, responding to, portraying, and shaping socio-political realities. The conflict topos was employed for ideological purposes in various historical situations, and I show this through analysis of both whole narrative articulations of the conflict topos and examples of the conflict motif used outside of a narrative context. I argue that combat myths generate a narrative hierarchical relationship among their characters, and that the taxonomy of those mythical characters was consciously projected onto historical persons and polities for ideological purposes. Those aligned with the victorious deity are validated and endorsed by association with that deity. Those aligned with the sea or sea monsters are, the authors hope, destined for defeat, invalidated, and delegitimized.

In this chapter, I discuss two methodological issues that should be central to scholarship on the conflict topos: myth theory and the comparison of ancient West Asian traditions. Study of the conflict topos necessitates engagement with theories of myth and with debates about myth and the Hebrew Bible. I have not found any work that does this

explicitly.³ In the first section, I elaborate upon recent theorization of myth as ideology production, and develop the notion of myth as narrative taxonomy, which I illustrate in subsequent chapters with specific examples of the conflict topos. I also discuss how the study of myth in relation to biblical literature was obfuscated in past generations of scholarship, and the consequences thereof.⁴ In the second section, I discuss the comparative aspect of scholarship on the conflict topos, with particular attention to how the relationship between biblical and Canaanite traditions is often construed. I argue that Israelite and Judean traditions should be included among Canaanite traditions. This disputes the portrayal of Israelite or Judean traditions as being opposed to, completely other than, or superior to Canaanite traditions. Though every study of the conflict topos in the Hebrew Bible addresses a relationship between Israelite/Judean and Canaanite traditions, that relationship has typically been described in a manner that privileges biblical traditions over Canaanite traditions. I prefer to align myself with scholars who consider such an approach to be detrimental to our reconstructions of West Semitic history, literature, societies, and cult.

³ Nick Wyatt, in his concluding chapter of *Myths of Power*, traces how biblical scholars have debated the status of the categories *myth* and *history* in the Hebrew Bible, but he does not otherwise engage myth theory, and throughout he implicitly embraces the theory of the “mythopoeic mind,” which I critique below (Nick Wyatt, *Myths of Power: A Study of Royal Myth and Ideology in Ugaritic and Biblical Tradition* [Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1996], 373-424).

⁴ See Robert A. Oden’s discussion in idem., “Interpreting Biblical Myths,” in *The Bible without Theology: The Theological Tradition and Alternatives to it* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 40-91.

Myth Theory

In this section, I discuss definitions and theories of myth with particular attention to recent developments in myth theory as well as the history of myth theory as it has been used in biblical scholarship. I also explain my use of the terms “whole narratives” and “motif” and address terminology used by other scholars, such as mytheme, echo, alloform, maximyth, and minimyth.

Most discussions of myth, whether of a particular myth or myth as a genre, begin with a definition of the word *myth*. When authors define myth they implicitly or explicitly articulate a theory of myth or rely on inherited myth theories. The definitions are usually drawn from ideas formulated over the past few hundred years of scholarly discussion of myth, some of which have been useful. Such definitions usually focus on the content of stories that are generally regarded as myths, such as the early and influential definition articulated by the Grimm brothers who said, “den Kern aller Mythologie bilden die Gottheiten,” that is, “divinities form the core of all mythology,” in other words, myths are stories about gods.⁵ Content-based definitions describe features of a variety of particular stories and types of stories that at some point have been labeled “myth.” Hans H. Penner offers an updated and widely accepted definition of myth: “A myth is a story with a beginning, middle, and end that was or is transmitted orally about the deeds of superhuman agents.”⁶ Such a content-based definition is useful for

⁵ Jacob Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie* (Göttingen: Dieterichsche Buchhandlung, 1843), xvi; idem., *Teutonic Mythology* (trans. James Steven Stallybrass; 3 vols.; London: George Bell & Sons, 1982-83), 3: xvii.

⁶ He continues, “Explanation: no story, no superhuman being(s), no myth. The salience of ‘oral transmission’ places certain genres, such as novels and science fiction, out of bounds as myths.” His definition of myth coincides with his accompanying definitions of

delimiting the category of myth within the larger categories “narrative” or “story,” as long as we agree that the boundaries of the category should be flexible and that the limits of the category should not get in the way of comparative analysis. For the purposes of my study, every text that I analyze involves superhuman agents. However, they are not all stories; I discuss poems, proverbs, prophecy, letters, epitomes, inscriptions, and monumental iconography as well. My analysis, therefore, is more broad in scope than what Penner’s definition describes, that is, I am interested in the conflict topos, not only the particular whole narrative articulations of the conflict topos that have survived.

Rather than focusing on content, some treatments of myth focus on their function, that is, *what myths do*, or as I prefer, *what people do with myths*. The general consensus in recent theorization is that myths validate things (things such as social and political institutions), or rather, people attempt to legitimize, validate, and render things normative through myth. I am interested in how people use myths, as well as mythic motifs, themes, and imagery outside of a narrative context, in service of particular ideologies. Story-tellers and authors, as myth-makers, may adapt traditional and/or familiar narratives or motifs to suit their particular interests and to fit their specific historical, social, political, and/or cultic context. My project examines how the conflict topos was used to legitimize, validate, and render normative particular ideologies or socio-political arrangements.

Beyond discussion of what myth *is* or *does*, we must also reflect upon what scholars do with the category of myth. Unfortunately, many of us simply define myth

ritual and religion. He defines ritual as the ways that a community communicates with superhuman agents, and religion as a set of propositional attitudes towards superhuman agents (Hans H. Penner, “You Don’t Read a Myth for Information,” in *Radical Interpretation in Religion* [ed. Nancy K. Frankenberry; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002], 153-170, 169).

based on narrative characteristics shared among some set of stories that we have already categorized as myth. This circular logic only produces a definition that describes the contents of a preconceived category, increasing the risk that the limits of the category might hinder comparative analysis. This approach was especially problematic when the Grimm brothers' definition of myth was used by biblical scholars who concluded that there could be no myths in the Bible since they thought that there were certainly no "gods," but only one "God," in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament. Because of the limits of the definition of myth in currency, biblical scholars eschewed the topic of myth.

Even Hermann Gunkel, who worked extensively with ancient West Asian myth and mythic imagery in the Hebrew Bible, upheld the Grimm brothers' definition and denied that there was any myth in the Hebrew Bible.⁷ This problematic view persisted through most of the 20th century. Despite the fact that scholars outside of biblical studies had moved beyond a definition of myth that limited the category to "polytheistic" contexts, many biblical scholars propagated a *sine qua non* definition of myth: without gods there is no myth. As a result, the Hebrew Bible was categorically excluded.⁸ As Robert Oden points out, the consequences of this exclusion were two-fold:

⁷ Hermann Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1895), 170. This work was recently translated into English: *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton* (trans. K. William Whitney Jr.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

⁸ Oden, "Interpreting Biblical Myths," 47-48, 176 n.5, 6. Oden cites as examples: Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 35-37; Artur Weiser, *The Old Testament: Its Formation and Development* (New York: Association, 1961), 57-59; Georg Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), 87; George E. Wright, *God Who Acts* (Chicago: Regnery, 1952), 38-48; Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (2 vols.; New York: Harper & Row, 1962-65), 87.

[F]or many decades the clear majority of biblical scholars displayed a noteworthy hesitance either to admit the presence of complete myths within the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament or to investigate fully the resources of other disciplines that might aid them in their attempts to interpret biblical myths.⁹

This “hesitance” resulted in a lapse of engagement with current myth theory in biblical studies from which we are still recovering. In the 1960s-1970s, however, some biblical scholars criticized the obfuscation of myth in studies of the Hebrew Bible, most significantly, Brevard S. Childs and Frank M. Cross. Childs, in *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament*, argued against the use of the Grimm brothers’ definition of myth, which he said led scholars to overlook the “problem of myth in the Old Testament.”¹⁰ Cross produced important work on Ugaritic materials and dealt extensively with the centrality of mythic motifs throughout the biblical anthology. Cross and Childs, unlike others, did not avoid the topic of myth or deny the presence of mythical elements in the Hebrew Bible. However, though Childs and Cross were progressive for their time, we see in their discussions of myth that they still found the category to be problematic when applied to biblical materials. They each cast myth in opposition to history, and both proposed a “tension” in the Hebrew Bible regarding myth. Childs described a tension between myth and the “anti-mythical” attitude of the Hebrew Bible.¹¹ Likewise, Cross maintained that there is a strong tension between myth and history in the Hebrew Bible.¹² The lasting and

⁹ Oden, “Interpreting Biblical Myths,” 40.

¹⁰ Brevard S. Childs, *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament* (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1960), 15.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹² Frank M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), viii. Hereafter, this title will be abbreviated *CMHE*.

troubling effect of their characterization of a “tension” between myth and history *within* the biblical text itself is that any mythic elements or imagery in the biblical text is labeled as foreign, “Canaanite,” or “Canaanizing,” a scholarly tendency that I critique below. In addition to potentially misrepresenting biblical traditions by asserting a “tension” towards myth from within biblical texts, which in retrospect was actually a tension regarding myth within biblical scholarship, biblical scholars did not interact with myth theory as it developed within other fields. We should not assert or assume a “tension” between “mythical” and “biblical,” or “myth” and “history.” Rather, any “mythical” or “mythic” elements that are in the Hebrew Bible should be treated as “genuinely” biblical, that is, as representing concepts, notions, or imagery from which we can learn something about Israelite and Judean traditions. Furthermore, biblical myths should be examined and elucidated using the same myth theory that scholars outside of biblical studies use, and biblical scholars should engage in theorizing myth as well.

In the present study, I build upon the recent theoretical work of Bruce Lincoln, Russell T. McCutcheon, and Jonathan Z. Smith, who all emphasize the ideological functions and uses of myth. I develop Lincoln’s notion of myth as taxonomy and ideology in narrative form, which I find very useful for illuminating the conflict topos in ancient West Asian, including biblical, traditions. Lincoln, McCutcheon, and J. Z. Smith have described myth as ideological, hierarchical, political, and even propagandistic.¹³

¹³ Bruce Lincoln may have the strongest articulation of the propagandistic use of myth, to the point that some myth-makers are portrayed as having very ill intentions. This is a result of his focus on the misuse of myth as a category in the early modern study of myth. However, it should not detract from his development of myth as “ideology in narrative form.”

Lincoln, in *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship*, describes myth as “ideology in narrative form.” Building on the structuralist concept of myth as “taxonomy in narrative form,” Lincoln quotes Durkheim in order to highlight the inherently hierarchical nature of all taxonomies:

A classification is also a system whose parts are arranged in a hierarchical order. Some are dominant features, and others are subordinated to those ... The purpose of a classification is to establish relations of subordination and coordination.¹⁴

Here, J. Z. Smith’s use of taxonomy as a rubric for classification is useful. J. Z. Smith frequently cites botanical and biological classification systems, or taxonomies, to critique and improve upon how we classify, define, and order our evidence.¹⁵ Taxonomies present hierarchical classifications as if they were natural. They do this by organizing items according to select features that indicate, according to the logic of the specific taxonomy, difference. As J. Z. Smith explains:

When properly constructed, its [a taxonomy’s] central feature is hierarchy. Taxa at the same level differ from and exclude one another. Taxa at a higher level include the lower taxa as being similar ... Biological taxonomies enumerate a graded series of hierarchical categories ... which are related and distinguished on the basis of morphological and/or genetic features.¹⁶

¹⁴ Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 147; Lincoln quotes from Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (trans. Karen Fields; New York: Free Press, 1995), 149.

¹⁵ Jonathan Z. Smith, “What a Difference a Difference Makes,” in *To See Ourselves as Others See Us”: Christians, Jews, “Others” in Late Antiquity* (ed. Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 3-48.

¹⁶ J. Z. Smith, “Fences and Neighbors: Some Contours of Early Judaism,” *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jamestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 1-18, 2.

Mythic taxonomies also present hierarchical classification as if it were natural. The narrative organizes characters in relation to one another according to characteristics that are privileged in the myth as markers of difference and significance. The differences and relationships among the characters, such as occupying dominant or subservient positions or displaying behavior understood as errant or appropriate, however, are presented as if they are “natural” and given. That is, the culturally constructed system of relationships is displayed as if it is a universal and organic system of relationships. As J. Z. Smith indicates with the notion *map is not territory*, the texts we have are not historical realia, nor an exact replica of historical realia, but rather depictions or maps that describe territory from a particular elite point of view.¹⁷ The map, however, presents itself as if it is an accurate picture of the actual territory. Lincoln describes this characteristic of texts when he suggests that myths represent culture as if it were nature.¹⁸

One way that myths represent culture as if it were nature is by linking a phenomenon that is particular to the current context with phenomena that are portrayed as universal, primordial, or foundational. J. Z. Smith summarizes this as relating the “Now” to the “Then” of the mythic narrative.¹⁹ Going further, McCutcheon describes myths as political, as validating and legitimating new or contemporary institutions by locating their

¹⁷ J. Z. Smith, *Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1978; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), xii.

¹⁸ Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 147.

¹⁹ J. Z. Smith, “The Unknown God: Myth in History,” *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982), 66-89.

establishment in the distant past.²⁰ People develop and use myths for ideological purposes and engineer their realities through myths. McCutcheon theorizes myth as a process, “technique,” and “strategy” of “social argumentation”²¹ and “ideology production”:

Mythmaking is a species of ideology production, of ideal-making, where “ideal” is conceived not as an abstract, absolute value but as a contingent, localized construct that comes to represent and simultaneously reproduce certain specific social values *as if* they were inevitable and universal ... Myths present *one particular* and therefore contestable viewpoint as if it were an “agreement that has been reached” by “we the people.” ... Mythmaking takes place in a specific socio-political moment and supports a specific judgment about the here and now.²²

Myths may be reworked and updated, re-articulated, to accommodate and legitimize new or changed social structures. As Lincoln emphasizes, a narrative taxonomy is malleable and dynamic and therefore can accommodate play within its categorization:

Myths are not snapshot representations of stable taxonomies and hierarchies, as functionalists would have it. Rather, the relation between social order and the stories told about it is much looser, and—as a result—considerably more dynamic, for the loose fit creates possibilities for rival narrators, who modify aspects of the established order as depicted in prior variants, with consequences that can be far-reaching if and when audiences come to perceive these innovative representations as reality ... They [narrators] use instruments that most often assist in the reproduction of the sociotaxonomic order to recalibrate that order by introducing new categories, eliminating old ones, or revising both categories and the hierarchic orders in which they are organized.²³

²⁰ Russell T. McCutcheon, “Myth,” in *Guide to the Study of Religion* (ed. Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon; New York: Cassell, 2000), 190-208, 204.

²¹ Ibid., 199-200.

²² Ibid., 204.

²³ Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 150.

Lincoln moves from myth as “taxonomy in narrative form” to myth as “ideology in narrative form,” by emphasizing that the classification system is naturalized and legitimated through myth:

[W]hen a taxonomy is encoded in mythic form, the narrative packages a specific, contingent system of discrimination in a particularly attractive and memorable form. What is more, it naturalizes and legitimates it. Myth, then, is not just taxonomy, but *ideology* in narrative form.²⁴

People create meaning by reformulating and recasting the taxonomy of relationships in a mythic narrative, which serves as a template for people to express something about their world. This *something* may be placed along a spectrum of explanatory value and ideological value. In addition to serving as entertainment, a myth relates “how things are” and explains “how things came to be,” but it may do so in such a way that supports or challenges existing (dominant or non-dominant, real or imagined) power structures. Each version or retelling of a myth may be more or less ideological, and each may accomplish conservative or innovative social or political work.

I find it helpful to imagine such a spectrum of explanatory and ideological value because this allows for greater sensitivity to the various contexts of myths. Michael Satlow has criticized Lincoln’s work in *Theorizing Myth* for appearing “to pick ‘myths’ at random only to show that they encapsulate ideology in narrative form.”²⁵ While the specific examples that Lincoln analyzes seem to be the result of extreme ideologies, not every myth originates from or survives within such obvious political contexts. Though Lincoln admits that his “protocol designed for students of myth” “may not be appropriate

²⁴ Ibid., 147.

²⁵ Michael Satlow, “Disappearing Categories: Using Categories in the Study of Religion,” *MTSR* 17.4 (2005): 287-298, 292.

for every mythic text,”²⁶ his preferred examples beg the question of how useful the theory is for myths in general. To address this problem, I propose that we imagine a spectrum of explanatory and ideological value. As any given telling of a particular myth explains *something*, we may gauge the degree to which its explanation serves the interests of some group, individual, or institution. However, if our extant version of a myth cannot be shown to be associated with any plausible socio-political phenomenon, it is not useful to fabricate one merely to fulfill the expectations of the theory.

Our extant examples of the conflict topos, as I argue in subsequent chapters, show several ways in which people may use mythic motifs to do ideological work in support of or in opposition to powers (which may be hegemonic, marginal, imagined, or actual), institutions, and constructions of divine hierarchies. The traditions I discuss, then, serve as case studies for the theorization of myth as ideology in narrative form. I present two specific ways that people do ideological work with myths. One method is recasting the taxonomy of characters in an inherited narrative, for example, substituting a preferred deity for the dominant deity in the narrative. A second method of doing ideological work with myths is projecting the hierarchical relationships among mythic characters on to historical persons and polities, for example, associating a king with the dominant deity in the narrative, or associating a political enemy with the defeated foe in the narrative. Such ideological use of mythic narrative depends specifically on the taxonomy of characters in the myth and makes use of the hierarchy that the myth encodes to communicate a social or political perspective. Authors adapt mythic narratives and motifs in order to shape, challenge, re-inscribe, or generate ideological schemas.

²⁶ Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 150.

Preferred Terminology

In this section I clarify my use of specific terminology and explain what I mean by “whole narrative” and “motif.” Briefly, a whole narrative is a story with a beginning, middle, and end that is narrated as a unit. Of course, our extant whole narratives of the conflict topos do not survive in single texts that contain the whole story, but there is sufficient agreement among scholars as to the content and order of these stories for us to read them as whole narratives. In our extant literature from Mari, Israel, and Judah, we do not have lengthy stories about a battle between the warrior deity and sea deity or dragons. Rather, we have references to such a battle in abbreviated form, epitomes or summaries of the conflict and allusions to it. I refer to such references as the “conflict motif.” Other terms that might be used where I use “motif” are alloform,²⁷ mytheme,²⁸ echo,²⁹ and minimyth.³⁰ I will consistently use “motif,” by which I mean “a recurrent theme, subject, or image.”³¹ I prefer this term to the others because it is more accessible than the terms alloform, minimyth, and mytheme and more neutral than the term echo.

Cross uses the term “alloform” to designate variant forms of the conflict myth in Ugaritic literature, which contains a whole narrative articulation of the conflict topos and

²⁷ Cross, *CMHE*, 149.

²⁸ Mark S. Smith, *God in Translation: Deities in Cross-Cultural Discourse in the Biblical World* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 83.

²⁹ John Day, *God’s Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), *passim*.

³⁰ Wendy Doniger, “Minimyths and Maximyths and Political Points of View,” in *Myth and Method* (ed. Laurie L. Patton and Wendy Doniger; Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 109-127.

³¹ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, “Motif,” n. 3.

various instances of the motif.³² The term “alloform” is mainly used in discussions of chemistry and grammar for distinct forms of something treated as a type. It is a relatively neutral term in that it does not have connotations that imply a great deal about the relationships of the particular variants. However, I prefer the term “motif” to refer to variants that occur outside of a narrative context because the term “alloform” would include both these and variants of the conflict myth that occur in the form of whole narratives.

The structuralist term “mytheme” denotes a constituent unit of a myth. Claude Lévi-Strauss explained myth by comparison with language, and he theorized that just as phonemes are combined to make meaningful speech, *mythèmes* are combined to produce a myth’s meaning.³³ I appreciate the observation that parts of a myth attain meaning only in relation to other parts. However, I find less compelling Lévi-Strauss’s idea that the relationships among mythemes are universal or inherent in human thought and that the “true” meaning of a myth lies only below the surface level of the narrative. This diminishes the roles of authors, redactors, and/or transmitters of myths, and neglects the relevance of the surface level of a narrative.

John Day uses the term “echo” to refer to occurrences of the conflict motif in the Hebrew Bible.³⁴ The figurative sense of an echo is a repetition, reproduction, or

³² Cross, *CMHE*, 149.

³³ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie Structurale* (Paris: Plon, 1958), 233; idem., *Structural Anthropology* (trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke G. Schoepf; New York: Basic Books, 1963), 211; Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 90.

³⁴ Day, *God’s Conflict*, iii.

weakened imitation, “an affect that continues after its cause has ceased.”³⁵ The use of “echo” suggests a diminished meaning or efficacy compared to an original. For Day, as his subtitle, “Echoes of a Canaanite myth in the Old Testament,” makes clear, the conflict motif in the Hebrew Bible is derivative of “a Canaanite myth,” by which he means the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle*.³⁶ I prefer not to use the term “echo” because I do not want to suggest that the meaning or efficacy of the conflict topos is diminished when it is used outside of a whole narrative. I will argue, rather, that the motif survives because authors made it meaningful in their contemporary circumstances. I would also avoid the suggestion that occurrences of the conflict motif are echoing, or resulting from, one original or particular conflict myth.

Wendy Doniger proposes the notions of minimyth and maximyth to assist us in cross-cultural comparisons of myth. Neither the minimyth nor maximyth actually exist in realia; rather, they are metamyths that one constructs in order to examine variants of a myth.³⁷ The minimyth is the simplest “core that still retains some intrinsic meaning” within a set of myths.³⁸ The maximyth is an accumulation of all the details of all the variants of a myth, and this may be used “to note the particular spin that each individual telling (not merely each individual culture) puts on the basic tale.”³⁹ One risk of any comparative study of myths is the projection of details amassed from the set onto every

³⁵ *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, “Echo,” n. 5.

³⁶ Day, *God’s Conflict*, 1.

³⁷ Doniger, “Minimyth and Maximyth,” 116.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 117.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 118.

particular occurrence, and Doniger guards against that risk by emphasizing that mini- and maximyths are non-occurring theoretical constructs. The whole narratives and occurrences of the conflict motif that I discuss would all be used to build the maximyth of the conflict myth, and the minimyth, or minimal core, is what I have used to gather the texts that I compare.

Finally, it may be helpful to address briefly how some scholars have distinguished among the categories “myth,” “epic,” and “history” with reference to biblical texts. As Nick Wyatt and Oden each discuss at length, there was a scholarly tradition of categorizing “myth” and “history” as a dichotomy, which biblical scholars used to contrast “mythical” and “biblical.”⁴⁰ We have moved beyond these dichotomies, but there remains some variety in how scholars apply these categories to biblical texts.

Cross distinguishes among the categories “myth,” “epic,” and “history” according to the degree to which deities play a part in the narrative. He limits “history” to narrative that has only human characters and no appeal to things divine. He considers mythic narrative to be primarily concerned with “primordial events” beyond historical time. Epic, according to Cross, is an intersection of historical and mythic narrative, characterized by interaction between human and divine characters:

Epic, in interpreting historical events, combines mythic and historical features in various ways and proportions ... The epic form, designed to recreate and give meaning to the historical experiences of a people or nation, is not merely or simply historical. In epic narrative, a people and their god or gods interact in the temporal course of events. In historical narrative only human actors have parts. Appeal to divine agency is illegitimate ... By contrast myth in its purest form is concerned with

⁴⁰ Oden, “Interpreting Biblical Myths,” 48; N. Wyatt, “The Problem of a Biblical Mythology,” *Myths of Power*, 373-424, 398.

‘primordial events’ and seeks static structures of meaning behind or beyond the historical flux.⁴¹

These definitions contribute to his categorization of “Canaanite myth” as distinct from Israelite epic. He proposes that Israel’s early epic sources were used in the composition of the Pentateuch and elaborated in the work of the Deuteronomists and Chronicler.

“Israel’s choice of the epic form,” Cross explains, displays both the link between Israelite tradition and “its Canaanite past” as well as “the appearance of novelty” in Israelite tradition.⁴² According to Cross’s definitions, most of the Hebrew Bible would be “epic.”

Oden prefers a definition of myth that was first articulated by Joseph Fontenrose: “myths are ‘the traditional tales of the deeds of *daimones*: gods, spirits, and all sorts of supernatural or superhuman beings.’”⁴³ He criticizes attempts to distinguish between myths, legends, and sagas by biblical scholars as theological and apologetic attempts to protect the Bible from the category myth.⁴⁴ He prefers the opposite approach, and applies the category of myth to all biblical narratives in which *daimones* of any sort play a part, thus categorizing practically the entire Hebrew Bible and New Testament as myth.⁴⁵ I appreciate his challenge to traditional, and especially to apologetic tendencies in biblical scholarship, and I fully embrace his call for biblical scholars to make use of developments within other fields for analyzing biblical materials. However, his overly

⁴¹ Cross, *CMHE*, viii.

⁴² *Ibid.*, ix.

⁴³ Oden, “Interpreting Biblical Myths,” 56; Oden cites Joseph Fontenrose, *The Ritual Theory of Myth* (Berkeley: University of California, 1966), 54-55.

⁴⁴ Oden, “Interpreting Biblical Myths,” 57.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 58.

broad application of the category of myth threatens to dissolve any distinction that the category might connote within ancient West Asian and ancient Mediterranean literature, the majority of which features *daimones*.

Both Cross and Oden hinge their definitions of myth on the presence of divine beings, though their categorizations of the biblical anthology are substantially different. For the purposes of this study, I am not concerned with applying the labels “history,” “epic,” or “myth,” to texts, but rather with identifying how mythic topoi are used in all sorts of contexts, regardless of how scholars classify those contexts by genre or function, including any combination of history, epic, myth, historiography, epistolary, prose, poetry, proverb, or prophecy, and ritual,⁴⁶ iconographic, or archeological contexts.

The Ancient West Asian Milieu and the Comparative Enterprise

Extant whole narrative articulations of the conflict topos come from Babylonian, Assyrian, and Ugaritic corpora. On account of this, studies of the conflict topos have always been comparative. Scholars focusing on the conflict motif in the Hebrew Bible have used the Babylonian and Ugaritic traditions in particular to illuminate the biblical traditions. Because of the availability and richness of the comparative evidence, the

⁴⁶ M. S. Smith deals with the problem of distinguishing “myth” and “ritual” in ancient West Asian texts in his *The Rituals and Myths of the Feast of the Goodly Gods of KTU/CAT 1.23*. There is a vast amount of literature theorizing the relationship between myth and ritual. For the purposes of the present study, “Myth and Ritual Theory” is relevant to the scholarly interpretation of several texts that I discuss in chapters 2 and 3, and is discussed there. Generally, following M. S. Smith, it is not always clear that a text is *either* “myth” or “ritual,” myths may refer to and describe rituals, and likewise ritual texts may refer to myths (M. S. Smith, *The Rituals and Myths of the Feast of the Goodly Gods of KTU/CAT 1.23: Royal Constructions of Opposition, Intersection, Integration, and Domination* [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006], 3-8).

conflict topos is typically offered as an example of the “Bible in its ancient West Asian context.” By viewing biblical traditions in their contemporary cultural milieu, we may better understand particular ideas and practices. Volumes such as *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*⁴⁷ and *The Context of Scripture*⁴⁸ assume this approach. It is evident in the titles of these works that the focus is the Hebrew Bible, and I agree that comparative evidence is essential for studies of the Hebrew Bible and for reconstructing Israelite and Judean history and religion. However, in my own work, I do not want to limit my focus to biblical traditions. Rather, I see the Hebrew Bible as one source among ancient West Asian literary corpora, inscriptional evidence, and archeological data. By using all of the available evidence, we may see continuities and innovations among ancient West Asian, including Israelite/Judean, traditions.

Within ancient West Asian comparative studies, I am particularly interested in how my project intersects with the discussion of the relationship between Israelite and Judean traditions and Canaanite traditions. There is a history in biblical scholarship of characterizing things Canaanite in negative terms and validating things Israelite. Though by the 1970s some scholars were attempting to avoid this type of polarity, there remained an apologetic valence in their descriptions of Israelite traditions. Every study of the conflict topos in the Hebrew Bible addresses a relationship between Israelite/Judean and Canaanite traditions, but that relationship has typically been described in a manner that privileges biblical traditions over Canaanite traditions. Such apologetic and theological

⁴⁷ James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, (3rd ed.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

⁴⁸ William W. Hallo, ed., *The Context of Scripture* (New York: Brill, 1997).

tendencies are detrimental to our reconstructions of West Semitic histories, literatures, societies, and cults. Rather, Israelite and Judean traditions should be included among Canaanite traditions, not portrayed as being opposed to, completely other than, or superior to Canaanite traditions.

There have been many studies of the conflict motif in the Hebrew Bible, beginning with Gunkel's *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* in 1895. In Gunkel's day, the only available comparative evidence relevant to the conflict motif came from Mesopotamia. However, in the 1920s and 1930s, the discovery of ancient Ugarit brought to light a corpus of material and literary evidence that exhibited a much closer affinity to biblical language and traditions. Despite the surprising amount of similarity between Ugaritic and biblical traditions, most scholars interpreted and reconstructed Ugaritic society and cult through the lens of biblical ideology that insisted upon the separateness of Israel among her neighbors and the absolute "otherness" of Canaanite society and cult.⁴⁹ Some of the older instances of derogatory characterization of Canaanite traditions seem quite ridiculous now. Examples include characterizations of

⁴⁹ See the discussions of Lester Grabbe, "'Canaanite': Some Methodological Observations in Relation to Biblical Study," in *Ugarit and the Bible: Proceedings of the International Symposium on Ugarit and the Bible, Manchester, September 1992* (ed. George J. Brooke, Adrian Curtis, and John F. Healey; Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 1994), 113-122; Delbert R. Hillers, "Analyzing the Abominable: Our Understanding of Canaanite Religion," *JQR* 75 (1985): 253-269; and M. S. Smith, "Ugaritic Studies and Israelite Religion: A Retrospective View," *NEA* 65.1 (2002): 17-29.

Canaanite cult and pantheon as “utter depravity and wickedness,”⁵⁰ “seductive nature worship,”⁵¹ “full of hate, violence, ... drinking-bouts, and orgies.”⁵²

Cross worked extensively with Ugaritic materials, and to date his essays in *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, published in 1973, are a necessary starting point for any study of the conflict topos. In the early 1970s, he criticized “the tendency of scholars to overlook or suppress continuities between the early religion of Israel and the Canaanite (or Northwest Semitic) culture from which it emerged,” and to conceive the cult of Israel “as a unique or isolated phenomenon, radically or wholly discontinuous with its environment.”⁵³ He offered a corrective to theological biases against all things Canaanite. However, he still characterized Israelite tradition in a somewhat apologetic manner. He repeatedly emphasizes Israel’s alleged “emergence from” and “radical transformation of” Canaanite tradition. Regarding myth, there is *Canaanite Myth*, but no Israelite myth; rather, he posits that there was an inherent “tension between the mythic and historical” in Israelite religion. He sees *Hebrew Epic* as the result of the “old mythic patterns ... [being] broken by Israel’s austere historical consciousness.”⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Ulf Oldenburg, *The Conflict between El and Baal in Canaanite Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1969), xi.

⁵¹ Leila L. Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha as Polemics against Baal Worship* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 2.

⁵² Johannes C. de Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism: the Roots of Israelite Monotheism* (2nd ed.; Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1997), 83-84.

⁵³ Cross, *CMHE*, vii-viii.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 138.

Despite how progressive Cross's reconstruction of the Canaanite milieu of Israelite traditions was at the time, a lasting effect of his emphasis on "Canaanite myth" and "Hebrew epic" as such distinct categories has been the tendency of scholars to label anything "mythic" that is present in the Hebrew Bible as "Canaanite" or "Canaanizing," as if there can be no "genuine" Israelite myth. For example, Bernhard W. Anderson's introductory work on the Hebrew Bible uses the category "myth" once, when he identifies "mythical views" in Exodus 15. However, the "mythical views" are "Canaanite mythical views" reflecting a "Canaanite mythic pattern," rather than "Israelite," "Judean," or "biblical" "mythical views."⁵⁵ This is a prevalent tendency that subtly reproduces a theological apologetic and that prevents us from fully exploring how myth is used and generated within biblical traditions.

Day, another major contributor to the study of the conflict motif in the Hebrew Bible, likewise exhibits this apologetic tendency. In his 2000 publication, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, in which he republished most of his 1985 study *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament*, he states in his preface:

Ever since I started doctoral research under Professor John Emerton at Cambridge in 1973 much of my time has been devoted to studying the impact, both positive and negative, of Canaanite mythology and religion on ancient Israel and the Old Testament.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1986), 81.

⁵⁶ Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 7.

It is not appropriate to evaluate the impact of Canaanite mythology or religion on ancient Israel and the Hebrew Bible in terms of “positive and negative,” or as a one-way influence. Such a teleological viewpoint is an obstacle to our understanding of ancient West Semitic history, literature, cult, and culture. There has been a shift in scholarship toward a more critical stance in the study of Israelite religion as a whole.⁵⁷ Thus, it is necessary to question why scholarship focusing on the conflict motif has lagged behind this shift.

When scholars betray a reverence toward “biblical Israel,” it skews our understanding of the cultural milieu of the historical Israel.⁵⁸ The cultural milieu of ancient Israel was Canaanite, and archeological evidence indicates material and cultural continuity during the time of the “emergence” of ancient Israel as a distinct polity.⁵⁹ Scholars who characterize Israelite tradition as totally other than Canaanite are usually working with an outdated model of the origins of ancient Israel, specifically one that

⁵⁷ Peter Machinist, “The Question of Distinctiveness in Ancient Israel: An Essay,” in *Ah, Assyria: Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor* (ed. Mordechai Cogan and Israel Eph'al; Jerusalem: Magness Press, 1991), 192-212; Robert P. Gordon, “‘Comparativism’ and the God of Israel,” *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Versions* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), 180-196.

⁵⁸ We may distinguish between “biblical Israel,” “ancient Israel,” and the historical Israel. “Biblical Israel” is the ideal that texts of the Hebrew Bible portray, whereas the historical Israel is the more diverse social world in which the Hebrew Bible was produced. “Ancient Israel” is what we reconstruct based on the available material evidence that survived historical Israel along with the literary evidence in the Hebrew Bible, as well as archeological and literary evidence from neighboring areas. See discussion in Philip R. Davies, *In Search of “Ancient Israel”* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992).

⁵⁹ Lawrence E. Stager, “The Archeology of Family in Ancient Israel,” *BASOR* 260 (1985): 1-36.

begins with a “conquest of Canaan.”⁶⁰ Of our available textual and material evidence, the Hebrew Bible *is* our largest source of Canaanite material. Playing upon Cross’s title, which sets *Canaanite* and *Hebrew* apart, I would suggest that *Canaanite Literature* $\supset$ *Hebrew Literature*, the $\supset$ symbol indicating that Hebrew literature, whether myth, epic, or otherwise, is a subset of Canaanite literature. Of course, we may resolve the fictional polarity of Israelite and Canaanite by using the phrase “ancient West Semitic,” which includes Israelite, Judean, Ugaritic, Phoenician, Ammonite, Moabite, Aramean, and Edomite. However, since studies of the conflict topos are so laden with the older terminology we must address directly the assumptions undergirding it and its continued impact.

In Cross’s work, his description of the emergence of Israelite tradition from Canaanite tradition is intertwined with his theory of myth, in that the Canaanite milieu he describes Israel “emerging from” is also a “mythopoeic environment.” Cross repeatedly refers to the “mythopoeic,” for example: “Mythic elements were present at the beginning of Israel’s history when Yahwism emerged from its mythopoeic environment.”⁶¹ This statement exhibits two of the types of assumptions that I challenge. First, he implies that Yahwism emerged from its environment at the beginning of Israel’s history and thereafter

⁶⁰ See discussions in Joseph A. Callaway, “The Settlement in Canaan: The Period of the Judges,” in *Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple* (ed. Hershel Shanks; rev. and exp. ed.; Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999), 55-90; John Bright, “*Exodus and Conquest: the Formation of the People Israel*,” *A History of Israel* (4th ed.; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2000), 107-143.

⁶¹ Cross, *CMHE*, 135. Twenty-five years after *CMHE*, Cross continued to use the theory of the “mythopoeic,” for example: “The theogony was created by a mythopoeic mind enchanted by binary opposites that seemed fixed in the structure of reality” (Cross, *From Epic to Canon* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998], 81).

was distinct from that environment, whereas I would argue that Yahwism and all other Israelite/Judean cultural products continuously drew from and contributed to the cultural milieu. Second, he asserts the existence of a “mythopoeic” environment, implicitly embracing the unsupportable theory of the “mythopoeic” mind.

Lucien Lévy-Bruhl formulated a theory of the “mythopoeic” in the 1920s, according to which “mythopoeic thought” is a different kind of thinking that is expressive, poetic, and mystical rather than logical and rational.⁶² This theory differed from previous theories that considered myth to have developed from “primitive” attempts to explain phenomena. Rather than using myths to explain phenomena, the “pre-logical,” “mythopoeic mind” used myth to participate in phenomena. This notion fits well with Cross’s interpretation of the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle* as “the libretto” to cultic ritual.⁶³ However, this theory of myth is highly problematic and has been mainly abandoned, because there is no support for the existence of “mythopoeic thought” or any “pre-logical” mode of thinking among modern or ancient peoples.⁶⁴

Yet, the notion of “mythopoeic thought” still appears in some studies in expressions such as “biblical thought”⁶⁵ or “the mythological mind.”⁶⁶ It is even used

⁶² Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *Primitive Mentality* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1923); idem., *How Natives Think* (New York: Knopf, 1925).

⁶³ Cross, *CMHE*, ix.

⁶⁴ Oden, “Interpreting Biblical Myths,” 70-73; Edward E. Evans-Pritchard, *Theories of Primitive Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), 78-99.

⁶⁵ For example, in his book subtitled *Studies in Biblical Thought*, Étan Levine writes: “biblical Israel had discriminated between pagan mythological thought and historical thought” (Étan Levine, *Heaven and Earth, Law and Love: Studies in Biblical Thought* [New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000], 39).

explicitly by some, for example Bernard F. Batto and Lawrence E. Boadt. In *Slaying the Dragon: Mythmaking in Biblical Tradition*, Batto rearticulates the theory of the “mythopoeic mind,” redefining “mythopoeic” as strictly “myth-making,” the literal meaning of the Greek roots. He labels the activity of ancient “genius” scribes who use inherited myths in creative ways as “mythopoeic.”⁶⁷ Though his redefinition of the term is careful, the concept is still problematic, as we can see in the discussion of myth by Boadt, who describes his own understanding of myth as building upon Batto as well as Lévy-Bruhl and Cross:

To be “mythopoeic” means to be devising stories that forge opposing human experiences of the immanent and transcendent, the natural and the supernatural, the explainable and the unexplainable, into a coherent relationship with each other. It bridges the fundamental polarity found in the deepest structures of that experience like death and life, male and female, change and stability, order and chaos. It doesn’t have to be logical and scientific, it has to connect and in some way heal the gap in coherence of our experience of life ... I dwell on this understanding of myth in order to insist that Israel itself was quite conscious of its need for myths about Yahweh in order to undergird its faith and make sense over the centuries of its ever-more-refined monotheism.⁶⁸

Boadt clearly adopts a structuralist explanation of the function of myth in his explanation of “mythopoeic” activity. He then contrasts “logical” and “scientific” thinking with a mode of thought that “connect[s]” and “heal[s].” Through this contrast he suggests that

⁶⁶ N. Wyatt, *Myths of Power*, 117. Elsewhere, he contrasts “logic” and “mythologic,” and describes the “ancient” “view of the world” as “infantile” (N. Wyatt, *Myths of Power*, 61, 121).

⁶⁷ Bernard F. Batto, *Slaying the Dragon: Mythmaking in Biblical Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992).

⁶⁸ Lawrence E. Boadt, “Mythological Themes and the Unity of Ezekiel,” in *Literary Structure and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Lénart J. de Regt, Jan de Waard, Jan P. Fokkelman; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 211-231.

“mythopoeic” thought is not logical. He further characterizes “Israel itself” as an entity that could be “conscious” of collective “need” and “faith.” This characterization of biblical authors, who represent only a select and elite portion of ancient Israelites and Judeans, is problematic, as is his assertion of a collective “faith” and an evolution of “monotheism.” My more general critique of Boadt is that he characterizes a mentality behind biblical traditions that bears a unique or peculiar kind of thinking. For Boadt and Batto, biblical *mythopoesis* is characterized as inspired. For Cross, however, the Canaanite mythopoeic mind is “enchanted” whereas the Israelite “historical consciousness” is “austere.”⁶⁹ In both portrayals of Israelite tradition, “biblical thought” is peculiar. Whether “biblical thought” is then contrasted with ancient Mesopotamian and Canaanite “thought” or with “modern” “scientific” “thought,” the assertion of any substantial or essential difference in the “minds” of the authors of biblical texts is problematic.

To be clear, I am not suggesting that there is nothing peculiar or innovative in the Hebrew Bible or in Israelite and Judean traditions—quite the opposite is true, and I argue that biblical texts show very innovative uses of the conflict motif. What I would not argue is that the authors of biblical texts were innovative in ways that were distinct from the capacities of any other ancient authors. Two of Lincoln’s “Theses on Method” are particularly relevant here. First, “[t]he same destabilizing and irreverent questions one might ask of any speech act ought be posed of religious discourse.” Second, and more generally, “[r]everence is a religious, and not a scholarly virtue.”⁷⁰ There are several

⁶⁹ Cross, *From Epic to Canon*, 81; *CMHE*, 138.

⁷⁰ Bruce Lincoln, “Theses on Method,” *MTSR* 8.3 (1996): 225-227.

problems that may result when scholars treat the Hebrew Bible or Israelite and Judean traditions with reverence. Primarily, we mistake the interested stance of particular biblical authors as a descriptive view. Following that, we misunderstand the relationships between the Self and Other (or the Us and Them) of the texts (there are many Them/Others in the biblical anthology),⁷¹ and we misunderstand hegemonic positions as universal.

Our approach to biblical texts should be the same as our approach to other ancient texts. Individuals, groups, and communities responsible for authoring and transmitting texts were interested in their socio-political contexts. Imagery, allusions, and motifs that they employed to say things about, respond to, portray, or shape their socio-political context were meaningful, not accidental. In this project, I show that the conflict topos was meaningful for particular authors in particular contexts, and that it was useful for ideological purposes, for saying things about, responding to, portraying, and shaping socio-political realities.

In this chapter I have situated my dissertation within relevant scholarly discussions and clarified my methodological approach. I see my project as improving upon past scholarship on the conflict topos in two important ways: first, with regard to theories of myth as they have been applied to ancient West Asian literature; and second, with regard to how the relationship between biblical and Canaanite traditions is

⁷¹ Various Others and Self/Other discourse are discussed in Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs, eds., *"To See Ourselves as Others See Us": Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985); Saul M. Olyan, "Generating 'Self' and 'Other': The Polarity Israelite/Alien," *Rites and Rank: Hierarchy in Biblical Representations of Cult* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 63-102.

construed. I have developed the notion of myth as narrative taxonomy and discussed how a mythic taxonomy may be used to generate ideology in narrative form. The mythic taxonomy can be reinterpreted to create innovative meanings, and can be referenced outside of a narrative context to make statements about various individuals, groups, and institutions. I have argued that biblical traditions should be included among Canaanite or West Semitic traditions, all of which may be illuminated through comparison with traditions in their broader ancient West Asian milieu. In the following chapters I analyze our extant examples of the conflict topos and show how the conflict motif was used for ideological purposes in various historical situations over the span of several millennia, from the second millennium BCE and into the middle ages of the Common Era.

CHAPTER 2: THE CONFLICT TOPOS IN EXTANT MYTHS

*Let them recite the song of Marduk,
Who bound Tiamat and took kingship (Enuma Elish VII 161-162).⁷²*

These lines conclude *Enuma Elish*, summarizing the main events of the story: Marduk defeated Tiamat and became king. These two events are inextricably linked: by defeating Tiamat, Marduk was elevated to kingship. The full story of how these events unfolded is narrated in the seven tablets of *Enuma Elish*, a Babylonian text conventionally dated to ca. 1100 BCE.⁷³ We have two other Mesopotamian traditions related to *Enuma Elish*: *Anzu*, an older story about Ninurta defeating Anzu, dating to the Old Babylonian period, and a later Assyrian story about Aššur defeating Tiamat dating to the reign of Sennacherib (705-681 BCE).⁷⁴ From the other side of the fertile crescent,

⁷² The Akkadian text of *Enuma Elish* (*EE*) is available in Philippe Talon, *The Standard Babylonian Creation Myth: Enūma Eliš* (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Corpus Project, 2005). All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

⁷³ *EE* is extant only from Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian copies. Fragments of the text were found at a variety of sites (many were found in Aššur and Sultantepe, other locations include Nineveh, Kalḫu, Sippar, and Uruk), and they reflect a conservative scribal tradition in that they exhibit a lack of major textual variation (Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, The Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others* [Rev. ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], 228-229; Talon, *Enūma Eliš*, xiii-xviii).

⁷⁴ *Anzu* is preserved in two versions: an Old Babylonian version containing tablets II and III, found at Sippar, and a Standard Babylonian version containing most of tablets I and II and parts of tablet III, which is reconstructed from various Middle and Late Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian manuscripts from Aššur, Nineveh, Sultantepe, Tarbiṣu, Sippar, and Borsippa (Benjamin R. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature*

dating between ca. 1400-1350 BCE, we have the *Baal Cycle*, found in the city of Ugarit, that narrates Baal's victory over Yamm and his attainment of kingship.⁷⁵

This chapter focuses on these four narratives as distinct articulations of the conflict topos. Each narrates how a warrior deity (Ninurta, Marduk, Aššur, or Baal) secures kingship after defeating a rival for authority (Anzu, Tiamat, or Yamm).⁷⁶ Each narrative employs the conflict topos in order to promote a particular deity. These deities are elevated within their respective pantheons in relation to other deities who are complicit in the warrior deity's rise to power and at the expense of the rival figures they defeat. The narratives describe the authority of these deities as kingship, a human

[3rd ed.; Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2005], 556; Amar Annus, *The Standard Babylonian Epic of Anzu* [Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001], xxxv-xxxviii). The Assyrian version of *EE* is only found in Late Assyrian fragments, dating ca. 700-612 BCE, from Aššur and Nineveh (Wilfred G. Lambert, "The Assyrian Recension of Enūma Eliš," *CRRAI* 39 [1992]: 77-79, 77).

⁷⁵ Our extant portions of the *Baal Cycle* consist of six tablets and various fragments that were found over the course of three years (1930-1933) in Ugarit, which was rediscovered in 1928 and excavated beginning in 1929 (Mark S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle Volume I, Introduction with Text, Translation, and Commentary of KTU/CAT 1.1-1.2* [Leiden: Brill, 1994], 1-2; hereafter, *UBC I*).

⁷⁶ We see the same pattern of a god fighting an enemy and attaining kingship in the story of Tishpak battling Labbu. Unfortunately, our discussion of the text is limited due to its fragmentary nature, but the text clearly associates the act of defeating the foe, a dragon, with attaining kingship (CT 13.33-34, ll. 17-22). However, as Frans A. M. Wiggerman has argued, the kingship in question involves authority over the land Tishpak is saving, not over the gods (Frans A. M. Wiggerman, "Tišpak, His Seal, and the Dragon *mušhuššu*," in *To the Euphrates and Beyond: Archaeological Studies in Honour of Maurits N. van Loon* [ed. Odette M. C. Haex, Hans H. Carvers, and Peter M. M. G. Akkermans; Brookfield, VT: Balkema, 1989], 119). For comparison of this text with *Anzu* and *EE*, see Lambert, "Ninurta Mythology in the Babylonian Creation Epic," *Keilschriftliche Literaturen: Ausgewählte Vorträge der XXXII. Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Münster, 8-12 Juli 1985* (Berlin: D. Weimer, 1986), 55-60; for discussion of the lion-dragon imagery of this text, see Theodore J. Lewis, "CT 13.33-34 and Ezekiel 32: Lion-Dragon Myths," *JAOS* 116 (1996): 28-47.

political institution. In doing so, these narratives promote the institution of kingship by presenting it as the given construction of authority among the gods. In the cases of the Babylonian and Assyrian versions of *Enuma Elish*, the narrative not only promotes a particular deity but also a specific city and cult location. These versions of *Enuma Elish* perform ideological work in support of particular socio-political arrangements by promoting a specific deity, city, and temple, bolstering the interests of authority figures associated with Babylon and Aššur, respectively. Similarly, *Anzu* highlights Nippur and promotes Enlil's temple there by claiming that Ninurta's cult will enter the temple of Enlil, Ekur, located in Nippur. We may speculate about how the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle* may have served to further the interests of Ugarit's ruling authorities as well. In this chapter, I analyze the conflict topos within *Anzu*, the two versions of *Enuma Elish*, and the *Baal Cycle*, and where possible I examine the socio-political contexts in which these narratives were employed to legitimate certain kings, dynasties, cities, and temples. These examples of whole narrative articulations of the conflict topos also serve to establish the parameters of the conflict topos within the ancient West Asian milieu, providing a framework for analyzing uses of the conflict motif outside of a narrative context, which I discuss in the following two chapters.

Anzu

Anzu relates Ninurta's victory over Anzu, a bird-like composite figure who stole the Tablet of Destinies from Enlil. After several other deities refuse to challenge Anzu, Ninurta is chosen to fight him. As a reward for his victory the gods grant him kingship. This story survives in two versions, an Old Babylonian version (ca. 1850-1500 BCE) and

a Standard Babylonian version (ca. 1500-600 BCE).⁷⁷ Though no Sumerian version of *Anzu* is known, Anzu is included in lists of foes Ninurta has already slain in the Sumerian narratives “Ninurta’s Exploits” (“Ninurta’s Exploits,” ll. 131-134) and “Ninurta’s Return to Nibru” (Ninurta’s Return to Nibru, ll. 34-40).⁷⁸ “Ninurta’s Exploits” enumerates those he has defeated as he faces yet another enemy:

The Mermaid, the Dragon, the Gypsum, the Strong Copper, the hero Six-headed Wild Ram, the Magilum Barge, Lord Samanana, the Bison, the Palm-tree King, the Anzu bird, the Seven-headed serpent⁷⁹—Ninurta, you slew them in the Mountains (“Ninurta’s Exploits,” 131-134).⁸⁰

The narrative of *Anzu* employs the conflict topos to promote Ninurta, in that his victory over Anzu leads to his attainment of authority among the gods, and to promote the political institution of kingship, the concept used to characterize Ninurta’s divine authority. After analyzing the narrative of *Anzu*, I discuss possible historical contexts in which its ideology may have been relevant.

⁷⁷ Foster, *Before the Muses*, 556; Dalley, *Myths*, 203; Annus, *Epic of Anzu*, xxxv-xxxviii.

⁷⁸ The Sumerian texts are available in Jan A. A. van Dijk, *LUGAL UD ME-LÁM-bi NIR-GÁL: Le récit épique et didactique des Travaux de Ninurta, du Déluge et de la Nouvelle Création Vol 1* (Leiden: Brill, 1983), 51-88; and Jerrold S. Cooper, *The Return of Ninurta to Nippur* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1978), 30-175.

⁷⁹ The multi-headed serpent appears as a defeated enemy of Ninurta, Baal, Anat, and Yahweh. I discuss this figure in Chapter 3. For a summary of what Wolfgang Heimpel calls the “dragon slayer motif” in Mesopotamian traditions, see W. Heimpel, “Mythologie,” *RIA*, 537-564, 561 fig.9. For Mesopotamian depictions of warrior deities battling serpent or dragon figures, see Anthony Green, “Mythologie. B. I.,” *RIA*, 572-586, 575-576 and figs. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 18.

⁸⁰ The Sumerian original is available in J. A. A. van Dijk, *LUGAL UD ME-LÁM-bi NIR-GÁL*, 68-69; translation of the Sumerian is from Jeremy Black, *The Literature of Ancient Sumer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 167.

The plot of *Anzu* follows the possession of the Tablet of Destinies, originally belonging to Enlil, but stolen by Anzu and retrieved by Ninurta. It is the loss of the Tablet of Destinies that drives the plot toward combat.⁸¹ In *Anzu*, Enlil and the gods become upset and unsettled once Anzu has the Tablet, and they discuss at length who should retrieve it. What is at stake in the possession of the Tablet is “Enlil-power” (*illilūtu*) that is, the rank of the preeminent god of the Nippur pantheon, which implied control over the orders (*parṣu*) of the gods. This power is the focus of the narrative throughout, and the power in question moves through three stages: possession of power by Enlil, usurpation of power by Anzu, and restoration of legitimate power by (and to) Ninurta.⁸²

Anzu had access to the Tablet from his position as the guard of Enlil’s bath chamber, where, “[Anzu’s] eyes stare at the performance of Enlil-power” (*Anzu* SB I 66), specifically his crown, “attire of divinity,” and the Tablet.

(The desire) to usurp Enlil-power seized his heart.
 “Let me take the gods’ Tablet of Destinies for myself,
 So that I may possess command of all the gods.
 I shall abolish the throne, I shall end the rites!
 I shall direct the totality of all the Igigi!” (*Anzu* SB I 72-76)

When Anzu accomplishes his plan and flees with the Tablet of Destinies, the rites of the gods are abandoned and they desperately seek a solution (*Anzu* SB I 80-87). The possession of the Tablet, and the power-potential that it apparently confers, is so

⁸¹ This element is similar to the role of the Tablet of Destinies in *Enuma Elish* described below.

⁸² The following plot summary and quotations of *Anzu* are from the more complete Standard Babylonian version. The Akkadian text is available in Annus, *The Standard Babylonian Epic of Anzu*, 1-40.

important to the gods that as they seek a warrior to challenge Anzu they promise the victorious warrior honor, prominence, and wide-spread cultic recognition:

Your name will be great in the assembly of the great gods.
Among the gods your brothers, you shall have no rival.
Then shrines may be created.
In the four corners, establish your cult centers.
Your cult centers shall enter Ekur.
Display your prowess before the gods, and your name will be great! (*Anzu* SB I 98-103, and parallels 119-124, 140-145)

They summon three candidates to slay Anzu: “Adad, the canal-controller,” “Girra, Anunitu’s son,” and “Shara, Ishtar’s son.” However, each responds in fear of Anzu’s newly gained power (*Anzu* SB I 89-157).⁸³ After the gods despair for a while, Ea decides to choose Anzu’s conqueror himself, and Anu and the Igigi agree to this plan. He calls Belet-ili, praising her as supreme in the assembly, and requests that her son Ninurta subdue Anzu in exchange for greatness and popularity among the gods and lands, and she agrees. She complains that:

Anzu has taken the kingship that I engineered.
The Tablet of Destinies that was in [...]
He has deprived Enlil; he rejected your father,
He took away the rites; he subverted (them) to his own control. (*Anzu* SB I 207-210)⁸⁴

Her summary of the situation, specifically the disruption of kingship and rejection of the divine father Enlil, indicates the magnitude of the destabilizing threat that Anzu presents to these deities. She charges Ninurta with capturing Anzu and gives him a plan with

⁸³ The feature of other deities cowering before the enemy prior to the hero’s battle is shared with *Enuma Elish*, as I discuss below. This feature is also similar to the hesitancy and fear shown by other deities when facing Yamm’s embassy (*KTU* 1.2 II 21-24) or Leviathan (Job 41:17), as contrasted with the prowess of Baal and Yahweh, respectively.

⁸⁴ Below I will discuss Belet-ili’s relationship to the power that is the focus of the text.

strategic details for his attack (*Anzu* SB II i 1-27). It is clear that power and specifically kingship are at stake: “Slit the throat of wicked Anzu, so that kingship may enter Ekur (again)” (*Anzu* SB II 21-22).

Ninurta prepares for battle and meets Anzu on the mountainside. He initially fails because the Tablet disables his weapons. After a message of encouragement and further strategy arrives from Ea, Ninurta cuts Anzu’s wings, shoots him with arrows, and seizes and slits his throat. Ninurta regains the Tablet of Destinies, and the wind brings the wings of Anzu back to the gods who rejoice. When Ninurta returns, Enlil declares, “You have complete dominion, all the totality of rites,” and thus Ninurta receives kingship (*Anzu* III 124). The text concludes by giving Ninurta a series of names and honoring him as incomparable among the gods.⁸⁵ We see that the text begins and ends with clear indications of its focus on power and its purpose, which is to glorify Ninurta specifically by telling the story of how he gained power through this combat with Anzu.⁸⁶ It begins:

Listen to the praise of the powerful and strong one,
Who, in a rage, seized and bound the Stone Mountain,
Conqueror of winged Anzu, with his weapon,
(Slayer of) roaring Bull-Man in the midst of the sea (*Anzu* SB I 9-12).

And similarly, before the pronouncement of names for Ninurta, the narrative ends:

The gods have heard the news—
In the mountains you bound wicked Anzu.
...
[In gr]eatness, with his power, let him stare at wicked Anzu.

⁸⁵ The feature of assigning names to the victorious deity also occurs in *Enuma Elish*, as I discuss below.

⁸⁶ Dalley also compares the opening lines of *Anzu* with those of *Erra and Ishum*, and she and Foster discuss similarities between the characters Ninurta and Nergal, who is credited with defeating Anzu and Assaku in *Erra and Ishum* (Dalley, *Myths*, 204; Foster, *Before the Muses*, 579).

Warrior, in your powerfulness you slew the mountain.
You bound Anzu, slew him (despite) his powerfulness.
Winged Anzu, you slew (despite) his powerfulness.

... .

You have complete dominion, all the totality of rites.
Who has been created like you?! (*Anzu* SB III 61-62, 116-119, 124-125).⁸⁷

The focus of the narrative is power and restoration of legitimate authority by and therefore to Ninurta. The restoration of power involves a reconfiguration of authority among the deities: Enlil's power is recovered by Ninurta, and Ninurta retains this power. The new configuration of divine authority is portrayed as the legitimate configuration. The justification for the reconfiguration is Ninurta's victory; this is the ideological work accomplished through the conflict topos in *Anzu*. The narrative offers an explanation and justification for the primacy and authority of Ninurta among the gods. Moreover, by characterizing Ninurta's authority as kingship, the narrative legitimates the human political institution of kingship. The narrative implicitly suggests that the human political arrangement (here specifically kingship) reflects the political arrangement that is accepted by the gods and functioning in the divine sphere.

We can only speculate about how *Anzu* might have been utilized in the historical contexts in which the Old Babylonian or Standard Babylonian versions circulated.⁸⁸ The

⁸⁷ The conclusion of the text after the pronouncement of names is fragmentary, but the words "[. . .] battle and combat, he granted to you [. . .]" are legible, so it appears that the combat is explicitly mentioned again in the final lines, but we cannot be sure exactly what is said.

⁸⁸ The Old Babylonian version of *Anzu* identifies its protagonist as Ningirsu. Ningirsu was identified as a local form of Ninurta in Lagaš, though originally he may have developed as an independent deity (Jeremy Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons, and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992], 138, 142-143). Ningirsu was the patron god of Girsu, a city within Lagaš in southern Mesopotamia. The "Stele of the Vultures," found in Girsu and dating ca. 2460 BCE, depicts Ningirsu holding a mace, a net full of captives, and a composite

text does not focus on one location for Ninurta's cult centers, but rather indicates that they will be in "all four corners" (*Anzu* SB I iii 43 and parallels) and will enter Ekur (*Anzu* SB I iii 42 and parallels), which was Enlil's temple in Nippur.⁸⁹ The text (both versions) underscores an association of Ninurta's cult with Nippur, and the presence of Ninurta's cult within the temple of another deity, especially Enlil, would indicate that Ninurta was a highly prominent deity.⁹⁰ In turn, the deity's presence in the temple Ekur and the city of Nippur, asserted in the text, would serve to promote cultic activity there, and this would further the interests of local authorities who would benefit from these cultic activities and the related status of the city. Other than Ekur, however, the narrative emphasizes a wider spread of Ninurta's prominence and cultic recognition to "all four corners." The text does not mention Kalḫu, an Assyrian cult center of Ninurta in the 9th

lion-bird figure that may be Anzu. Though we cannot be certain, it appears that the defeated Anzu was employed as an emblem for the victorious warrior Ningirsu (Irene J. Winter, "After the Battle is Over: The *Stele of the Vultures* and the Beginning of Historical Narrative in the Art of the Ancient Near East," *On Art in the Ancient Near East, Volume 2: From the Third Millennium BCE* [Leiden: Brill, 2009], 3-52, 6-10). Additional evidence for Ningirsu-centered combat traditions may be found in the inscriptions of Gudea, which date to the late third millennium BCE. Gudea was a Sumerian governor of Girsu who rebuilt Eninnu, the temple of Ningirsu, and he commissioned an inscription in honor of this building project that mentions Anzu and repeatedly calls Ningirsu the warrior "who has no opponent" (Gudea, Cylinders A and B; *ETCSL* 2.1.7; original text available in Dietz O. Edzard, *Gudea and His Dynasty* [Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1997], 68-101; Black, *The Literature of Ancient Sumer*, 44-52). Gudea's inscription indicates that the victories of Ningirsu were cited to justify the building of his temple. Our earliest surviving copy of *Anzu*, the Old Babylonian version, is much later than Gudea's building of Eninnu in Girsu, so we cannot tie *Anzu* specifically to this historical context. However, Gudea's inscription and the much earlier "Stele of the Vultures" suggest that the motif of Ningirsu's victories predates our extant narratives of Ningirsu's (or Ninurta's) combats.

⁸⁹ Andrew R. George, *House Most High: The Temples of Ancient Mesopotamia* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 116-117; E. Ebeling, "Ekur," *RLA* II, 323.

⁹⁰ Dalley, *Myths*, 227 n.6.

and 8th centuries, though limestone reliefs adorning Ninurta's temple there illustrates combat traditions, portraying a deity (most likely Ninurta, since it is his temple) battling a composite lion-eagle-dragon figure, possibly Anzu.⁹¹ The illustration of the conflict motif at Ninurta's temple in Kalḫu would serve to legitimate this temple by linking it to the deity's victories, whereby, according to the narrative of *Anzu*, he attained divine kingship and earned cultic prominence. Aššurnasirpal II (883-859 BCE), after a successful military program of expansion, moved his capital to Kalḫu. His royal inscriptions indicate that he drew upon Ninurta-centered combat traditions to promote his own kingship, so the illustration of Ninurta's battle in his monumental art complements his royal ideology. The association of Ninurta's victories, such as that narrated in *Anzu*, with these specific sites and temples likely served to promote these locations, though here I speculate. We can be more certain about the use of Ninurta-centered combat traditions to promote particular kings and to attack their enemies, based on Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions that identify the king with Ninurta and the king's enemies with Ninurta's enemies. We also have Neo-Assyrian explanatory texts that identify the king with Ninurta in various ritual activities.

In Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions the conflict between Ninurta and Anzu is referenced in order to validate particular kings. Kings are depicted as the counterpart of Ninurta, and furthermore kings' rivalries with political enemies are compared with

⁹¹ Dalley *Myths*, 203; Stefan Zawadzki, "Who was the Supreme God of Calah after 800 B.C.?", *Folia Orientalia* 24 (1987): 23-28; Austen H. Layard, *The Monuments of Nineveh: From Drawings Made on the Spot* (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2004) ii, plate 5; Anthony Green, "Myths in Mesopotamian Art," in *Sumerian Gods and Their Representations* (ed. Irving L. Finkel and Markham J. Geller; Groningen: STYX Publications, 1997), 142, 156 fig. 17.

Ninurta's battles against Anzu and Asakku.⁹² The legitimating ideology used to promote Ninurta's divine kingship within *Anzu* is extended to human kings when those kings are compared to Ninurta and their enemies are compared to Ninurta's enemies. Specifically, Shalmaneser III and Aššurnasirpal II were described with the titles "Vice-regent of Enlil" and "Avenger of Assyria," both epithets of Ninurta (*RIM* A.0.101.40; A.0.101.41).⁹³ The phrase "to annihilate like a flood," an expression that characterized Ninurta's power in particular and represents the flood as his weapon, was used to describe Shalmaneser III and Adad-nārārī III's power over foreign enemies (A.0.102.14; A.0.104.1).⁹⁴ Shalmaneser I is said "to trample" (*dāšu*) on his enemies (A.0.77.4), as Ninurta does in *Anzu* (*Anzu* II 47).⁹⁵ An inscription describing a campaign of Shalmaneser III states that the king is a "vigorous hero, who is supported by the god Ninurta" (A.0.102.5).⁹⁶ An inscription of Aššurnasirpal II contains a hymn to Ninurta that is followed by a series of praises of the king, and the same vocabulary is used to describe Ninurta and the king (A.0.101.1).⁹⁷ These inscriptions show that composers of Neo-Assyrian royal ideology

⁹² Annus, *Anzu*, xxi; Stefan M. Maul, "Der assyrische König – Hüter der Weltordnung," in *Priests and Officials in the Ancient Near East* (ed. Kazuko Watanabe; Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1999), 201-14.

⁹³ Texts available in Albert Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC*, Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods Volume 1 (Toronto: University Press, 1986), 308; 311 (hereafter, *RIMA*); see also Annus, *Anzu*, xxi; Maul, "Der assyrische König," 212.

⁹⁴ Grayson, *RIMA* 3 (1996), 64, 202; Annus, *Anzu*, xxi-xxii; Maul, "Der assyrische König," 210.

⁹⁵ Grayson, *RIMA* 1, 192.

⁹⁶ Grayson, *RIMA* 3, 30; Annus, *Anzu*, xxi.

⁹⁷ Grayson, *RIMA* 2, 191; Annus, *Anzu*, xxii.

adapted traditions of divine combat, specifically stories about Ninurta as a victorious warrior deity and divine king, to promote their kings. The identification of the king with the deity appears to be a Neo-Assyrian innovation, and this innovation is highly significant for our understanding of the development and application of the legitimating ideology of the conflict topos within the ancient West Asian milieu.

Various Neo-Assyrian explanatory texts identify the king with Ninurta as well. These explanatory texts comment on specific objects and actors within descriptions of rituals by interweaving details from literary traditions. The ritual and literary elements combined in these texts may or may not have been associated with one another prior to these compositions. Those that mention Ninurta and the king include the following. A text describing the crowned king being carried to his palace equates him with Ninurta when he is set on his throne by the gods, given royal accoutrements, and adorned with the “splendor of kingship,” and the incense burning in front of the king is equated with the “sloughing flesh of the evil gods,” Ninurta’s enemies (KAR 307 rev. 20-25 [VAT 8917] = SAA 3, 39). The king standing in his chariot is equated with “the warrior king, the lord Ninurta,” and the horses of the chariot are the “ghost of Anzu” whose tongues are the reins (KAR 307 obv. 24-9 [VAT 8917] = SAA 3, 39). A longer text, which weaves together images from Ninurta and Marduk traditions, references Ninurta in its fragmentary conclusion and states that Anzu and Asakku, enemies of Ninurta, were defeated in the midst of “relentless arrows” that are equated with torches that the king is using in the ritual (CT 15, 43-44 [K 3476 obv.] = SAA 3, 37). While the function and nature of these explanatory texts is somewhat opaque, these texts show that Ninurta-

centered combat traditions, including *Anzu*, were adapted beyond their original narrative forms. These combat traditions were utilized to expound upon and interpret ritual activities involving the king in a manner that elevates the king by identifying him with Ninurta. The equation of the king with Ninurta serves to legitimate the king by placing him in Ninurta's role as a victorious warrior, acting out the defeat of his enemies and reaffirming his attainment of kingship through ritual.

Anzu and related traditions represent a distinct articulation of the conflict topos in which Ninurta is the victorious deity and Anzu is the defeated enemy. *Anzu* and related traditions legitimate a specific divine arrangement through this narrative hierarchy: Ninurta is elevated to kingship, and divine power is recovered from a figure who is portrayed as illegitimate. Authority is reconfigured within a divine hierarchy that the narrative presents as preferable and legitimate. In addition to promoting Ninurta, the narrative promotes cultic activity at Ekur in Nippur by claiming that Ninurta's cult would be present there. Monumental art at Ninurta's temple in Kalḫu suggests that Aššurnasirpal II utilized the conflict motif not only to promote his own kingship but to promote the site of his new capital. Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions and explanatory texts show that Ninurta-centered combat traditions were employed in royal ideology to make substantial claims about the status of kings; this is consistent with the promotion of the institution of kingship in *Anzu*. These royal inscriptions and explanatory texts identify the king with Ninurta specifically and represent him as a victorious warrior. Just as Ninurta attains kingship and prominence among the gods by defeating Anzu, the particular king's authority is portrayed as being validated by the gods, and his political enemies are portrayed as being destined for defeat, on the model of Anzu and of Ninurta's other

enemies. The legitimating work accomplished through the conflict topos within *Anzu* and other Ninurta-centered traditions is comparable to a broader set of phenomena that also utilize the conflict topos to promote particular deities, the institution of kingship, particular kings, dynasties, cities, and temples. Most closely related to *Anzu* is *Enuma Elish*, in which we can see that Ninurta-centered combat traditions were adapted to promote the deity Marduk.

Enuma Elish

Enuma Elish celebrates Marduk's victory over Tiamat, his elevation to kingship, and the subsequent building of Babylon and his temple Esagil within the city (*EE* V, 117-130). The narrative portrays the city of Babylon as an important and central locus of divine activity (*EE* V, 129-138), which suggests that the text originates from a time in which Babylon flourished, such as during the reigns of Hammurabi (1792-1750 BCE), Agum-kakrime in the 16th century BCE, or Nebuchadnezzar I (1125-1104 BCE).⁹⁸ Though we have no firm evidence, the language and ideological content of the narrative make the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I a plausible context for the composition.⁹⁹ The narrative promotes a hierarchy in which Marduk is elevated above other deities and

⁹⁸ Foster, *Before the Muses*, 436. For regnal dates, see John A. Brinkman's chronological appendix in Adolf Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (rev. ed.; ed. Erica Reiner; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 335-346.

⁹⁹ Herman L. J. Vanstiphout, "Enuma Elish as a Systematic Creed: An Essay," *OLP* 23 (1992): 37-61, 48; Lambert, "Studies in Marduk," *BSOAS* 47 (1984), 4-6; Lambert, "The Reign of Nebuchadnezzar I: A Turning Point in the History of Ancient Mesopotamian Religion," in *The Seed of Wisdom* (ed. William S. McCullough; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 3-13; Walter Sommerfeld, *Der Aufstieg Marduks* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), 174-181; against Dalley, *Myths*, 228-231.

becomes king of the gods (*EE* V, 110, 113).¹⁰⁰ The gods authorize his kingship and agree to all of his decrees, including the building of Babylon as a cult center for all of the gods (*EE* V, 113-139). This divine legitimation of Babylon and the elevation of Babylon's patron deity within the pantheon would fit within a broader effort of Nebuchadnezzar I to promote "nationalistic revival" within the Babylonian state.¹⁰¹

The story of *Enuma Elish*, as is summarized in its closing lines, focuses on Marduk's rise to authority among the gods, specifically by defeating the goddess Tiamat, the primordial sea, who birthed the gods. Their battle is a result of a series of conflicts among the gods that begins before Marduk's birth. The narrative begins as Tiamat and Apsu generate the gods, whose noise aggravates Apsu so much that he wants to kill them all. Tiamat objects to Apsu's anger, but he is urged on by his vizier Mummu. Ea kills Apsu to protect the gods, binds Mummu, and builds his abode upon Apsu (*EE* I, 62-75). Next, Marduk is born, exceptional from birth, and his play disturbs Tiamat (*EE* I, 78-110). Tiamat's allies, also unable to rest due to Marduk's play, urge her to take revenge for Apsu's death (*EE* I, 111-128), and she creates a monstrous army for battle (*EE* I, 129-146). She selects Qingu from her new brood to lead the army and be her husband, and she grants him "kingship of all the gods" (*EE* I, 147-162). Ea, Anshar, the Igigi gods, and the Anunnaki gods are terrified of Tiamat's army and Qingu's possession of the Tablet of

¹⁰⁰ Vanstiphout characterizes *EE* as "a theological didactic poem about Marduk as the Supreme Being and his World Order" (Vanstiphout, "Enuma Elish as a Systematic Creed," 52).

¹⁰¹ Lambert, "The Reign of Nebuchadnezzar I," 3-13; Foster, *Before the Muses*, 291-297, 376-377.

Destinies (*EE* II, 1-126), so Ea summons Marduk in secret to subdue Tiamat (*EE* II, 127-162). Marduk demands that in exchange he be given the power to confer destinies:

Lord of the gods, of the destiny of the great gods,
If I indeed avenge you,
If I bind Tiamat and rescue you,
Arrange an assembly, ordain my supreme destiny.
Gladly convene together in the court of assembly.
Let my decree determine destinies instead of you.
Anything that I myself establish, let it not be changed.
Neither reverse nor negate the command of my lips (*EE* II, 155-162).

In Tablet III, the gods discuss Tiamat's threat and hear that both Anu and Nudimmud were too afraid to confront her, but that Marduk has offered to fight her. As in *Anzu*, where Ninurta is selected after a series of other potential warriors have demurred, in *Enuma Elish* Marduk in particular is selected to challenge Tiamat, and his willingness to do so is contrasted with the fear of two other potential warriors. In both narratives, this feature serves to highlight how daunting the battle is even to warrior deities and how Ninurta and Marduk, respectively, are exceptional among the gods.¹⁰² This tablet ends with a scene in which the gods are so relieved that Marduk is willing to challenge Tiamat that they are filled with joy; they feast and drink, and with elevated spirits, "To Marduk their avenger they confer destiny" (*EE* III, 137-138).

In the fourth tablet, Marduk is crowned king (*EE* IV, 1-28) and given supremacy among the gods:

"You are prominent among the great gods,
Your destiny is not equaled, your command is (like that of) Anu.
...
From this day forth, your command shall not be negated.
..."

¹⁰² In *Anzu*, three warriors are sought out before Ninurta is chosen, whereas in *EE*, only two other potential warriors are mentioned.

No one among gods shall transgress your limits.

...

Marduk, you indeed are our avenger,
We grant you kingship over all of everything.”

...

They rejoiced, they acclaimed, “Marduk is king!” (*EE IV*, 3-4; 7; 10; 13-14; 28).

Following this, Marduk prepares for battle (*EE IV*, 29-64). After he fights Tiamat and her army (*EE IV*, 65-120), he regains the Tablet of Destinies (*EE IV*, 121-122). He then mutilates Tiamat’s body, uses her body parts to construct the heavens, and compartmentalizes her waters (*EE IV*, 123-140).¹⁰³ Finally, he constructs abodes for Ea, Enlil, and Anu (*EE IV*, 141-146). In the fifth tablet, Marduk organizes the cosmos by positioning the stars, planets, calendar, weather, and waters, including using more remaining parts of Tiamat’s body to form clouds, mist, springs, the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, mountains, and “the Great Bond” that holds the heaven and earth together, and to secure the heaven and earth (*EE V*, 1-66).¹⁰⁴ He then sets up images of his defeated enemies at his temple in Babylon as a memorial of his victory (*EE V*, 67-77). Upon seeing these, the gods rejoice, bring gifts, and proclaim in unison “This is the king!” (*EE*

¹⁰³ Elsewhere, it seems that Tiamat is not dead but that Marduk is keeping her subdued. In the list of names attributed to Marduk in Tablet VII, the elaboration of the name Nēberu includes the following:

The course of the stars of heaven, may he maintain.
Like sheep, may he tend all the gods.
May he bind Tiamat, may her life be narrow and short.
In the future of humanity, in days to come,
May she depart, may she not return, may she be distant forever (*EE VII*, 130-134).

This would imply that Tiamat is still potentially a threat that Marduk must address. I will discuss the notion of a continually subdued cosmic enemy in Chapter 4, specifically with regard to traditions about Leviathan and Behemoth.

¹⁰⁴ For discussion of the cosmographic features in this passage, see Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 107-125.

V, 78-88). The gods anoint him, and as he takes his royal garments, implements, and throne, they again swear allegiance to Marduk (*EE* V, 89-116). Marduk announces that he shall build a temple on the earth for himself where he will establish his kingship, and he names it Babylon, “House of the great gods,” where all the gods are to visit regularly. The gods agree to his wishes and once again affirm his kingship: “Before, the lord was [our beloved] son; but now, (he is) our king” (*EE* V, 117-156). The narrative of *Enuma Elish* concludes in Tablet VI in which Marduk deals with the last of his defeated enemies. He kills Qingu, his political rival whom the text repeatedly condemns as illegitimate, using his blood to create humans (*EE* VI, 1-38). The Anunnaki gods are ordered to build Babylon, where the Igigi gods then celebrate, and the great gods take their thrones (*EE* VI, 39-81). The rest of this tablet and the whole of the final tablet are dedicated to still more praise of Marduk, additional confirmation of his kingship, and the pronouncement of his names, whereby he is proclaimed to be exalted above everything imaginable (*EE* VI, 92-166, VII).

The destiny of Marduk was utmost, they prostrated themselves.

...

They granted him the execution of kingship over the gods.

...

May his rule be supreme, he will have no rival. (*EE* VI, 96; 99; 106).

The text ends: “Let them recite the song of Marduk, who bound Tiamat and took kingship,” summarizing and reiterating the purpose of the narrative.

Enuma Elish promotes Marduk, Babylon, and Marduk’s temple through the legitimating ideology of the conflict topos. The narrative throughout is focused on the elevation of Marduk, which is justified through his victory in combat. His divine kingship is portrayed as legitimate and preferable to an alternative power structure represented by

Qingu and Tiamat. The centrality of Babylon, the presence of deities there, and the establishment of Marduk's temple are portrayed as being determined by Marduk himself and agreed upon by all the gods. The elevation of Marduk and the centrality of Babylon and Marduk's temple are justified in the narrative through the conflict topos, that is, the promotion of the deity and his temple and city is presented as a given result of Marduk's victory. The text presents a distinctly Marduk-centered divine hierarchy and a distinctly Babylon-centered cosmology.

Wilfred G. Lambert has analyzed the elevation of Marduk in *Enuma Elish*, and he argues that though Marduk achieved a prominent status within the pantheon at the time of Hammurabi, *Enuma Elish* elevates Marduk beyond prominence to preeminence within the pantheon.¹⁰⁵ He compares the theogony at the beginning of the narrative with mid-third- and mid-second-millennium BCE god lists and a first-millennium BCE copy of an incantation in order to show how *Enuma Elish* asserts a divine genealogy in which Marduk's status threatens that of Enlil and Anu, traditionally the head Sumerian deities.¹⁰⁶ He finds the ultimate expression of Marduk's new status in a Sumerian and Akkadian bilingual incantation, which lacks any sort of theogony of paired divinities and rather claims that Marduk created everything, even all the great gods.¹⁰⁷ Even within

¹⁰⁵ The prologue to Hammurabi's law code states that Anu, "king of the Anunnaki," and Enlil, "lord of heaven and earth," granted power over all people to Marduk and elevated him among the Igigi gods (Martha Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor* [Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1995], 76). This reflects the elevation of Marduk by the other gods, and his authority over people and the Igigi. However, Anu and Enlil retain their superior status and divine roles.

¹⁰⁶ Lambert, "Mesopotamian Creation Stories," in *Imagining Creation* (ed. Markham J. Geller and Mineke Schipper; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 15-37, 26-29.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

Enuma Elish, however, Lambert argues that Marduk clearly assumes absolute power over the gods.¹⁰⁸ In the narrative, control over the destinies indicates supreme authority, and Marduk attains this control: “Let my decree determine destinies instead of you” (*EE* II 160, and parallels III 62, 120). In Tablet VI, when Marduk assigns all the gods to their positions and orders the cosmos, the gods accept his decrees without objection or consultation. *Enuma Elish* thus exhibits an innovative characterization of Marduk’s relationships to other deities, both friend and foe, which raises him above the familiar pantheon. At the same time, the legitimating ideology used to promote Marduk characterizes a widespread body of combat traditions which promote specific deities, institutions, politics, and agents. The narrative pattern of *Enuma Elish* was not new; rather, Marduk’s exploits in battle were based on Ninurta’s exploits.¹⁰⁹ The adaptation of Ninurta-centered traditions for the purposes of promoting Marduk shows that there was a conscious flexibility in the taxonomy of the conflict topos that allowed authors to promote an innovative characterization of Marduk through the already familiar roles traditionally associated with Ninurta.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Lambert, “The Reign of Nebuchadnezzar I,” 4.

¹⁰⁹ Especially convincing is Lambert’s discussion of how the eleven monsters faced by Marduk are patterned after a list of Ninurta’s enemies (Lambert, “Ninurta Mythology,” 56); see also Vanstiphout, “Enuma Elish as a Systematic Creed,” 44-45.

¹¹⁰ This flexibility is again evident when the defeat of Anzu and perhaps Tiamat is attributed to Nabû (SAA 3, 38; *KAR* 360 [VAT 10060]). Alasdair Livingstone explains that as Marduk took Enlil’s place, his vizier Nabû became identified as his son. Thereafter, Nabû was described with characteristics of Enlil’s son Ninurta and attributed with Ninurta’s victories (Alasdair Livingstone, *Mystical and Mythological Explanatory Works of Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007], 155-156). For further discussion of the development of the relationship between Nabû and Marduk, see Barbara Nevling Porter, “What the Assyrians Thought the Babylonians

The plot of *Enuma Elish* focuses on the establishment of Marduk's power and kingship. In his authoritative position, Marduk establishes Babylon and his temple within it as divinely sanctioned locations. Thus, the narrative implicitly furthers the claims of the human authorities who would benefit from the prominence of Babylon and cultic activity at the temple of Marduk. We may reasonably speculate that the reigning king of Babylon would have certainly benefited from the narrative's Babylon-centered and pro-kingship ideology in that the stability of his state and reign would be tied to divine activities. In Neo-Assyrian explanatory texts and later Seleucid era descriptions of the annual Babylonian New Year's festival, we have evidence for the explicit identification of the king with Marduk.

Several Neo-Assyrian explanatory texts, which interpret and explain various ritual actions, reference Marduk's conflict with Tiamat and Qingu. CT 15, 43-44 (K 03476) = SAA 3, 37 is a particularly interesting example. It begins with a reference to Bēl (here referring to Marduk) defeating his enemies, and then describes the king performing ritual actions. At each step of the ritual, the text states that the king is Marduk and that the king's ritual action represents some accomplishment of Marduk in battle (ll. 3, 5, 7, 11, etc.). The other participants in the ritual are equated with the gods, Marduk's siblings (l. 6) who observe Marduk's victories (l. 11). Along with the equation of Marduk and the king, the sacrificial items are compared to Marduk's defeated enemies, including Qingu, represented by the sheep (l. 9), Anzu and Asakku, traditionally defeated by Ninurta (l.

Thought about the Relative Status of Nabû and Marduk in the Late Assyrian Period," in *Assyria 1995: Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project* (ed. S. Parpola and R. M. Whiting; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997), 253-260.

15), and a “defeated and crushed Anu” (ll. 19-20), which does not explicitly appear in *Anzu* or *Enuma Elish*. When the king opens a container, he is compared to Marduk doing something with his penis to Tiamat, but the line is fragmentary (l. 18).¹¹¹ Someone—perhaps the king, but the antecedent is not clear—shows his weapon to Marduk, who blesses him (l. 14). The last few lines of text on the obverse are fragmentary, but the name Ninurta is legible (l. 16), and the reverse side (damaged and quite fragmentary) mentions Enlil-ship and Ea-ship (rev. l. 9). This is a remarkable text in that it weaves together events from *Enuma Elish* with traditions related to enemies associated with Ninurta in *Anzu* and Sumerian sources. It assigns significance to details of a ritual by proposing that the ritual actions of the king mirror Marduk’s victories. A few other fragmentary explanatory texts feature the same type of interweaving of ritual actors and mythic characters, and likewise intersperse, line by line, a ritual action of a human and a narrative action of a deity.¹¹² As in the text from Nineveh just described (SAA 3, 37), in SAA 3, 39, an explanatory text from Aššur, animals (a dove and sheep) that are ritually manipulated in particularly destructive or violent ways are identified with Marduk’s defeated enemies, specifically Tiamat and Qingu (KAR 307 rev. 17-19 [VAT 8917] =

¹¹¹ Possibly, “he bound/fettered” her, 𒀭𒌷𒍪-[*mu-u₂*], though this is difficult to understand. This verb, *kamû*, occurs in *EE* VII 132 and 162, describing Marduk as the one who binds/fetters Tiamat.

¹¹² For example, LKA 73 (VAT 9947) = SAA 3, 40 obverse, lists a series of days beginning in the middle of the month of Šabatu (XI) that are associated, one by one, with single episodes in which Marduk defeats his enemies. Unfortunately the first line is slightly damaged, but it begins with the king going somewhere, and this line is associated with Marduk defeating Anu. In the middle of the text, there is a reference to the king wearing a crown and assuming kingship, and after some fragmentary lines, to the “throne of Bēl.” Despite how fragmentary and opaque this text is, it clearly associates Marduk’s series of victories with a series of days that includes a day “when the king wears a crown.”

SAA 3, 39). These Neo-Assyrian explanatory texts, as those discussed above that mention Ninurta, are somewhat opaque in their nature and function, but they indicate that the characters and narrative hierarchy of *Enuma Elish* were adapted within another genre to elevate the status of the king, at least in the context of the ritual being explained, by comparing him to Marduk. The king is portrayed in the position of Marduk relative to his defeated enemies, represented by ritual objects slain and mutilated by the king. By claiming that the king's ritual actions are representative of Marduk's victories, the explanatory text recasts the ritual as a reenactment of the elevation of Marduk through his combat. We have no way of knowing whether the association of these specific rituals with *Enuma Elish* was limited to these explanatory texts or whether this presents a shared understanding of these rituals. However, the explanatory texts at least indicate that such associations, including the explicit identification of the king with Marduk, were developed within Neo-Assyrian scholarly literature. Later Seleucid period copies of ritual texts that describe the annual Babylonian New Year's festival also identify the king with Marduk as he engages in ritual actions.

Descriptions of the annual Babylonian New Year's festival incorporate images based upon Marduk's combat with Tiamat.¹¹³ The ritual even specifies that a priest would "raise" (*i-na-áš-ši*) *Enuma Elish*, most likely indicating that he recited *Enuma Elish*

¹¹³ Our evidence for the association of *EE* with the Babylonian *akītu* festival comes from Seleucid period copies of ritual texts. These copies post-date the Greek destruction of Babylonian temples by ca.200 years, so we cannot establish how accurate these texts are or the precise dates of the rituals they describe (Porter, "What the Assyrians Thought the Babylonians Thought," 253; Black, "The New Year Ceremonies in Ancient Babylon: 'Taking Bēl by the Hand' and a Cultic Picnic," *Religion* 11 [1981]: 39-59, 42).

(*RAcc.*, 127-154, 1.282).¹¹⁴ This festival was an occasion at which the narrative and its legitimating ideology were used for political purposes to renew the king's authority. The king led a procession in which Marduk's statue was carried to the *akītu* house and placed on top of a platform representing Tiamat.¹¹⁵ *Enuma Elish* and ritual activities related to Marduk's battle with Tiamat were used to frame the king's authority in a legitimizing discourse. The position and authority of Marduk were exhibited, and his elevation to kingship, specifically through combat, was rehearsed. Similarly, the promotion of the king to power is reenacted: a ritual humiliation of the king serves to provoke the king to reaffirm his loyalty to the gods, Babylon, the temple Esagil, and his subjects, and this is followed by the priest assuring the king that Marduk will endorse his kingship and defeat his enemies (*RAcc.*, 127-154, 413-452).¹¹⁶ The association of the king with Marduk was physically displayed with the king's role of "taking the hands" of Marduk and leading the divine statue in procession.¹¹⁷ The *akītu* festival is an example of how the ideology of

¹¹⁴ The Akkadian text is available in Marc J. H. Linssen, *The Cults of Uruk and Babylon: The Temple Ritual Texts as Evidence for Hellenistic Cult Practice* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 215-224; see also 235 note to 1.282. Earlier reconstructions of the ritual, influenced by "Myth-Ritual" theories, proposed that the *EE* was not only recited but reenacted by the king. This is no longer a defensible reconstruction. See discussion in Benjamin D. Sommer, "The Babylonian Akitu Festival: Rectifying the King or Renewing the Cosmos?," *JANES* 27 (2000), 81-95.

¹¹⁵ Lambert, "The Great Battle of the Mesopotamian Religious Year, the Conflict in the Akitu House," *Iraq* 25 (1963), 189-190; see also Andrew R. George, *Babylonian Topographical Texts* (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 1992), 268-269.

¹¹⁶ Linssen, *The Cults of Uruk and Babylon*, 82.

¹¹⁷ Julye Bidmead speculates that "taking the hands" of Marduk had a symbolic legal meaning during the *akītu* festival, indicating that Marduk and the king ritually renewed their contractual agreement (Julye Bidmead, *The Akītu Festival: Religious Continuity and Royal Legitimation in Mesopotamia* [Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2002], 161-162). M. J. H. Linssen rejects Bidmead's proposal that (the phrase or act of) *qātē DN šabātu*

Enuma Elish, a particular Babylonian articulation of the conflict topos, was used for political purposes, and it offers a view of the legitimizing connotations of the conflict topos in Babylonian tradition.

Enuma Elish promotes the deity Marduk to a preeminent status within the divine hierarchy, a status justified through his victories in combat. The narrative portrays the establishment of Babylon and Marduk's temple as the result of divine decrees, and promotes these locations by claiming that they are sites of divine activity. The narrative exhibits a distinctly Marduk-centered and Babylon-centered ideology, which would have also served the interests of ruling authorities in Babylon by tying the city's stability with cosmic events. Finally, we have evidence from Neo-Assyrian explanatory texts and later Seleucid period copies of Babylonian ritual texts that the combat traditions recorded in *Enuma Elish* were adapted within other genres. These texts identify the king with Marduk; as the king interacts with ritual objects, the activities and ritual movement recall the elevation of Marduk to kingship through his victories. This, in turn, elevates the status of the king, at least during these rituals, by suggesting a parallel between the human king and divine king. Though our understanding of the explanatory texts is limited by their obscure nature, and our interpretation of the New Year's festival ritual texts is

had such a legal meaning in this context, because other ritual texts use the phrase to indicate leading a divine statue in procession as well, without legal connotations (Linssen, "Review of Bidmead, J.—*The Akītu Festival*," *BiOr* 61.1-2 [2004]: 160-164, 162). Nonetheless, the physical contact of the king and Marduk in the *akītu* procession suggests that a focus of the ritual was the close association between the king and Marduk. Likewise, the physical contact of some other individual with another divine statue in some other ritual procession would indicate a focus on the association of that individual with that particular deity. In other words, even if we reject Bidmead's speculation about a legal meaning for *qātē DN šabātu* in the *akītu* festival, the role of leading the god in procession still has a symbolic value.

complicated by their late provenance, both literary corpora attest to the spread and use of the narrative hierarchy of *Enuma Elish* and suggest that its legitimating ideology, used explicitly in the text to promote Marduk, his temple, Babylon, and kingship, was employed to promote kings as well.

Aššur version of Enuma Elish

Enuma Elish is a Babylonian text celebrating Babylonian places in honor of a Babylonian god, Marduk. The ideological work performed by the text was apparently so successful that the combat with Tiamat and every other detail were appropriated by an Assyrian editor to produce a version of *Enuma Elish* that celebrated Assyrian places and honored the Assyrian god, Aššur.¹¹⁸ This Assyrian recension is only found in late fragments, dating ca. 700-612 BCE, from Aššur and Nineveh.¹¹⁹ It is widely accepted that the Assyrian version of *Enuma Elish* is secondary to the Babylonian version because there are no traces of Assyrian dialect in the version that celebrates Aššur.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ The Assyrian version was first discussed by Heinrich Zimmern in H. Zimmern, "Marduks (Ellils, Aššurs) Geburt im babylonischen Weltschöpfungsepos," *MVAG* 21 (1917): 213-225; and shortly thereafter, Daniel D. Luckenbill, "The Ashur Version of the Seven Tablets of Creation," *AJSL* 38 (1921): 12-35. See also Peter Machinist, "The Assyrians and Their Babylonian Problem: Some Reflections," in *Jahrbuch des Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin*, (Berlin: Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, 1984/85), 353-364, 359. On the multivalence of the designation "Aššur" for the deity, city, and territory, see Lambert, "The God Aššur," *Iraq* 45.1 (1983): 82-86.

¹¹⁹ Lambert, "The Assyrian Recension of Enūma Eliš," *CRRAI* 39 (1992): 77-79; 77.

¹²⁰ Dalley, *Myths*, 228.

Lambert has compiled the alterations present in the Assyrian text, and they are remarkably few and limited to city names and divine names.¹²¹ In place of the name Marduk, the Assyrian editor inserted AN.ŠÁR, which is how Aššur's name came to be written in many Late Assyrian texts. Anšar is actually the name of Marduk's great-grandfather in the opening of *Enuma Elish* (*EE*, I, 1.12). However, the names Anšar and Aššur were merged at some point, as can be seen in royal inscriptions of Sargon II.¹²² As a result, the deity Anšar is left out of Aššur's lineage in the Assyrian version of *Enuma Elish* and the rest of Marduk's lineage is shuffled a bit to account for this.¹²³ The two times that the city Babylon is mentioned, the location is changed to the city Aššur. With these few substitutions the entire focus of *Enuma Elish* and its ideology are shifted to serve Assyrian interests. Lambert finds the revisionist effort "ill-conceived" and "amateurish," however, and notes that the revisions are little attested in late Assyrian copies of *Enuma Elish*; there is even a copy in which the revisions are incomplete. We do have at least one external quotation of the Assyrian recension in a badly damaged Late Assyrian letter that maintains the substitution of Aššur for the title Bēl in Tablet IV, 17.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Lambert, "Assyrian Recension," 77.

¹²² Lambert, "Assyrian Recension," 78; Hayim Tadmor argues that the custom of writing Aššur's name as AN.ŠÁR did not occur before the reign of Sargon II (Hayim Tadmor, "The Campaigns of Sargon II of Assur: A Chronological-Historical Study," *JCS* 12 [1958]: 22-40, 77-100, 82 n.231).

¹²³ Primarily, Marduk's parents Ea and Damkina are replaced by Lahmu and Lahamu (Lambert, "Assyrian Recension," 78).

¹²⁴ Lambert, "Assyrian Recension," 78; ABL 1336 = S. Parpola, LAS 288 = SAA 10, 365.

The way that the Assyrian *Enuma Elish* promotes Aššur, and the exact nature of its pro-Aššur ideology is more apparent, however, when we look at other texts that claim Aššur's preeminence over the other gods. There are two effective techniques used to elevate Aššur within the existing hierarchy of the pantheon. One technique is to portray Marduk and Ninurta as agents of Aššur. Rather than a strategy of equating Aššur with Marduk or Ninurta, these deities are reimagined as subordinate to Aššur. As with all hierarchies, position is relative, so the explicit subordination simultaneously detracts from the status of Marduk and Ninurta while elevating that of Aššur. Moreover, this strategy rhetorically prevents the possibility of understanding Aššur as interchangeable with Marduk or Ninurta, by asserting that his status surpasses theirs in the pantheon. Another technique is to extend Aššur's new role beyond ruling over the rest of the gods such that he takes over the roles of older gods in creation. Through this technique Aššur supercedes the older deities. This not only widens the scope of Aššur's divine activities but also denies the status of the preceding deities in the traditional pantheon.

Assyrian redactors did not hide the fact that they were using Marduk and Ninurta traditions to characterize Aššur's rule. Rather than ignoring Marduk and Ninurta, they are treated as existing warrior gods who had achieved prominence. However, they are demoted from kingship and are portrayed as acting on Aššur's behalf. The "Marduk Ordeal," a fragmentary and opaque text, describes the captivity of Marduk (KAR 143 and duplicates = SAA 3, 34 [Aššur] and 35 [Nineveh]).¹²⁵ Marduk is said to be guarded as a

¹²⁵ For discussion of the challenges in interpreting the "Marduk Ordeal" and further bibliography, see Livingstone, *Works*, 208-221; Herman L. J. Vanstiphout, "The nth Degree of Writing at Nineveh," *Iraq* 66 (2004): 51-54; Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "The Tribulations of Marduk and the So-Called Marduk Ordeal Text," *JAOS* 103 (1983): 131-

prisoner by a son of Aššur (l. 19), and Aššur brings lawsuits against Marduk (l. 18). The text mentions *Enuma Elish* several times, stating that it is recited in front of Bēl, and that it “concerns the prisoner” Marduk (l.34). After a fragmentary line, in which something is sung, Marduk pleads his innocence before Šamaš, stating “Only what was good for Aššur, those things I did. What then is [my] crime?” (l. 36). It follows, from the reference to the recitation and chanting of *Enuma Elish*, that what is sung in the fragmentary line is *Enuma Elish*. If so, the text portrays Marduk himself stating that his actions as the victorious protagonist of *Enuma Elish* were actually favors for Aššur. As Alasdair Livingstone points out, this shift in Marduk’s agency cleverly plays upon the narrative detail of *Enuma Elish* in which Marduk’s victories are said to benefit the older deity Anšar (*EE* IV, 125).¹²⁶ It is not in tension with the rise of Marduk that his victory also benefits Anšar and other deities. On the contrary, his elevation is justified by the fact that he successfully quells a threat that the other deities are unwilling to face. However, subsequent to the merging of Aššur’s name with Anšar’s name, the meaning of the notion that Marduk acts for the benefit of Anšar changes substantially. In the “Marduk Ordeal” this notion is elaborated in order to legitimate a preference for Aššur over Marduk. Similarly, the text recalls Ninurta’s victory over Anzu, but makes Ninurta an agent of Aššur:

When Aššur sent Ninurta to defeat Anzu. Nergal [...] sent word before Aššur, “Indeed, Anzu is defeated.” Aššur [said] to the god [...]; “Go now, tell the news to all the gods” (“Marduk Ordeal,” SAA 3, 34: 58-60).

141; Martti Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 151.

¹²⁶ Livingstone, *Works*, 226.

This passage preserves the tradition of Ninurta's victory over Anzu, but rather than replacing Ninurta with Aššur, it presents Aššur as superior to Ninurta, who here appears to defeat Anzu on Aššur's behalf. Another version of this text from Nineveh includes Qingu and Asakku as enemies whom Ninurta defeats for Aššur as well (SAA 3, 35). This text offers a fascinating display of how composers reshaped the combat traditions of *Anzu* and *Enuma Elish* to serve their interests and manipulated the taxonomy of the characters involved to promote highly innovative views of their preferred deity. Marduk and Ninurta are subordinated to Aššur such that the victories through which they attained kingship become acts of service to Aššur, who is now king. Moreover, their explicit subordination eliminates the possibility of understanding Aššur as interchangeable with Marduk or Ninurta.

A second technique used to elevate the status of Aššur was to portray him as superceding the older generation of gods who participated in creation. This strategy developed from the merging of Anšar's name with Aššur's name, which we see in the Assyrian recension of *Enuma Elish* and in earlier texts as well. Aššur is elevated to Anšar's position in the pantheon and becomes part of the primeval generation. He thereby becomes older and more prominent than Marduk in the divine genealogy (*EE* I 1-16). Peter Machinist emphasizes that as the son of Lahmu and Lahamu, Aššur precedes Anu and Marduk's parents Ea and Damkina, who were all prominent Babylonian gods. Thus the only deities remaining above Aššur are "cultically otiose deities, Apsu, Tiamat, Lahmu, and Lahamu."¹²⁷ When Aššur supercedes the prominent primeval deities, he

¹²⁷ Machinist, "The Assyrians and Their Babylonian Problem," 359.

achieves a greater status than he would have if they were to retain their roles in creation and the honor of their antiquity.

This new role for Aššur is explored in several texts besides the Assyrian recension of *Enuma Elish*. A hymn to Aššur ascribes to him the power to ordain destinies, calls him father and creator of the heavens and earth as well as creator of the gods, and states that his sovereignty was acknowledged by Anu, Enlil, Ea, Belet-ili, and Ninlil (SAA 3, 1).¹²⁸ A text describing the dedication of cultic specialists for the Assyrian *akītu* festival calls Aššur “the king of all the gods, creator of himself, the father of the great gods” (SAA 12, 86, 7).¹²⁹ Inscriptions regarding the Assyrian reconstruction of Babylonian temples and the reinstatement of Babylonian divine statues state that these statues are returned only after they have been refashioned and “born” (*im-ma-al-du*) in Aššur’s temple (*RINAP* 4.48:1-2, 87).¹³⁰ Steles portraying Aššurbanipal participating physically in the labor of

¹²⁸ Foster, *Before the Muses*, 817-819; Livingstone, *Court Poetry*, xvii; Tadmor, “The Campaigns,” 82.

¹²⁹ SAA 12, 86 is also discussed in Machinist, “Assyrians and Their Babylonian Problem,” 356; 363 n.12.

¹³⁰ For discussion of this text and the topic of cult statues being born, see Victor A. Hurowitz, “The Mesopotamian God Issue: From Womb to Womb,” *JAOS* 123 (2003): 147-157; Steven W. Holloway, *Aššur is King! Aššur is King!: Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 284-285; Christopher Walker and Michael B. Dick, “The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian *mis pi* Ritual,” in *Born in Heaven, Made on Earth: The Making of the Cult Image in the Ancient Near East* (ed. Michael B. Dick; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 55-122, 64-66, 116-117; Barbara N. Porter, “Gods’ Statues as a Tool of Assyrian Political Policy: Esarhaddon’s Return of Marduk to Babylon,” in *Religious Transformations and Socio-Political Change: Eastern Europe and Latin America* (ed. Luther H. Martin; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1993), 12; B. idem., *Images, Power, and Politics: Figurative Aspects of Esarhaddon’s Babylonian Policy* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1993), 124-125, 152; Machinist, “Assyrians and Their Babylonian Problem,” 357.

temple reconstruction state that Marduk returns to Babylon reconfigured as a deity who has been created by “the father” Aššur (*RIM* B.6.32.14, 25-26; B.6.32.2, 36-37). By claiming that Aššur created Marduk, the inscriptions lower Marduk’s status relative to Aššur and deny that Marduk is a rival deity. This heightens Aššur’s authority and subsumes Marduk under Aššur’s dominion and paternity. The “Marduk Ordeal” text introduces the new divine genealogy by attributing it to *Enuma Elish*:

That which is said in *Enuma Elish*: When heaven and earth were not created, Anšar emerged (“Marduk Ordeal,” SAA 3, 34, 54).

The text here substitutes the name Anšar, indicating the deity Aššur, for Apsu and Tiamat, the very first generation of primeval gods. Thus, Aššur not only replaces Marduk as the victorious warrior elevated to kingship among the gods but also reaches unprecedented heights in the pantheon. By assuming Anšar’s place in traditional genealogies, he joins the primeval generation of gods, takes on roles in creation, and becomes “father” and “creator” of the gods.

In addition to the innovative portrayal of Aššur’s position in the pantheon, Assyrian tradition also makes use of the legitimating ideology of the conflict topos to support its kings. Aššur’s authority is extended to kings in texts that associate the king with Aššur and claim that he has given the king authority. The hymn to Aššur ends by claiming that Aššurbanipal is the vice-regent of Aššur who has delivered sovereignty into the king’s hands (SAA 3, 1 [K 3258], rev. 8 and 12). Aššurbanipal’s coronation hymn claims that Aššur has given him his scepter (SAA 3, 11 [VAT 13831], 2), symbolic of Aššur’s kingship and authority (which the hymn explicitly asserts in l. 15), while Ninurta is merely a warrior deity who gives him his weapon (rev. 5). As discussed above, Assyrian texts blend traditions associated with Ninurta, Marduk, and Aššur, in such a

way that emphasizes the superiority of Aššur and his status of supreme divine authority. These two texts promote the kingship of Aššurbanipal, the last of the Sargonid kings: Sargon II (721-705 BCE), Sennacherib (705-681 BCE), Esarhaddon (680-669 BCE), and Aššurbanipal (668-627 BCE). Machinist identifies a series of “ideological actions and expressions” during the reigns of the Sargonid kings that promoted Assyria as “the new center of Mesopotamian culture.”¹³¹ Several phenomena that exhibit this ideological tendency center around the Assyrian version of *Enuma Elish*, and may date to the reign of Sennacherib.

Sennacherib destroyed Babylon and carried away the cult statue of Marduk (689 BCE). He brought the throne and bed of Marduk to Assyria and placed them in Aššur’s temple, and he instituted an Assyrian *akītu* festival that promoted Aššur as “king of the gods.”¹³² An inscription of Sennacherib describes a scene from *Enuma Elish* that was depicted on the doors of his *akītu* house, showing Aššur approaching Tiamat and her army in battle; Aššur wields his bow and flood-weapon and rides in his chariot (K 1356).¹³³ The inscription clearly describes Aššur in combat with Tiamat, providing evidence for a visual representation of the Assyrian version of *Enuma Elish*. Furthermore, the inscription emphasizes that Sennacherib was responsible for the illustration of the

¹³¹ Machinist, “Assyrians and Their Babylonian Problem,” 359.

¹³² Lambert, “Assyrian Recension,” 77; Machinist, “Assyrians and Their Babylonian Problem,” 356, 363 n.10.

¹³³ Eckart Frahm, *Einleitung in die Sanherib-Inschriften* (Vienna: Institut für Orientalistik der Universität, 1997), 222-224, text 184; Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1924), 139-142: 6-r.1; r.10-1.e.2; Beate Pongratz-Leiten, *Ina šulmi īrub: Die Kulttopographische und Ideologische Programmatik der Akītu-Prozession in Babylonien und Assyrien im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1994), 207-209.

great battle scene (K 1356, l. 26). Sennacherib's reputation is explicitly linked to the production of this monument, which suggests that the content of the picture was also significant for Sennacherib's legitimacy. The choice of the combat scene is particularly fitting because it was through victory against Tiamat that Aššur attained his kingship. Sennacherib's production of the monument, emphasized in the inscription, implies that the illustration of this pivotal moment in the story of *Enuma Elish* would serve to promote Sennacherib's kingship by suggesting that his status is linked to Aššur's victory as well. The relationship between Sennacherib's kingship and Aššur's authority, implied in K 1356, is made explicit in K 6177+8869, which describes an illustration of Aššur, the Tablet of Destinies, and Sennacherib as well as an accompanying prayer to Aššur regarding Sennacherib's kingship.¹³⁴ The picture shows the Tablet of Destinies with Aššur's image on it, and the inscription repeatedly states that Aššur possesses the Tablet of Destinies. It also lists the powers that the Tablet of Destinies represents and asserts that Aššur wields this authority because he possesses the tablet. The implications of Aššur's possession of the Tablet of Destinies for his authority, as described in K 6177+8869, is entirely consistent with the Assyrian version of *Enuma Elish*. The picture (described in K 6177+8869) also includes Sennacherib in a posture of obeisance before Aššur, and in his prayer (which was presumably inscribed with the picture, and copied in K 6177+8869) Sennacherib requests that Aššur protect his reign, destine kingship for him, exalt him above other royal figures, and make his throne as secure as a long-standing mountain. Though in the form of a request, Sennacherib's prayer implies that Aššur does in fact

¹³⁴ The text is presented by Andrew R. George, "Sennacherib and the Tablet of Destinies," *Iraq* 48 (1986): 133-146.

endorse Sennacherib's authority. In sum, K 6177+8869 (and the picture it describes) claims that Aššur's authority is legitimate, physically juxtaposes Sennacherib and Aššur, and explicitly links Sennacherib's kingship to Aššur. I propose that the same legitimating ideology is at work in K 1356 and K 6177+8869: these texts, and the visual media they describe, promote Sennacherib's kingship specifically by making references to the story of Aššur's rise to power through his defeat of Tiamat and attainment of the Tablet of Destinies and therefore of divine kingship.

Sennacherib's annals may also allude to *Enuma Elish* in the account of the battle of Halule (691 BCE). Elnathan Weissert has proposed that there are five allusions to the Assyrian version of *Enuma Elish* in Sennacherib's account of this battle.¹³⁵ There are instances of specific and peculiar shared vocabulary that suggest correspondences between characters and scenes from *Enuma Elish* and Sennacherib's campaign. Sennacherib is compared to Aššur in several ways, and the inhabitants of Babylon are characterized as "wicked demons," a description used for Tiamat's army.¹³⁶ The Babylonian king Mushezib-Marduk is accused of possessing illegitimate power, and the inscription uses the same phrase (*ana lā simātišu*) that characterizes Qingu's inappropriate power in *Enuma Elish*.¹³⁷ This simultaneously promotes Sennacherib as a legitimate authority while attacking the legitimacy of his rival. The anxious and hurried

¹³⁵ Elnathan Weissert, "Creating a Political Climate: Literary Allusions to *Enuma Elish* in Sennacherib's Account of the Battle of Halule," *CRRAI* 39 (1992): 191-202.

¹³⁶ Weissert, "Creating a Political Climate," 193 and notes 13, 14, citing *EE*, IV, 116-117 and *Chic. Pr.* V 18-19. The prism text is available in Luckenbill, *Senn.*, 23-47; Frahm, *Sanherib*, 102-105, text 16.

¹³⁷ Weissert, "Creating a Political Climate," 193-194 and notes 16, 17, citing *EE*, IV, 82 and *Chic. Pr.* V 28-29.

manner in which the gods attend to Sennacherib's situation is described with the same adverb (*urruḫiṣ*) as the manner in which the gods send Marduk into battle.¹³⁸ When describing Sennacherib putting on his battle helmet, the inscription uses an archaic form of the word "head" (*rāšu*), which is also used in the description of Aššur's head being crowned with terrifying radiance before battle.¹³⁹ Finally, the most compelling correlation occurs between the weapon of Sennacherib and that of Aššur. Sennacherib is armed with a bow that Aššur himself has given to him. Furthermore, his arrow "cuts off life," a description that recalls Aššur's charge upon receiving his weapon to end Tiamat's life.¹⁴⁰ The same vocabulary (forms of the verb *parāsu*, "to cut off," and the noun *napaštu*, "life, throat") is used in the inscription and *Enuma Elish* IV 31. Even if one is not convinced by all five of the allusions that Weissert proposes, this last correspondence regarding the weapon is sufficient to find a direct link from Sennacherib's inscription to the Assyrian version of *Enuma Elish*. When Aššur gives Sennacherib a bow and arrow, he confers his prowess in battle on Sennacherib and foreshadows Sennacherib defeating his enemy and gaining power in the same manner that Aššur was victorious and won dominion. The structure and taxonomy of the conflict topos, in this case based on the Assyrian articulation of it, is invoked by Aššur's presence. The text of the inscription portrays

¹³⁸ This is the weakest of Weissert's five allusions, but it is still based on specific and peculiar shared vocabulary; Weissert, "Creating a Political Climate," 194 and notes 19-21 citing *EE*, II, 113; *EE* III, 65; and *Chic. Pr.* V 66-67.

¹³⁹ Weissert, "Creating a Political Climate," 195 and notes 26, 27, citing *EE*, IV, 58 and *Chic. Pr.* V 68-69.

¹⁴⁰ Weissert prefers "piercer of throats," where I translate "cuts off life," but we are reading the same Akkadian here, and this does not effect his argument (Weissert, "Creating a Political Climate," 194-195 and notes 22-24, citing *EE*, IV, 30-31 and *Chic. Pr.* V 71-73 and VI 3).

Sennacherib in Aššur's position by having Aššur give him weapons; Sennacherib is legitimated by being portrayed in Aššur's position in the mythic hierarchy. Sennacherib's account of the battle of Halule and his descriptions of monumental art depicting images from *Enuma Elish* (described in K 1356 and K 6177+8869) illustrate the application of the legitimating ideology of the conflict topos for the purposes of promoting a specific royal figure.

External references to the Assyrian version of *Enuma Elish* employ a particular articulation of the conflict topos, with Aššur defeating Tiamat to become "king of the gods," in order to legitimate Assyrian kings and empire.¹⁴¹ Sennacherib's authority as king was displayed by associating him with the victorious Aššur and portraying him in

¹⁴¹ Hayim Tadmor discusses the royal ideology of Assyrian inscriptions and the relationship between scribes and kings (Hayim Tadmor, "Propaganda, Literature, Historiography: Cracking the Code of the Assyrian Royal Inscriptions," in *Assyria 1995*, 325-338). Several of his observations and hypotheses are relevant for our understanding of the production and audience of the types of ideological texts I discuss. He identifies two layers of ideological work within Assyrian royal inscriptions: first, the promotion of the king as the ultimate warrior who obliterates his enemy, and second, the claim that Aššur commanded and therefore endorsed the king's war activities and determined that enemies be conquered (Tadmor, "Propaganda," 326-327). Tadmor suggests that Assyrian court composers drew from a reservoir of heroic imagery drawn from oral and written epics, first-hand accounts of events and military campaigns, and campaign itineraries ("Propaganda," 327, 329). While the inscriptions are mostly anonymous, and the narrators of their contents are the kings themselves, and Tadmor reasons that they were produced by royal scribes who "mirrored and created the political attitudes of the king" ("Propaganda," 328). Therefore, the king, in relation to his royal scribes, was both the official author and the primary audience of his scribes' compositions ("Propaganda," 332). Tadmor cautions that beyond the king and scribes, we do not know the audience of royal ideology since "the very existence of public opinion and the public audience in Assyrian society is yet to be demonstrated" ("Propaganda," 332). However, he proposes that the (imagined or actual) audience would have included the gods, the future heir, and the state elite ("Propaganda," 334). For further discussion see, Frahm, "New Sources for Sennacherib's 'First Campaign'," *ISIMU VI* (2003): 129-164, "Appendix C," 157-160; Mikko Luukko, "The Administrative Roles of the 'Chief Scribe' and the 'Palace Scribe' in the Neo-Assyrian Period," *SAAB 16* (2007): 227-256.

Aššur's position. Aššurbanipal's authority was conferred to him directly by Aššur. The authors and redactors responsible for these Assyrian traditions use the legitimizing ideology of the conflict topos, directly from *Enuma Elish*, to place Aššur in the position of Marduk as the victorious, legitimate king with authority over the gods. However, Assyrian texts go beyond substituting Aššur for Marduk, and subordinate both Marduk and Ninurta to Aššur's authority. The texts do not deny or ignore that Marduk and Ninurta are also successful warrior deities; rather they acknowledge Marduk and Ninurta and explicitly place Aššur above them in the pantheon. Machinist situates the Assyrian version of *Enuma Elish* within a series of phenomena related to the elevation of Aššur, the promotion of Assyrian kings, and the centrality of Assyria (rather than Babylonia) in the socio-political realm of Mesopotamia during the reigns of the Sargonid kings.¹⁴² If we accept his interpretation of these phenomena and their ideological import, then the Assyrian articulation and application of the conflict topos fits within a broader political effort to assert Assyrian centrality and prominence.

Assyrian authors, redactors, and copyists adapted Babylonian literary traditions as they generated Assyrian royal ideology. The political relationship between Assyria and Babylon was constantly changing, and we have evidence for a range of Assyrian attitudes

¹⁴² Machinist concludes by comparing the Sargonid ideology of Assyrian centrality to the earlier 13th century exaltation of Aššur under Tukulti-Ninurta I. At that time, Aššur was identified with Enlil and so elevated over Marduk. Tukulti-Ninurta I also sacked Babylon, compiled a library from stolen Babylonian collections, removed the statue of Marduk, and instituted *akītu* rites in Aššur, though still in honor of Marduk. Machinist proposes that at both of these times, Babylonian traditions were rearticulated as Assyrian traditions. Furthermore, he sees the resemblance of these two sets as indicating a "continuum of confrontation" between Assyria and Babylonia. He proposes that this continuum was recognized by Sennacherib himself, who claims to have taken from Babylon a royal seal that had been taken by Tukulti-Ninurta I when he sacked the city 600 years prior (Machinist, "Assyrians and Their Babylonian Problem," 362, 364 n. 34).

towards Babylonian traditions. The totalizing claims that some authors, redactors, and copyists made about Aššur are balanced by Aššurbanipal's acrostic hymn to Marduk (SAA 3, 2). This text exhibits the complexity of the Assyrian adaptation of Babylonian traditions. The acrostic clearly indicates that the hymn was composed for Aššurbanipal: "I am Aššurbanipal, who has called out to you; give me life Marduk, so that I might praise you." Yet within this piece of Assyrian royal ideology, Marduk maintains his roles and status in the pantheon. The hymn celebrates Marduk as the preeminent god and divine king who possesses the Tablet of Destinies (SAA 3, 2, 1-11; 24-27). Marduk is said to have defeated a series of enemies, including Anzu (traditionally defeated by Ninurta), Tiamat, and Qingu (SAA 3, 2, 15-20). In the hymn, the king entreats Marduk for his favor (SAA 3, 2, rev. 12-13, 20-21). The Marduk-centered ideology is consistent with the Babylonian version of *Enuma Elish*: victories in battle are cited in conjunction with the assertion of Marduk's dominion, incomparability, and possession of the Tablet of Destinies. Thus, among Assyrian combat traditions, we see varying levels of play with the identification of the victorious warrior deity. At the same time, the use of the theme of combat for royal ideological purposes is consistent: the deity has achieved divine kingship through victories in battle, and from his preeminent position he may grant favor to the human king. Literature associated with Aššurbanipal in particular may indicate that within (at least, his) royal ideology the rhetorical priority was promoting the king, regardless of which victorious warrior deity was invoked: Marduk, the incomparable king of the gods (SAA 3, 2); Aššur as divine king, and Ninurta as divine warrior (SAA 3, 11); Aššur, explicitly elevated above Marduk (*RIMB* 6.32.14, 25-26; 6.32.2, 36-37); or Aššur, the incomparable king of the gods (SAA 3, 1).

Baal Cycle

The Ugaritic *Baal Cycle* narrates the rise of the storm deity Baal Haddu to kingship after he defeats the sea deity Yamm (literally, “Sea”).¹⁴³ The text’s two surviving colophons identify Ilimalku as the scribe who produced the tablets and indicate that he was associated with King Niqmaddu, most likely Niqmaddu III who reigned ca. 1380-1346 BCE.¹⁴⁴ Cross, William J. Horwitz, and M. S. Smith have each proposed that Ilimalku recorded the extant narrative from existing oral or written tradition.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ The first generation of scholars to interpret the *Baal Cycle* considered the purpose of the text to be explanatory, particularly of regular seasonal changes. However, there is now general agreement that the narrative is about Baal’s rise to power. The most current interpretation, which I share, is articulated by M. S. Smith who considers the focus of the text to be the rise of Baal to kingship. Though he acknowledges seasonal, agricultural, and ritual themes, these are not at the forefront of the narrative. Other interpretations include: (1) a cosmogonic narrative, that is, the text is concerned with cosmos versus chaos and the ordering of society around kingship, temple, and Baal (Mowinckel, Cassuto, Fisher, Cross, Clifford); (2) a ritual text of enthronement for Baal (Mowinckel, Gaster, Kapelrud); (3) a reflection on seasonal cycles in the Ugaritic environment (Gaster, De Moor, Gese, Kinet, Grabbe); (4) an agrarian myth about the struggle of life over death (Caquot); (5) a story responding to historical and political events such as the conflict with Sea Peoples (Obermann), the rise of metallurgy (Virolleaud), the influx of Hurrians (Pope), or the rise of the Amorites (Vine). For a discussion of these interpretations and full references, see M. S. Smith, *UBC 1*, 58-114.

¹⁴⁴ M. S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle Volume II: Introduction with Text, Translation, and Commentary of KTU/CAT 1.3-1.4* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 8, 730; hereafter, *UBC 2*; *KTU 1.4 VIII* (end); *KTU 1.6 VI* 54-58.

¹⁴⁵ Cross speculates that the text was based on oral tradition that was dictated to a scribe (Cross, *CMHE*, 112-113, 117 n. 18, 127 n. 50). William J. Horwitz agrees that the text was based on oral tradition, but cautions that our extant version is not necessarily the first time the narrative was recorded in writing (William J. Horwitz, “Our Ugaritic Mythological Texts: Copied or Dictated?” *UF* 9 [1977]:123-130). M. S. Smith offers a hypothetical reconstruction of four stages in the development of the *Baal Cycle*: First, stories and episodes about Baal circulated independently. This stage would be a fitting context for the development of variants (Cross’s “alloforms”) of Baal’s conflict with an enemy. Second, some stories were written down separately from one another, and various

Considering Ilimalku's association with the king, it seems reasonable to speculate that he would have produced a narrative that would please the king and perhaps even endorse the claims of the ruling family. The narrative promotes Baal and his kingship as well as the institution of kingship and tradition of palace-building. Baal is legitimated through his victory over Yamm and again through his (more involved) victory over Mot (literally, "Death"). He attains kingship and dominion that is recognized by the other deities and receives permission to construct a palace.¹⁴⁶ The *Baal Cycle* presents a particular articulation of the conflict topos in which the authority of Baal is repeatedly challenged but ultimately affirmed. Each of the main characters in the narrative challenges or furthers Baal's authority in some way, and throughout kingship and dominion are the central concerns of the text.

The extant tablets of the *Baal Cycle* are conventionally ordered as follows:

Tablets I and II narrate Baal's conflict with Yamm, Tablets III and IV narrate his

episodes were incorporated into others. Third, Ilimalku copied the available stories, connecting them into a larger narrative. Finally, copies were made of the composition, including our extant tablets (M. S. Smith, *UBC 1*, 33-36).

¹⁴⁶ As I discuss below, Baal's dominion is recognized by the other deities, but he is not celebrated to the extent that Marduk or Aššur are in the *EE*, or even to the extent that Ninurta is in *Anzu*. Considering that Ugarit was a vassal of Hatti, the limited nature of Baal's rise to power may have a political dimension, but this is speculative. Wyatt explores the possibility that the *Baal Cycle* is a myth about the vassal-sovereign relationship between Ugarit and Hatti (Wyatt, "Ilimilku the Theologian: the Ideological Roles of Athtar and Baal in *KTU* 1.1 and 1.6," in *Ex Mesopotamia et Syria Lux: Festschrift für Manfred Dietrich zu seinem 65. Geburtstag am 6.11.2000* [ed. Oswald Loretz, Kai Metzler, Hanspeter Schaudig; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2002], 845-856, 852-854). However, M. S. Smith has criticized Wyatt's interpretation due to a lack of evidence and an over-emphasis on the notion that Ilimalku composed the narrative first-hand within a specific historical context (M. S. Smith, *UBC 2*, 12-13).

attainment of a temple, and Tablets V and VI narrate the conflict with Mot.¹⁴⁷ According to this reconstruction, the plot includes two conflicts in succession, first between Baal and Yamm and second between Baal and Mot. I am less interested in the relationship between the two episodes than in what is at issue in each conflict: dominion.¹⁴⁸ Both conflicts involve a challenge and threat to Baal's rising authority from another deity, and both end in confirmation of Baal's dominion.

The *Baal Cycle* begins with a fragmentary dialogue between El and Yamm in which Yamm plans to attack Baal (*KTU* 1.1 II 1-28). El requests that Yamm, his "beloved," drive Baal from his throne (*KTU* 1.1 III 13-27), and El sends messengers to

¹⁴⁷ Our extant portions of the *Baal Cycle* consist of six tablets and various fragments that were found over the course of three years (1930-1933) in Ugarit. The surviving text contains approximately 1,820 lines of a series of episodes related to the storm deity Baal, though the length of the original text is estimated to be about 5,000 lines. The tablets were found in a house situated between two temples, often called the "House of the High Priest." The tablets were not all found in the same spot, which suggests that they do not belong to one copy of the text. Furthermore, we cannot be certain whether the tablets contain a continuous narrative or a series of loosely related episodes. I agree with M. S. Smith that this reconstruction of the order of the tablets makes the most sense in terms of the flow of the narrative. Baal attains kingship and a temple after he defeats a foe, and then his conflict with Mot is provoked by Baal sending a message to Mot about his new palace (*KTU* 1.4 VIII 1-48). For a full discussion of alternative arrangements of the tablets see M. S. Smith, *UBC* 1, 2-19; for the specific locations where the tablets were found in the house, see M. S. Smith, *UBC* 2, 10 n.4.

¹⁴⁸ Discussions about the relationship between the two conflicts are concerned with the "narrative arc" of the six tablets as a whole. The repeated challenge to Baal's kingship and his death and return to life in the Mot episode have been used to support seasonal interpretations of the text. While I recognize that seasonal elements may be present, I do not consider the text's primary focus to be the explanation of seasonal phenomena. Rather, the focus is Baal's dominion. My arguments about how the text develops and promotes his dominion do not depend upon any arguments about the "narrative arc" of the six tablets as a whole nor upon hypotheses about how the Yamm and Mot episodes are related to each other. Rather, it is clear in both episodes that Baal's authority is challenged and affirmed through conflict and victory. That being said, I do agree with M. S. Smith that the Mot episode likely developed as a bi-form of Baal's conflict with Yamm (M. S. Smith, *UBC* 1, 15-16).

prepare for the construction of a palace for Yamm (*KTU* 1.1 IV - 1.2 I 11). Shapshu informs Athtar of El's plan and support of Yamm, and explains that this constitutes a threat to Athtar's authority (*KTU* 1.2 I 15-24):

[How the]n, will he hear you,
Bull [E]l, your Father?
Surely he will uproot the [ba]se of your seat,
Surely he will [overturn the throne] of your kingship,
Surely he will shatter the scepter of your jurisdiction (*KTU* 1.2 I 17-18).¹⁴⁹

Athtar responds that he has no palace or court like the other gods, but the rest of his response is fragmentary (*KTU* 1.2 I 19-20).¹⁵⁰ It appears that the news of El's plans in support of Yamm was also threatening to Baal, because we next hear about Baal sending a threatening message to Yamm (*KTU* 1.2 II 3-10). Yamm responds by sending messengers to the divine assembly, requesting that they turn Baal over to him (*KTU* 1.2 II 11-19). When the gods perceive Yamm's delegation they bow their heads (*KTU* 1.2 II 21-24). Baal rebukes them for being unwilling to answer Yamm's messengers and asserts that he will answer them himself, at which point the gods raise their heads again (*KTU* 1.2 II 24-29). Yamm's messengers arrive and report Yamm's decree while standing; they do not bow to El or the assembly (*KTU* 1.2 II 30-32). They demand that the gods give Baal over to Yamm, and El complies:

Baal is your servant, O Yamm.
Baal is your slave, [O River.]
The Son of Dagan is your prisoner.

¹⁴⁹ The full Ugaritic text of the *Baal Cycle* is available in Manfred Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquin Sanmartin, eds., *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani, and Other Places* (*KTU*: 2nd, enlarged edition; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995), 2-160.

¹⁵⁰ At this point in the narrative, it is not clear what Athtar's position is because the text is so fragmentary.

He himself will bring you tribute,
Like the gods, he will bring [your gifts],
Like the holy ones, your offerings (*KTU* 1.2 II 36-38).

Baal is disturbed, but proclaims:

I myself say to Yamm, your master,
[Your lo]rd, [Judge River]:
“[...] the word of Haddu [. . .]” (*KTU* 1.2 II 45-46).

Presumably, Baal’s proclamation is a threat and a declaration of war, because the next legible scene narrates Baal preparing for battle (*KTU* 1.2 IV 1-23). Kothar-wa-Hasis, the gods’ artisan, assists Baal by fashioning his weapons and encouraging him (*KTU* 1.2 IV 7-23). He articulates explicitly a causal connection between Baal’s battle and his attainment of kingship:

Now your enemy, O Baal,
Now you will crush your enemy,
Now you will destroy your foe.
You will take your eternal kingship,
Your everlasting dominion (*KTU* 1.2 IV 7-10).

Furthermore, as he names Baal’s weapons, Yagarrish and Ayyamarri, probably meaning “may he drive out” and “may he expel” respectively, Kothar states explicitly that Baal’s goal is to drive and expel Yamm from his throne (*KTU* 1.2 IV 11-23). In this conflict the text clearly states that what is at stake for both gods is kingship and dominion. Baal and his weapons are successful against Yamm, and after Yamm falls, Baal drags, dismembers,¹⁵¹ and scatters Yamm’s body (*KTU* 1.2 IV 23-31). Tablet II ends with a proclamation of Yamm’s death and Baal’s rule:

¹⁵¹ There are a variety of ways that the verbs in line 27 may be translated: *yqt* may be read as “he drags,” “he ensnares,” or “he strikes,” and *yšt* may be read as “he dries up,” “he sets,” “he drinks,” or “he separates,” on which the translation “he dismembers Yamm” is based. For discussion of these possibilities, see M. S. Smith, *UBC 1*, 351-356.

Yamm is surely dead!
Baal rei[gns]!
He surely rules! (*KTU* 1.2 IV 32-33; 34-35).

Baal then enjoys a victory feast (*KTU* 1.3 I 1-28), while Anat massacres a few towns (*KTU* 1.3 II 1-41). Baal sends messengers to Anat (*KTU* 1.3 III 8-31), and she fears that they have come to report a threat to Baal. Trembling with sweat, she asks the messengers, “What enemy rises against Baal? What foe against the Rider of Clouds?” (*KTU* 1.3 III 36-38; IV 4).¹⁵² The messengers assure her that Baal is not under threat and they relate the rest of Baal’s message, inviting her to Baal’s mountain (*KTU* 1.3 IV 5-20). Anat visits Baal, where he requests that Anat appeal to El for Baal to have a palace (*KTU* 1.3 IV 21-53). Anat agrees to Baal’s request and travels to El’s residence where she greets him with threats, warning him that she will strike his crown and make his beard drip with blood and gore if he rejoices that he has a palace (*KTU* 1.3 IV 53-V 25). After emphasizing that El has a palace, she communicates Baal’s desire for a palace:

Baal most high is our king,
Our judge, there are none above him.

...
Groaning, he (Baal) indeed exclaims to Bull El, his father,
To El, the king who established him.

...
“But there is no house for Baal like the gods,
No court like the sons of Athirat” (*KTU* 1.3 V 32-33, 35-36, 38-39).

Unfortunately, we are missing El’s response to Anat. Baal also sends messengers to Kothar, reiterating to him his desire for a palace and requesting that Kothar make a gift for Athirat (*KTU* 1.3 VI- 1.4 I 1-22). Kothar produces gifts for Athirat (*KTU* 1.4 I 23-43),

¹⁵² Anat proclaims that she would be ready to face any threat to Baal by recounting her previous victories over enemies including Yamm, Tunnan, the multi-headed serpent, the Calf of El, and the Dog of El (*KTU* 1.3 III 38-47). I discuss this passage in Chapter 3.

which Anat and Baal take to her. Athirat is terribly afraid of Anat and Baal as they arrive, and she assumes that they have come to kill her or her sons (*KTU* 1.4 II 12-26), but she is relieved when she notices their gifts (*KTU* 1.4 II 26-31). Anat and Baal ask Athirat to speak with El on Baal's behalf regarding a palace (*KTU* 1.4 III), and she subsequently visits El and repeats the same request that Anat made to El regarding Baal's lack of a palace (*KTU* 1.4 IV). El finally agrees to Baal's request: "Let a house be built for Baal like the gods, a court like the sons of Athirat" (*KTU* 1.4. V 1). However, his initial response to Athirat suggests that he is less than enthusiastic and perhaps even annoyed by Baal's request:

Benevolent El the Compassionate answers:
"Am I in fact a servant, Athirat a slave-girl?
Am I indeed a slave who wields tools,
Or Athirat a maidservant? Does she make bricks?" (*KTU* 1.4 IV 58-62)

El does not celebrate Baal's kingship or his attainment of a palace, though it cannot be built without his approval. El's bland attitude towards Baal is consistent with his preference for Yamm whom Baal has killed.

Anat reports the good news to Baal, he and Kothar consult about the construction, Kothar builds the palace, and Baal holds a banquet for the gods in his new home (*KTU* 1.4 V 20- VI 59). Baal celebrates his kingship by taking a victory tour (*KTU* 1.4 VII 7-14), and all of his enemies flee in fear (*KTU* 1.4 VII 35-41). This indicates that his dominion is widespread and recognized by potential rivals. Baal proclaims his authority over gods and humans:

It is I alone who rules over the gods,
Indeed, who fattens gods and people,
Who satis[fies] the multitudes of the earth (1.4 VII 49-52).

Baal has defeated the primary threat to his authority, Yamm, and all of his other enemies flee and quake even at the sound of Baal's voice. With the enthusiastic support of Anat and Kothar, he has attained a palace where he is enthroned as king. Though El and Athirat were not initially supportive of Baal's desire for a palace because of their relationship with Yamm, they eventually acquiesced. Despite the fact that Baal is not the god whom El preferred to win the battle or to receive a palace, Baal's victory in the conflict legitimates Baal's power.

In the scene at the end of Tablet IV, Baal appears to be without enemies, and he is confident in his unequalled dominion. However, he decides to send a message to Mot, another of El's "beloved" sons, announcing the building of his new palace (*KTU* 1.4 VII 45-49; VIII 1-37). Mot responds to Baal's message by suggesting that Baal invite Mot to a feast at which Mot would eat Baal (*KTU* 1.5 I 1- II 6). Imbedded in Mot's message is a reference to Baal killing Lotan the multi-headed, twisty serpent (*KTU* 1.5 I 27-31), though rhetorically the reference strengthens Mot's threat; he claims that despite Baal's victory over a previous enemy, he will rip Baal apart and devour him (*KTU* 1.5 I 31-35).¹⁵³ Baal gives in to Mot and declares himself to be Mot's servant (*KTU* 1.5 II 6-12). The next several columns are too fragmentary to interpret, but in the next legible scene Baal is told he will die (1.5 V 17).¹⁵⁴ In one of the most beautiful passages of the whole text, Baal's death is announced:

¹⁵³ I discuss this passage further in Chapter 3.

¹⁵⁴ After Baal hears that he will indeed die, he makes love with a cow 70/80 times and produces a son (*KTU* 1.5 VIII 17-25). While some scholars have interpreted this event as being highly significant in the plot, I find it too fragmentary and opaque to understand, especially since the son is not mentioned again in the extant text.

[W]e went through to [the end of the earth,]
As far as the edge of the meadows.
We [r]eached the pleasanse of the land of pestilence,
To the beauty of the field of the underworld.¹⁵⁵
We came to Baal fallen to earth.
Baal most high is dead,
The prince, lord of the earth perished (*KTU* 1.5 VI 3-10).

Upon hearing the news, El mourns (*KTU* 1.5 VI 11-25). Anat finds Baal's body as well and mourns (*KTU* 1.5 VI 26- 1.6 I 8). With the help of Shapshu, Anat carries Baal's body to his mountain, buries him, and makes offerings for Baal (*KTU* 1.6 I 8-31). Anat then goes to El and Athirat, and greeting El with deference (*KTU* 1.6 I 32-38), she cries:

Athirat and her sons now rejoice,
The goddess and the clan of her kin,
Because Baal most high is dead,
For the prince, lord of the earth perished (*KTU* 1.6 I 39-43).

El tells Athirat to choose one of her sons for El to make king (*KTU* 1.6 I 43-46). She chooses *Yd'-ylhn*, but El objects that he is too weak to match Baal's physical capabilities (*KTU* 1.6 I 50-52). Athirat then chooses Athtar, who ascends to Baal's throne, but, "His feet do not reach the footstool, his head does not reach its top." Athtar admits that he cannot be king on Mount Şapanu, so he descends from Baal's throne, but still reigns over the earth (*KTU* 1.6 I 53-65). These alternative kings pale in comparison with Baal and are unable to serve as adequate substitutes. This emphasizes Baal's legitimacy and ability to rule as king. Thematically, the feature of characterizing a series of alternative kings as inadequate when compared to Baal is parallel to the series of divine warriors who are inadequate in comparison to Ninurta or Marduk (*Anzu* SB I iii 28-97; *EE* III, 111-112).

¹⁵⁵ The etymology of *šhlmm̄t*, which I translate here as "the field of the underworld," is uncertain. It is a topographical name associated with the dead (Gregorio del Olmo Lete and Joaquín Sanmartín, "*šhlmm̄t*," *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language* [Wilfred G. E. Watson, trans.; Leiden: Brill, 2003], 812).

By emphasizing the relative lack among even the best of potential alternatives to Baal, the narrative asserts that Baal is the rightful and legitimate king.

Elsewhere, Anat searches for Baal and accosts Mot, demanding that he give up Baal. Mot instead tells her how he devoured Baal, and the second time Anat accosts Mot she splits him, burns him, grinds him, and sows him in a field where birds eat him (*KTU* 1.6 II). Meanwhile, El dreams that rain will return as a sign that Baal is alive, and he is greatly relieved (*KTU* 1.6 III 1-21):

He relaxes (lit., releases the brow) and laughs,
He lifts his voice and exclaims:
“I shall sit, as for me, I shall rest,
The breath in my chest shall calm down,
Because Baal most high is alive,
For the prince, lord of the earth is here” (*KTU* 1.6 III 16-21).

El sends a message to Shapshu urging her to search for Baal (*KTU* 1.6 IV). We are missing the rest of that column, but in the next scene Baal is alive. He attacks Athirat’s sons and retakes his throne:

Baal grabs the sons of Athirat,
As for the great ones, he beats (them) on the shoulder.
As for the crushers of Yamm, he beats (them) with a double axe,
As for the young of Yamm, he beats (them) to the earth.
Then B[aa]l [sits] on his royal throne,
[On the divan], on the seat of his dominion (*KTU* 1.6 V 1-6).

Here we see that within the Mot episode, Baal’s death occasions additional challenges to his authority from Athirat’s sons. Baal’s attack upon them, as he reasserts his kingship, recalls Athirat’s prior fear (in the Yamm episode) that Baal intends to kill her sons:

Why has Ba[al] most high come?
Why has ado[les]cent Anat come?
To crush me or [be]at my sons?
Or [finish off the c]lan of my kin? (*KTU* 1.4 II 21-26)

Athirat's sons are potential legitimate rulers, as we see when El and she choose a son to take the throne. Therefore, they pose a threat to Baal with which he must contend. This is implied in Athirat's statement and confirmed in the scene where Baal attacks them and reasserts his dominion. Baal reigns without incident for seven years, but then Mot sends a complaint to Baal about being shamed and pulverized. By shaming and mutilating Mot, Anat attacked his authority and legitimacy.¹⁵⁶ When Mot demands restitution for the shaming and mutilation, he is asking that Baal recognize and confirm his legitimacy. He demands that Baal appease his anger by giving him one of his brothers to eat (*KTU* 1.6 V 7-25). While Baal pretends to offer restitution, we learn that he actually insults Mot further, refusing to acknowledge Mot as a legitimate authority figure. After a gap in the text, we see Mot charge Mount Şapanu, complaining that Baal gave him one of his own brothers to eat, and they do battle (*KTU* 1.6 VI 9-22).

They attack like fighters,
 Mot is strong, Baal is strong.
 They butt heads like wild bulls,
 Mot is strong, Baal is strong.
 They bite each other like serpents,
 Mot is strong, Baal is strong.
 They pull each other like steeds,
 Mot falls, Baal falls (*KTU* 1.6 VI 16-22).

In this fight, Baal and Mot appear equal until Shapshu declares to Mot that he cannot possibly succeed:

“Take heed, divine Mot:
 How will you cont[en]d with Baal most high?
 How then will Bull El your father, hea[r] you?

¹⁵⁶ On the rhetoric of honor and shame in the ancient west Asian milieu, the notion of honor as a commodity, and the relationship of shaming and the diminishing of social status, see S. M. Olyan, “Honor, Shame, and Covenant Relations in Ancient Israel and its Environment,” *JBL* 115 (1996): 201-218.

Surely he will uproot the [ba]se of your seat,
 Surely he will [overturn the throne] of your kingship,
 Surely he will shatter the scepter of your jurisdiction.”
 Divine [M]ot is frightened,
 The beloved of El, the noble, is scared.
 Mot is disturbed by her voice,
 He [. . . :]
 “May Baal be seated on his royal [throne],
 On [the divan, on the seat] of his dominion” (*KTU* 1.6 VI 23-35).

This is a key passage for several reasons. First, the extant text concludes Baal’s conflict with Mot proclaiming Baal’s dominion. Second, the passage shows that Mot cannot defeat Baal and maintain his own kingship without El’s support. Though we have no passages where El himself declares Baal’s legitimacy, in this scene he is said to implicitly affirm Baal’s legitimacy by undermining Mot. In this conflict, victory is only possible with the support of El. This differs from the battle in the Yamm episode, where El’s favored contender is defeated. In both episodes, it is clear, however, that El retains his authority to support potential divine kings and to grant permission to other deities for various activities.¹⁵⁷

Throughout the six tablets, each main character has a particular relationship to Baal’s authority. Baal himself declares his kingship (*KTU* 1.4 VII 42-52). Anat enthusiastically supports Baal and declares his reign to El (*KTU* 1.3 V 32-33). Kothar also enthusiastically supports Baal’s dominion and assists him in defeating Yamm and constructing his palace. Though Athirat’s sons pose a threat to Baal, Anat and Baal compel her to further Baal’s interests and she declares his rule (*KTU* 1.4 IV 43-44).

¹⁵⁷ M. S. Smith discusses the power dynamics between El and Baal, and El’s retention of power, on the model of royal succession within a patriarchal family (M. S. Smith, *UBC* 2, 17, 55, 289).

Yamm, Athtar, and Mot threaten Baal's authority, but each is overcome.¹⁵⁸ Athtar declares himself unfit to sit on Baal's throne, and once defeated, Mot declares Baal's kingship (*KTU* 1.6 VI 33-35).

El, however, never declares Baal's rule explicitly. This is consistent with El's relationship with Baal's enemies Yamm and Mot, who are both called El's "beloved" (*mdd/ydd*).¹⁵⁹ Three figures in the *Baal Cycle* are described with the epithet "beloved of El": Yamm, Desire, and Mot. This is not simply a term of endearment or expression of preference, but a title with legal connotations that indicates their status as designated successors. In contexts related to adoption, matrimony, inheritance, and succession, the designation "beloved" indicates valid transfer of property and position.¹⁶⁰ Thus, as an epithet for Yamm and Mot it marks their legitimacy as potential kings and heirs to El. This makes Baal's success against them all the more remarkable. In the Yamm episode, El supports Yamm rather than Baal, and even after Baal's victory he is hesitant to approve of Baal's palace. In the Mot episode, however, El implicitly supports Baal: after

¹⁵⁸ M. S. Smith discusses the spatial organization of the characters who compete for authority, in relation to their beneficence, cult, and cosmic realms: "A further divine mapping involves realms, a feature confined to the second tier of competing males and their enemies. The *Baal Cycle* includes and builds on this divine topography of mountains and cult sites by organizing divine space additionally according to realms ruled by the second tier of the pantheon held by the males, Baal, Yamm, and Mot. In other words, realms are attributed only to Baal (sky), Yamm (sea), and Mot (underworld), and possibly Athtar (earth?). Space therefore is used in two different ways, mountains to mark proximity of deities enjoying cult and bestowing blessing of various sorts, realms to mark cosmic competition" (M. S. Smith, "The Structure of Divinity at Ugarit and Israel," *Text, Artifact, and Image* [eds., Gary M. Beckman and Theodore J. Lewis; Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2006], 45).

¹⁵⁹ For a detailed discussion of these epithets, see Aicha Rahmouni, *Divine Epithets in the Ugaritic Alphabetic Texts* (Boston: Brill, 2008), 193-197, 212-218.

¹⁶⁰ M. S. Smith, "Structure of Divinity," 55.

Baal is killed by Mot, El displays appropriate mourning behavior that matches Anat's mourning; he rejoices when he dreams that Baal may be alive; and though Mot is another "beloved of El," El does not support Mot in his second battle with Baal. El's display of appropriate mourning when Baal is dead as well as his subsequent rejoicing that Baal may be alive constitute acts of political affiliation with Baal.¹⁶¹ The narrative does not elaborate on El's final acceptance of Baal's authority over that of his two "beloveds." However, considering the lack of rain and subsequent demise of croplands suffered during Baal's absence (*KTU* 1.6 IV 25-40), we may speculate that El's eventual acceptance of Baal's authority conforms to human need. The fruits of Baal's dominion are necessary for the survival of humans and human society, whereas Yamm and Mot are both associated with the destruction of humanity.¹⁶²

The *Baal Cycle* offers an articulation of the conflict topos that is particular to Ugaritic tradition, and we have a limited corpus from which to reconstruct Ugaritic social, political, and cultic ideologies. Glyptic and monumental art from Ugarit attests to an anthropomorphic warrior-god who may be identified as Baal.¹⁶³ God lists and ritual

¹⁶¹ On mourning and rejoicing as acts that indicate (the creation, maintenance, or disruption of) affiliation, see S. M. Olyan, *Biblical Mourning: Ritual and Social Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 52-56, 90-93, 106-108, 149-152.

¹⁶² M. S. Smith makes this point in his discussion of "monstrous," anthropomorphic, and theriomorphic deities: "In contrast, monstrous powers constitute no benefit, but only a threat to human well-being from the periphery. Yamm, for example, is connected with the demise of Kirta's household (*KTU* 1.14 I 19-20). Mot is known for his destruction as well (*KTU* 1.127.30-32)" (M. S. Smith, "Structure of Divinity," 46).

¹⁶³ Béatrice Muller, "Ougarit et la figure divine au Bronze Récent," in *Le Royaume d'Ougarit de la Crète à l'Euphrate* (ed. Jean-Marc Michaud; Sherbrooke, Québec: G.G.C. Editions, 2007), 501-544; Susan J. Sanders, "Baal au Foudre: The Iconography of Baal of Ugarit," in *He Unfurrowed his Brow and Laughed: Essays in Honor of Professor Nicolas Wyatt* (ed. Wilfred G. E. Watson; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2007), 249-266; Jürg

texts attest to Baal-related cultic activities. These texts indicate that various manifestations of Baal were recognized, including Baal Şapanu, Baal of Ugarit, Baal of Aleppo, and unnamed manifestations of Baal, with several or all of these deities occurring within a single god list (for example, *KTU* 1.47; *KTU* 1.74; *KTU* 1.65) or ritual prescription (for example, *KTU* 1.46; *KTU* 1.109; *KTU* 1.130). However, among the surviving cultic texts there are no references to events in the *Baal Cycle*, and ritual texts that involve the king do not exhibit any obvious identification between Baal and the king. One text that appears to be a divine blessing involving the king and “Rapi’u, eternal king” mentions Baal, but the text is fragmentary at this point, so our understanding of Baal’s role is unclear (*KTU* 1.108).¹⁶⁴ A prayer to Baal indicates that when a warrior attacks one’s gate, Baal is the appropriate deity to ask to drive away such a threat (*KTU* 1.119 rev. 26-36), and this is certainly consistent with the characterization of Baal as a warrior. However, these texts do not further our understanding of political ideology potentially associated with Baal. Other narrative texts add depth to our characterizations of various deities, but do not relate to the conflict topos in particular. *Kirta*, a narrative about the demise and restoration of king Kirta’s royal family, portrays the king making sacrifices to El as well as Baal (*KTU* 1.14 II 6-27), and Baal successfully intercedes on

Eggler, “Baal,” *Iconography of Deities and Demons in the Ancient Near East* (ed. Christoph Uehlinger and Jürg Eggler; Zürich: Schweizerischer Nationalfonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung, 2007); Izak Cornelius, “The Iconography of Ugarit,” *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 586-602; Margerite Yon, “Stèles de Pierre,” *Arts et industries de la pierre* (RSOu 6; Paris: Éditions Recherche sur le Civilisations, 1991), 271-344.

¹⁶⁴ Pardee suggests that Baal may be acting as an intermediary for the king, but he recognizes that his restoration of the relevant lines is hypothetical (Dennis Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit* [ed. T. J. Lewis; Leiden: Brill, 2002], 206 n.14).

behalf of king Kirta to El (*KTU* 1.15 11-28). It is possible that Baal's role as intermediary for Kirta reflects a more widespread understanding of Baal's relationship to Ugaritic kings, but we cannot be certain.¹⁶⁵ Nonetheless, a few conclusions may be drawn from the *Baal Cycle* alone. According to the *Baal Cycle*, the kingship of Baal is central to human survival and beneficial to the other gods, and Baal ultimately defeats his divine political rivals and achieves dominion. We may infer from this that some parties in Ugarit, at least the scribe Ilimalku, king Niqmaddu, and presumably their associates, wanted to emphasize the legitimacy of Baal's divine royal authority and cultic prominence. Though we do not have further evidence from Ugarit as to how Baal's kingship might have been associated with Niqmaddu's dynasty, the scribe's affiliation with the king suggest that Baal's authority was important to Niqmaddu's own political legitimacy. Finally, from a comparative perspective the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle* shows that the conflict topos was adaptable even within a theological context in which the deity rising to power had a limited dominion and faced repeated threats to his authority. In this sense the depiction of Baal's authority and the characterization of Baal's relationships with other deities through the notions of combat and alliance more closely resemble actual human kingship than do our Mesopotamian or biblical depictions of divine kingship. Baal's authority, like human royal authority, is always limited in scope, reliant upon allies, and subject to potential threats and contingencies.

¹⁶⁵ Daniel Schwemer generalizes from *KTU* 1.15 II 11-28 that it was Baal's role to represent the interests of the earthly king to El (Daniel Schwemer, "The Storm-Gods of the Ancient Near East: Summary, Synthesis, and Recent Studies, Part II," *JANER* 8.1 [2008]:1-44, 10). This is possible, but speculative; the scene from *Kirta* is our only indication of such a relationship between Baal and the king.

Comparisons and Narrative Taxonomy

The narratives discussed above are distinct articulations of the conflict topos that propose specific hierarchies in which certain gods are elevated, achieving a new position in their respective pantheons. The legitimating ideology of the conflict topos is evident in each narrative, and in the cases of *Anzu* and *Enuma Elish*, we have external confirmation of the political use of the conflict topos through references to these narratives. We can further appreciate how these narratives articulate the conflict topos by comparing specific details from each tradition. This both strengthens our understanding of how the conflict topos works in each text, and highlights how each context and literary tradition is distinct and particular. The purpose of comparing these texts, however, is not to suggest that they resulted from literary dependence. Of the four texts discussed, the Aššur version of *Enuma Elish* is the only one that clearly depends on another. Otherwise, there is no reason to assume or propose that these texts exhibit direct dependence. Rather, they each draw on a common stock of topoi generated and circulated within the ancient West Asian milieu in which these narrative traditions were produced.

Each narrative adapts the legitimating ideology of the conflict topos in service of a particular deity; in each narrative the authority of the prominent deity is described as kingship; and this kingship is justified through victory in combat. Once the shared topos and ideological import is recognized, we can better appreciate how each exemplary text is distinct and serves to legitimate particular institutions or socio-political arrangements, that is specific cults, cities, temples, or kings. I have argued that conflict myths exhibit a taxonomy of characters that authors and redactors manipulate in various historical and political contexts in order to promote their preferred deities, institutions, polities, and

royal figures, and to attack disfavored divine and human entities. The primary relationship in conflict myths is that of the victorious god to his defeated enemy; that relationship and its significance is constant. Any god in the role of the victorious deity is portrayed as legitimate by the narrative, and any defeated god is portrayed as illegitimate. The secondary relationships, however, both between the victorious deity and the other deities and between the defeated deity and pantheon, offer a space for the composers of these narratives to play. These relationships are adjusted in order to position the victorious and defeated gods relative to the other gods who, in the divine world of the text, represent the existing, traditional, and hegemonic authorities. Over the course of each narrative, the elevation of the victorious god, and whatever other events may surround that aspect of the plot, affect the existing order of gods. The texts just discussed differ in how they portray the relationship of the victorious god to the existing hierarchy of gods and the relationship of the defeated enemy to the existing order.

The victorious gods each have distinct relationships to the existing pantheon, and their elevation to kingship affects the existing hierarchy of gods. In *Anzu* and the two versions of *Enuma Elish*, Ninurta, Marduk, and Aššur are chosen by the gods to face a threat that all the gods fear. They are endorsed by the gods before battle. Marduk and Aššur are recruited for battle by Ea, and Ninurta is recruited by his mother Belet-ili at Ea's request. In contrast, Baal responds to a threat to his own authority of his own accord. He is not endorsed by El and Athirat in his battle against Yamm. Rather, he defeats the figure to whom El has granted kingship. This makes Baal's rise to power all the more remarkable, yet shows that his kingship was initially (and repeatedly) contested. The endorsement that other gods give to Ninurta, Marduk, Aššur, or Baal, within their

respective traditions, correlates to the level of threat perceived by members of the existing divine hierarchy, as does the relative degree of praise heaped on the victor after battle. The greater the threat perceived by members of the existing divine hierarchy, the more the gods endorse and subsequently praise the victorious warrior who quells that threat. For Baal, it appears that he is the only party actually threatened by Yamm.¹⁶⁶ The other gods are hesitant to respond to Yamm's messengers, possibly out of fear (*KTU* 1.2 II 21-24), but El and Athirat are not threatened at all. Rather, El endorses Yamm, and Athirat is threatened by Baal. In *Anzu*, all the gods are threatened by Anzu's possession of power. Three candidates are recruited to slay Anzu, but they are all too afraid. Ninurta's willingness to fight stands in contrast to the fear of the other gods, and they support Ninurta fully and praise him afterwards. In *Enuma Elish*, however, the level of threat to the gods and the eventual praise of Marduk and Aššur for nullifying the threat is paramount. Tiamat and Qingu are more ominous opponents than Anzu. While Anzu was a sole rogue usurper of power, Tiamat and Qingu had a vast army. We see again that the hero's willingness to do battle, even with some trepidation, stands in contrast to other gods who are unable to face the threat. However, the praise resulting from Marduk and Aššur's respective victories extends beyond that of Ninurta, and certainly beyond that of Baal. Ninurta receives kingship and prominence among the gods, and the other gods promise that he will have no rival, but he is not explicitly exalted above all the other deities. Enlil retains his position at the top of the pantheon; this is indicated in the narrative detail that Ninurta will be incorporated into Enlil's temple at Nippur, but

¹⁶⁶ Athtar is also threatened by El's support of Yamm, but this part of the text is too fragmentary to understand how Athtar deals with this threat.

Ninurta in no way supercedes Enlil. As for Baal, El never even mentions Baal's kingship directly, whereas all the gods repeatedly heap praise upon Marduk and Aššur, and all the gods affirm Ninurta's rise to power from the start. El, like Enlil relative to Ninurta, retains his status within the pantheon. Baal receives kingship and prominence, and he enjoys a period of peaceful reign without rivals. The narrative portrays him as greater than his defeated rivals and the alternative rulers who are inadequate to take his throne, but he is never explicitly elevated above the other gods. Marduk and Aššur, by contrast, are exalted above the other deities and even take on the names and roles of other deities. In this regard, the Aššur version of *Enuma Elish* goes even further than the Babylonian version by incorporating the merger of Aššur's name with the name of the older god Anšar, such that Aššur becomes both the victorious warrior deity and the creator deity.¹⁶⁷ In sum, the way that each narrative positions the victorious deity with respect to the other gods before and after battle is distinct. The degree of endorsement each rising deity receives before battle and the amount of praise heaped on the deity after his victory correlates positively to the level of the threat that the other gods face. By contrasting these aspects of the texts we see how they differ in their characterization of the changing power dynamics among the gods.

Likewise, the relationship of the defeated enemy to the other gods is distinct in each narrative, and once we identify the differences in how the narratives construe this relationship, we can see that these stories exhibit varying characterizations of illegitimate power structures. Throughout this chapter, I refer to Anzu, Tiamat, Qingu, Yamm, and

¹⁶⁷ As such, Aššur's final position incorporates two roles: warrior deity and father creator deity. These two roles are also held by Yahweh in biblical traditions, as I discuss in Chapter 3.

Mot as “enemies,” “defeated,” “illegitimate,” and “usurpers.” This obviously reflects the perspective of the texts. However, in each narrative these characters are potential rulers who possess power given to them from some divine source. If this were not the case, they would not be considered real threats. Anzu is the only usurper who is not allied with any other deity in the narrative. He steals the Tablet of Destinies from Enlil; no one supports Anzu’s possession of power. The other usurpers all have allies who endorse their claims to power. These claims are proven illegitimate according to the ideology of the narratives through the defeat of each usurper and the reclamation of legitimate authority by the victorious god. Tiamat supports Qingu; she selects him from her new brood to lead her army and be her husband, and she grants him “kingship of all the gods” (*Enuma Elish* I, 147-162). It is significant that Tiamat has the power to do this, in that it reflects her position in the pantheon. Though she becomes an enemy and endorses a divine king whom the other gods consider illegitimate, at the beginning of the narrative she functions within the existing divine hierarchy and has prominent power within the pantheon. It is only after Apsu’s death that she becomes a threat to the other gods, producing an army and a usurper with whom she plans to overhaul the entire existing hierarchy. As I mentioned above, this threat dwarfs the threat of Anzu who works alone. Tiamat’s power to confer kingship is comparable to Belet-ili’s power in *Anzu*, though their relationships to the existing order and victorious deities are opposite. Belet-ili endowed Enlil and Anu with their respective powers. She is the deity who established the divine order and hierarchy that Anzu threatens: “Anzu has taken away the kingship that I engineered.” (*Anzu* SB I 207). She works towards restoration of legitimate power through her son Ninurta. Thus, Tiamat’s relationship with Qingu is similar to Belet-ili’s relationship to

Ninurta, but Tiamat and Qingu work to disrupt the status quo whereas Belet-ili and Ninurta work to restore the established order, only with Ninurta in an elevated position. Athirat's relationship to power and legitimate rule in the *Baal Cycle* is much more complex than that of Tiamat or Belet-ili, though her position as matriarch affords her a similar prerogative to choose kings. While Tiamat and the offspring she endorses are both portrayed as wielding illegitimate power, and while Belet-ili and the son she endorses are both portrayed as legitimate, Athirat, in contrast, holds a stable and legitimate position within the pantheon but the sons she endorses are portrayed as inadequate pretenders to Baal's throne. Furthermore, the two "beloveds" of El, Yamm and Mot, are ultimately portrayed as illegitimate usurpers of Baal's authority. This relationship between the defeated usurpers and the existing divine hierarchy is quite distinct from and more complex than what we see in *Anzu* and *Enuma Elish*. Athirat is afraid of Baal and considers him a threat to her sons as potential rulers. The reciprocal threat that Baal and Athirat's sons present to one another is realized when Athirat and El choose a replacement for Baal from her sons and again when Baal attacks her sons before retaking his throne. El, the father and creator god, endorses Yamm in his conflict with Baal, and though he does not endorse Mot in his final battle with Baal, he does not explicitly endorse Baal either.

Each extant narrative articulation of the conflict topos exhibits a relationship between the victorious deity and his defeated enemy, and this relationship serves to legitimate the authority of the victorious deity at the expense of the usurper's potential legitimacy. The nature of this relationship and its function is consistent throughout all instances of the conflict topos, whether in whole narrative articulations or instances of the

conflict motif external to these narratives. At the same time, there is a flexibility in the adaptation of this taxonomy of characters, indicated by the fact that different gods can be placed in the roles of the legitimate or illegitimate character, and different historical agents and polities can be identified with the victor or defeated rival. However, the significance of these roles does not change: victory is always indicative of legitimacy in that victory justifies the possession of authority, and likewise the portrayal of defeat constitutes an attack on the defeated figure's legitimacy and leads to loss of power. The taxonomy of relationships surrounding the two primary characters, however, varies among our extant narratives of the conflict topos. By comparing the relationships of the victorious deities and the defeated deities with the existing divine power structures, we can see that these relationships represent varying portrayals of how legitimate power may be conferred from the status quo to the new divine hierarchy. With each narrative, we only realize the distinctness and significance of its particular arrangement of relationships by viewing alternatives to that arrangement.

Each narrative treated in this chapter promotes a particular deity at the expense of another deity and validates the institution of kingship. Beyond this ideological work, we have varying degrees of evidence for the use of these narrative traditions to promote the institution of the temple, specific localities, and individuals. Among the Mesopotamian traditions, we see that Ninurta, Marduk, and Aššur-centered combat traditions were employed to promote particular cult locations and cities. *Anzu* emphasizes a relationship between Ninurta and Nippur; specifically the text claims that the cult of Ninurta will enter Enlil's temple Ekur in Nippur. Otherwise, Ninurta's cult is to spread to the "four corners," indicating general widespread prominence. Monumental art from Ninurta's

temple in Kalḫu shows that Aššurnasirpal II alluded to Ninurta's victories, and the visual linking of the building to the deity's victory possibly served to promote the temple and new capital city as well. The Babylonian and Assyrian versions of *Enuma Elish* exhibit strong Babylon-centered and Aššur-centered cosmologies, respectively. *Enuma Elish* portrays the establishment of the city Babylon and Marduk's temple there as divinely sanctioned activities, and all the gods agree to frequent the location. Likewise, the Assyrian version of *Enuma Elish* claims the same for the city Aššur and the god Aššur's temple there. In each case, the claim that the deity would be present at a specific location (temple and city) promotes this location by associating it with divine activity and presence. The resulting honor and status afforded to the temple and city would then benefit cultic and administrative authorities there, through the activity of cult-related material and symbolic economy. In the *Baal Cycle*, Baal's home and palace is on Mount Šapanu, located about 40km north of Ugarit. After he defeats Yamm and attains his palace he goes on a victory tour that emphasizes his widespread rule (*KTU* 1.4 VII 7-14). This detail is similar to the notion in *Anzu* that the cult of Ninurta would be spread to the "four corners." Both narratives indicate a general widespread prominence of the deity, but neither emphasize the establishment of a specific city as the locus of the deity's presence, as does *Enuma Elish*. In the *Baal Cycle*, the city of Ugarit is only mentioned in the two legible colophons (to Tablets IV and VI) in references to Niqmaddu, the king of Ugarit. The *Baal Cycle* does not make any explicit claims about Ugarit or Baal's temple there, though it seems reasonable that the pro-Baal ideology of the text would also promote Baal-related cult activity within Ugarit. In sum, in the case of the *Baal Cycle*, we may speculate that the narrative would implicitly promote Baal-related cult activity in

Ugarit, but the text itself characterizes Baal's reign and presence in more general terms; *Anzu* also emphasizes a general widespread prominence of Ninurta's cult, though it highlights Ninurta's association with Nippur and Enlil's temple there; the Babylonian and Assyrian versions of *Enuma Elish*, by contrast, exhibit bold claims about the establishment of the cities Babylon and Aššur, respectively, and temples of Marduk and Aššur, respectively, within these cities.

Regarding the use of the conflict topos within royal ideology, our best evidence comes from Neo-Assyrian inscriptions and explanatory texts in which kings are identified with Ninurta, Marduk, or Aššur. Among these inscriptions, the enemies of kings are also identified with Ninurta's enemies Anzu and Assaku and Marduk/Aššur's enemy Qingu. In the explanatory texts, the king's actions in ritual are identified as Ninurta or Marduk's actions in combat while the objects manipulated or mutilated in the ritual are identified as the deity's weapons and enemies, including Anzu, Asakku, Tiamat, and Qingu. These texts, as well as others discussed above, show that the legitimating ideology developed within combat traditions was employed to promote specific kings and the office of the king more generally by portraying the king in the role of the victorious deity. Though we do not have similar evidence for the use of Baal imagery to promote the king among surviving Ugaritic materials, the scribe who produced the *Baal Cycle* was associated with the king. It is plausible that the narrative would have promoted the interests of his dynasty. According to the narrative, the success of Baal's hard-won royal dominion benefited the gods (*KTU* 1.4 VI 38-59; VII 49-52; 1.6 III 1-21). Perhaps the notion of royal dominion that is secured despite repeated opposition was significant within Ugarit's political ideology. At minimum, the notion that the reigning divine king's presence is

beneficial to his associates and subjects would involve a positive claim on behalf of the reigning human king, suggesting that his dominion would benefit his associates and subjects as well. Within each tradition, of course, the conflict topos would have functioned along with other modes of legitimating royal authority.¹⁶⁸ We have evidence among various ancient West Asian traditions that kings might claim to have divine approval and endorsement through the notions of divine parentage, divine adoption, possession of divine qualities such as “radiance” (*melammu*, *namurratu*, or *puluḫtu*), being the “image” (*šalmu*) of the deity, divination, intercession, and “sacred marriage.”¹⁶⁹ In each case, including instances of the conflict motif within royal ideology, the king is portrayed as having special proximity to the divine, through a distinct relationship with, quality of, mode of access to, or identification with the divine. Among the variety of tactics used for promoting kings, combat traditions might have been especially useful for mitigating concerns about a king rising to power, quelling potential rivals, engaging in battle, and constructing temples and palaces.

¹⁶⁸ This applies to the examples I discuss in chapters 3 and 4 as well. When the conflict motif is used to promote a specific individual, Zimri-Lim, King David, or Jesus, for example, this tactic for legitimating the individual occurs alongside other strategies such as claims to divine parentage, divine adoption, intercession, etc.

¹⁶⁹ For discussion of various modes of divine legitimation, see P. Machinist, “Kingship and Divinity in Imperial Assyria,” in *Text, Artifact, and Image: Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion*, 152-188; I. Winter, “Touched by the Gods: Visual Evidence for the Divine Status of Rulers in the Ancient Near East,” in *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond* (ed. Nicole Brisch; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 75-101; W. W. Hallo, “Kingship,” *Origins: The Ancient Near Eastern Background of Some Modern Western Institutions* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 188-211.

Conclusion

The narratives of *Anzu*, the Babylonian and Assyrian versions of *Enuma Elish*, and the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle* each exhibit a distinct articulation of the conflict topos. Through comparison we can better see how these texts share a general narrative pattern, certain specific narrative details, and a legitimating ideology. At the same time, the process of comparison allows us to appreciate how each narrative is distinct and to reconstruct how the legitimating ideology may have operated within each context and literary tradition. The taxonomy of primary characters, that is, the relationship between the combating deities within each narrative, serves to elevate the victorious deities and to manage any rivals by portraying them as defeated and, therefore, as losing power. According to the ideology of these texts, the power that the defeated rival loses is proven (through defeat) to have been illegitimate, while the power gained by the victor is proven to be legitimate authority. The taxonomy of secondary characters, including the relationship between the victor and existing divine hierarchy, the relationship between the defeated rival(s) and existing divine hierarchy, and the relationships among all the other deities within the pantheon, exhibits variation. This variation indicates that there was a range of ways that change among hegemonic power structures could be conceived—whether this is a divine power structure, as in these narratives, or a human power structure.

The narratives discussed in this chapter were produced by authors, redactors, and copyists who utilized the conflict topos to accomplish ideological work, primarily to promote a specific deity: Ninurta, Marduk, Aššur, or Baal. These deities are portrayed as victorious warrior deities, and their victories justify their rise to power and resulting

dominion. The authority of each of these deities is described as kingship, which is portrayed in the text as a natural or given form of authority. In this way, these narratives endorse the human political institution of kingship. The legitimating ideology employed in service of these deities and the institution of kingship was also extended to promote particular cosmic and earthly locations and royal individuals. We have explicit evidence for promotion of specific cities and temples from *Anzu* and the Babylonian and Assyrian versions of *Enuma Elish*, and we may speculate that the *Baal Cycle* would have promoted Baal-related cultic activity in Ugarit as well, by celebrating Baal's rise to power and prominence within the pantheon. In the cases of Ninurta, Marduk, and Aššur, external evidence from inscriptional, ritual, and explanatory texts (while admittedly sometimes obscure) shows that the legitimating ideology developed within combat traditions was employed to promote specific kings. Though we have no direct evidence for the political use of the *Baal Cycle* in Ugaritic royal ideology, we may speculate that the scribe's association with the king suggests that the narrative was at least agreeable to the king. It is plausible that the text furthered the interests of the king, but we do not know how fully developed such Baal-related political ideology might have been at Ugarit.

These whole narrative articulations of the conflict topos represent the type of story that instances of the conflict motif invoke and recall. As such, the traditions just discussed serve as background for the following chapter because they illustrate the connotations of the conflict topos in the ancient West Asian milieu. However, I would not suggest that instances of the conflict motif depend on these texts. In fact, our earliest example of the conflict motif, a letter from Mari, is contemporary with the Old Babylonian version of *Anzu* and predates the other texts just discussed, so dependence is

impossible. Nor do I want to suggest that instances of the conflict motif are extracted from narratives and subsequently used for ideological purposes. Rather, I have argued that whole narrative articulations of the conflict motif already accomplish ideological work. These narratives promote distinct arrangements of divine characters, elevate a single deity within the divine hierarchy, and portray the political institution of kingship as a natural or given model of legitimate authority. *Anzu* and *Enuma Elish* also explicitly highlight specific cities and temples. Moreover, the characters and events of *Anzu* and both versions of *Enuma Elish* are referenced in Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian royal ideology. The conflict topos was an ideological tool, and we have examples of the topos being used in the form of whole narratives and in shorter forms of the motif in epitomes, allusions, and imagery. It is such shorter expressions of the topos that the next chapter treats.

CHAPTER 3: THE CONFLICT MOTIF

I restored you to the th[rone of your ancestors]. Those weapon[s] with which I crushed Sea, I gave you (Mari Letter A.1968, 1'-4').¹⁷⁰

A letter from Nur-Sin of Aleppo to Zimri-Lim, king of Mari, quotes a message from the god Adad who says that he gave the king his weapons and placed Zimri-Lim on his father's throne. Specifically, these are the weapons that he had used to fight Sea. They represent the power of the god exhibited by his victory in battle, and he transfers this power to the king by giving him the weapons. The transfer of the weapons occurs as Adad restores Zimri-Lim to kingship. Thus Adad endorses Zimri-Lim's rule by giving him the weapons that represent his own power. This letter, dating to the eighteenth century BCE, contains our earliest example of the conflict motif and it exhibits the political use of the motif for legitimating divine and human royal authority: the warrior god has defeated his enemy and that victory secures his authority; the victorious deity then has the prerogative to endorse the authority of human kings, and here Adad does so by placing Zimri-Lim on the throne and giving his weapons to Zimri-Lim.

In Chapter 2, I argued that the conflict topos in the form of whole narratives has ideological import. In this chapter I argue that the conflict motif, that is epitomes, allusions, references, and imagery pertaining to the conflict, also has ideological import.

¹⁷⁰ The original text is presented by Jean-Marie Durand, "Le mythologème du combat entre le dieu de l'orage et la mer en Mésopotamie," *MARI* 7 (1993): 41-61, 45.

While I do not want to suggest that examples of the conflict motif depend on the specific whole narrative articulations of the conflict topos discussed in the previous chapter, they are closely related: they exhibit parallel imagery, the same or similar divine characters, similar relationships among divine characters, a shared concern with divine authority particularly articulated through the political concept of kingship, and the potential for making comparisons between divine figures and human agents and polities for legitimating or delegitimizing purposes. The motif references or summarizes a conflict between a warrior deity and sea deity/dragon that the warrior deity has won. We can only speculate about the specific details of the story in traditions where no full narrative survives. In these cases, there may have been full narratives in oral tradition and/or written tradition that did not survive. Nevertheless, we can identify a constellation of divine characters, their relationships and actions, and various narrative details, that indicate that the conflict topos was known and the motif was employed in literature from Mari, Ugarit, Israel, Judah, and Elephantine. The texts I discuss in this chapter range in date from the 18th century to the 6th century BCE. As I discuss in Chapter 4, the motif continues to appear after this time, in late-biblical texts, as well as first- and early-second-century CE Judean texts, including those interested in the figure of Jesus/*Christos*, and in late antique and medieval Jewish texts.¹⁷¹

The first section of this chapter treats passages in which a warrior god defeats the sea and/or rules over the sea or sea-based entities. Such passages survive in Ugaritic and

¹⁷¹ Because there are so many examples of the conflict motif, I organize these texts into two chapters. Chapter 3 includes texts dating from the Middle Bronze age to the late-6th century BCE, and Chapter 4 continues with texts that date from ca. 500 BCE to ca. 1000 CE. Within each of these two chapters I organize the texts according to the type of ideology they promote. Some passages pertain to more than one ideology.

biblical texts. Several Ugaritic texts promote the prowess of Baal and Anat through the conflict motif, and many biblical texts employ the motif to promote Yahweh. In the second section of this chapter I discuss biblical texts in which the conflict motif is used to portray disfavored agents and polities negatively by comparing them to or identifying them with Yahweh's defeated enemies. I also consider the use of the conflict motif to invoke Yahweh to intervene on behalf of humans in a particular socio-political circumstance. In the third and final section of this chapter, I discuss the conflict motif within royal ideology. In these examples, authors utilize the motif to make positive claims about the legitimacy of kingship and of particular kings, such as Zimri-Lim and David. The king is characterized as a powerful agent, possessing divine endorsement, characteristics, and/or weapons, with specific references made to the deity's defeat of the sea/dragon. This constitutes a substantial exaltation of the king relative to other humans, including rival royal figures.

In Chapter 2, I argued that whole narrative articulations of the conflict topos, and traditions related to these narratives, function to legitimate certain gods, temples, cities, kings, and the institution of kingship. In this chapter, we see that the conflict motif also functions to legitimate certain deities, temples, the institution of kingship, and particular kings. Additionally, the motif is employed to attack the legitimacy of disfavored agents and polities and to summon the victorious warrior deity to act against these human enemies. The use of the motif for delegitimizing purposes is further evidence for the political import of the motif; the motif would only be effective for attacking the legitimacy of particular (disfavored) agents and polities if its implicit ideological connotations were clear. Likewise, every instance of the conflict motif, whether used to

bolster or attack a divine/human figure or polity, would reinforce its connotations within political and/or theological discourse and further its ideological currency.

The motif occurs in several genres, including epistolary, poetic, proverbial, historiographic, and prophetic texts. Though these texts do not narrate a battle between deities, they contain allusions, epitomes, and imagery pertaining to such a battle. These references are not simply flourishes that enrich the letters, poems, proverbs, historiography, and prophecies. Rather, the conflict motif performs ideological work by relating the contemporary context and concerns of the text to divine events. Specifically, the hierarchic taxonomy of the conflict topos, that is, the relationship between the victorious deity and his enemy, is employed outside of a narrative context in order to validate particular institutions, states, and actors and to portray other agents and polities as illegitimate. In sum, the conflict topos serves as a foundation for discourse about what deities and/or polities are favored and disfavored, specifically articulated through ideological claims about the relative legitimacy or illegitimacy of their power, which is indicated by their association with either the victorious warrior deity or a defeated divine enemy. This discourse is exhibited in both whole narratives and examples of the motif; both bear out the legitimizing/delegitimizing function of the conflict topos.

The Victorious Warrior Deity

Passages from the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle*, the fragmentary Ugaritic text *KTU* 1.83, and many books of the Hebrew Bible include epitomes of a battle between a warrior deity and a series of defeated enemies. Baal, Anat, and Yahweh are each attributed with victory over the sea, a multi-headed serpentine figure, and/or draconic figures. As discussed in

the previous chapter, a similar list of defeated foes is attributed to Ninurta, and the gods Marduk and Aššur also defeat the sea deity Tiamat and monstrous serpentine/draconic figures associated with her. These warrior gods are said to have defeated a series of foes, and this shows their superiority in battle. In the cases of Ninurta, Marduk, Aššur, and Baal, a particular battle is singled out as the event that secures kingship for the victorious god. *Anzu* narrates Ninurta's pivotal battle with Anzu, the Babylonian and Assyrian versions of *Enuma Elish* narrate Marduk and Aššur's respective victories over Tiamat, and the *Baal Cycle* narrates Baal's victory over Yamm. In surviving biblical traditions, we do not have a whole narrative articulation of Yahweh's combat with the sea or related enemies, but his victory and subsequent rule is referenced throughout the biblical anthology. This section focuses on references, epitomes, and allusions to a battle between a warrior deity and his/her enemy, which survive in Ugaritic and biblical literature, and which function to exhibit the prowess of the warrior deity. In the case of Yahweh, we have examples that primarily emphasize his royal status, passages in which the conflict motif is intertwined with creation themes, instances in which the conflict motif is combined with the exodus motif, and examples in which Yahweh's past victories are invoked in order to summon Yahweh to intervene in the contemporary socio-political situation and/or to portray human enemies as destined for defeat. I first discuss Ugaritic instances of the conflict motif and then biblical examples.

Anat and Baal

The warrior deities Anat, Baal, and Yahweh each fought the sea, the multi-headed serpent, and draconic figures.¹⁷² These victories are recounted to show the capabilities of the warrior deity, and in the cases of Baal and Yahweh, the dominion gained through their victories that is made explicit through the conflict motif. The goddess Anat never attains royal authority, but she is portrayed as a capable warrior who engages in gruesome massacres (*KTU* 1.3 II). In the *Baal Cycle* she is Baal's constant ally and acts on his behalf and for his benefit throughout the narrative. After Baal defeats Yamm, he sends messengers to Anat to request that she assist him in attaining a palace. When Baal's messengers arrive, however, she fears that they have come to tell her that Baal is under threat. She shows her readiness to confront any enemy of Baal by recounting her previous victories:

¹⁷² These defeated enemies are sometimes but not always identified with one another, and there is fluidity among their specific characteristics. In each passage I discuss how they are identified and named. The sea is characterized in Ugaritic tradition as the deity Yamm/Nahar (Sea/River). The Hebrew cognate *yām* is also the sea, which in some passages has agency. Ugaritic *tannīn* and the Hebrew cognate *tannīn* (sometimes also *tannīm*), meaning "dragon," occur in Ugaritic and biblical passages alongside the sea or within the sea. Sometimes the draconic figure is identified with Yamm, Lotan/Leviathan, or Rahab. In Baal and Yahweh traditions, the multi-headed serpent is identified specifically as Lotan/Leviathan, whereas the passage relating Anat's killing of this figure does not name him. In some passages the sea seems to have a serpentine or dragon form, but in others there appears to be two or more separate enemies, including the sea and various serpentine or dragon figures. Our understanding of how these figures are identified with each other largely depends on our interpretation of parallel lines and adjacent stanzas in poetic passages. Parallel lines with fixed word pairs have corresponding meanings that may repeat the same idea using different vocabulary or have an accumulative affect (James L. Kugel "Fixed Pairs and Repetitive Parallelism," in *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981], 27-39). In some passages however, it is unclear whether we have, for example, a couplet or a triplet set of parallel lines, and this can lead to ambiguity. In each case, I discuss potential ambiguities and various options for identifying the defeated enemies.

She lifts her voice and cries out:
 Why have Gapn and Ugar come?
 What enemy appears against Baal,
 What adversary against the Rider of Clouds?
 Surely I crushed the beloved of El, Yamm,
 Surely I drained River (Nahar), the great god,
 Surely I muzzled Dragon (Tannīn), I harnessed him.¹⁷³
 I crushed the twisting serpent,
 The powerful one with seven heads.
 I crushed the beloved of El, Desi[re],
 I destroyed the calf of El, Rebel.
 I crushed the dog of El, Fire,
 I extinguished the daughter of El, Flame,
 That I might fight for silver, inherit gold (*KTU* 1.3 III 35-47).

We do not know when or in what context these battles occurred. Without further context, we only learn that Anat is a successful warrior who has defeated many enemies. In the current context this shows her capabilities in battle and willingness to face any of Baal's potential enemies.¹⁷⁴ This passage seems to list four separate enemies: Yamm, the multi-headed serpent, Desire, and Fire. According to the structure of the parallel lines, we may understand that the last two enemies are Desire/Rebel and Fire/Flame. The second figure is "the twisting serpent, the powerful one with seven heads." These parallel lines describe one figure that is serpentine and multi-headed. This exact phrase occurs in a passage

¹⁷³ The reading of the second verb is uncertain. For various options see Pardee, "Will the Dragon Ever Be Muzzled?" *UF* 16 (1984): 251-255. M. S. Smith reads the verb as *ištm[d]h*, "I destroyed" (*UBC* 2, 204). I am following Jeremy Hutton's reading of *ištm[d]h* as "I harnessed." Among the possible reconstructions of this verb, the action of harnessing is the most suitable for the context, especially as it occurs in parallel with the action of muzzling (Jeremy Hutton, "Ugaritic */š/ and the Roots ŠBM and ŠM[D] in *KTU* 1.3.III.40," *MARAAV* 13.1 [2006]: 75-83, 80-81).

¹⁷⁴ Several of her foes in this passage are associated with El. This is significant with respect to the power dynamics in the *Baal Cycle* regarding El's patriarchal authority and Baal's rise to authority (M. S. Smith, *UBC* 2, 52-55). Anat's actions throughout further Baal's rise to authority, and by defeating figures favored by El she detracts from and challenges El's authority.

recounting Baal's defeated foes (*KTU* 1.5 2-3), where the multi-headed serpent is identified as Lotan, and a similar phrase occurs in Isa 27:1, where he is identified as Leviathan.¹⁷⁵ In the list of Anat's defeated enemies, it is possible that the multi-headed serpent is identified with Yamm, but this reading is not certain because the passage is ambiguous.¹⁷⁶ The first enemy Anat names is Yamm (Sea) / Nahar (River) / Tannīn (dragon). Yamm/Nahar is consistently the name for Yamm, but elsewhere in the *Baal Cycle*, he is not identified or described as a dragon (*tannīn*). When Baal fights Yamm, several of his body parts are mentioned: his joints, form, torso, arms, head, and eyes; but there is nothing to suggest he has a draconic form (*KTU* 1.2 IV 1-41). In this passage, however, Yamm/Nahar is described as a dragon (*tannīn*), and is either associated with the multi-headed serpent or identified with the multi-headed serpent.

In the context of the *Baal Cycle*, Anat's defeat of Yamm and the multi-headed serpent presents a difficulty, because Baal is said to have faced the same enemies. Tablet 2 of the *Baal Cycle* narrates Baal's victory over Yamm, and Tablet 5 references Baal's

¹⁷⁵ I discuss Isa 27:1 in Chapter 4; in Isa 27:1, the "twisty serpent" is named Leviathan and occurs in parallel with the "dragon in the sea." Similarly, in Ps 74:13 (discussed below) a multi-headed dragon occurs in parallel with the sea and the next line mentions Leviathan. We also see a multi-headed enemy in several later texts (discussed in Chapter 4): in Rev 12 the angel Michael defeats a seven-headed dragon, and in Rev 13:1-4 this seven-headed dragon gives power to a seven-headed beast that rises from the sea; in the *Odes of Solomon* 22:5, *Theos* and *Christos* defeat a seven-headed dragon.

¹⁷⁶ Wayne T. Pitard considers all five lines to refer to one figure, Yamm, such that Lotan is a name for Yamm. He explains that the three lines, "Surely, I fought Yamm... Surely I finished off Nahar... Surely I bound Tannīn..." each begin with a verb preceded by the particle *l*, which may suggest that this is a tricolon, followed by a bicolon about the multi-headed serpent (Wayne T. Pitard, "The Binding of Yamm: A New Edition of *KTU* 1.83," *JNES* 57 no. 4 [1998]: 261-280, 280 n.38). M. S. Smith agrees that these five lines refer to one figure, and he considers this description of Yamm as a dragon (*tannīn*) and multi-headed serpent to be an alternative to the anthropomorphic description of Yamm in *KTU* 1.2 IV (M. S. Smith, *UBC* 2, 53-55; 247-258).

combat with the multi-headed serpent. There is no attempt to reconcile this apparent contradiction, and because Anat was a constant ally of Baal perhaps there was no need to do so. She also battles Mot directly and is pivotal in Baal's ultimate victory over Mot. Perhaps the references to Anat battling Baal's other enemies were interpreted in a similar manner, but we have no resources with which to better understand how her victories were understood.¹⁷⁷

Baal's victory over the multi-headed serpent occurs in the episode of Mot's challenges to Baal (*KTU* 1.5-1.6). The reference is embedded in a message from Mot to Baal. Mot sends a threatening message in which he references Baal killing the multi-headed serpent, here identified as Lotan.¹⁷⁸ The rhetorical effect of the reference within the context of Mot's message is to strengthen Mot's threat. Mot knows that Baal has killed his enemies in previous battles, but nonetheless Mot expects to utterly defeat Baal:

When you crushed Lotan, the fleeing serpent,
Annihilated the twisting serpent,
The powerful one with seven heads,
The heavens were bare, they relaxed.
But I myself will crumble you like a morsel,
I will devour (you) in lumps portion by portion.
Surely you will descend into the throat of divine Mot,
Into the maw of the beloved of El, the noble (*KTU* 1.5 I 1-8).

In this passage the conflict motif does triple duty. First, the reference to Baal killing Lotan the multi-headed serpent shows Baal's superiority as a warrior. Presumably, this

¹⁷⁷ I discuss *KTU* 1.83 below, which is possibly relevant to Anat's victories, but it does not resolve the remaining questions about how her victories were understood relative to Baal's victories.

¹⁷⁸ If Yamm/Nahar is identified as "the twisting serpent, the powerful one with seven heads" in Anat's speech (*KTU* 1.3 III 35-47, discussed above) and if these figures are consistently identified within the *Baal Cycle*, then Mot is here (*KTU* 1.5 I 1-8) directly referencing Baal's conflict with Yamm, not some other combat with Lotan.

reference initially existed independently of this scene, though we do not have a full narrative of this particular battle. Mark S. Smith speculates that this reference fits an early stage in the development of *Baal Cycle* traditions, during which various stories about Baal as a warrior circulated independently.¹⁷⁹ Secondly, we see a twist on how the conflict motif is usually employed. Typically, the motif serves to bolster the prowess of the victorious warrior, in this case Baal. In its original context, this passage too would promote Baal's legitimacy. However, in its current context within Mot's message, Baal's victories are referenced by Mot in order to flaunt his own power: Mot claims that he is so powerful he will defeat even the victorious Baal; the exaltation of Mot after defeating the known victor Baal would be greater than if he defeated some weaker enemy. It appears that the ideology of the motif is subverted in service of Mot. Mot appropriates the motif for his own benefit. However, in the scope of the whole episode, Baal eventually defeats Mot, and Baal's authority is ultimately affirmed over Mot's authority. Thus, thirdly, this particular occurrence of the motif contributes to the ideological force of the episode and narrative as a whole. Just as Baal defeated Lotan, he overcomes all of his enemies in this narrative, including Yamm, Mot, and potential usurpers among Athirat's sons. This passage uses the conflict motif in a creative and sophisticated way that plays with the application of its legitimating ideology. It is assumed in Mot's message that the reference to Baal's previous victory bolsters Baal's status as a warrior, and Mot inverts that connotation to assert his own power. In the scope of the episode and whole narrative, however, Baal's authority over Mot is reaffirmed when Baal defeats him.

¹⁷⁹ See note 145 above.

An additional Ugaritic reference to the defeat of Yamm/Nahar is contained in a small fragmentary text, *KTU* 1.83.¹⁸⁰ The fragmentary nature of the texts prevents us from determining whether it is narrative only or whether it is an incantation or ritual text that employs narrative detail. Furthermore, it is unclear who defeats Yamm/Nahar in this conflict. As in the list of Anat's defeated foes, Yamm/Nahar is here described as Tannīn (dragon), and in both passages Yamm/Nahar/Tannīn is bound. However, the scattering and possible desiccation of Yamm's body in *KTU* 1.83 is similar to Baal's actions towards Yamm's body in the battle scene of the *Baal Cycle* (*KTU* 1.2 IV 1-41). Grammatically, it is possible that the figure binding Yamm in this text is Anat, Baal, or an unknown plurality.¹⁸¹ Based on the surviving texts in which Anat and Baal contend with Yamm, translators prefer either Anat or Baal as the actor:

[...] on the earth. [or, In the land of] Mahanaim,
 (do something *trp* to) Yamm!
 Tongues lick the heavens.¹⁸²
 The two tails (do something *ttrp* to) Yamm.
 She (Anat) [or, You (Baal)] puts a muzzle on Tannīn.
 She binds [or, You bind] (him) on the heights of Lebanon.

¹⁸⁰ The most updated presentation of the text is available in Wayne T. Pitard, "The Binding of Yamm: A New Edition of *KTU* 1.83," *JNES* 57 no. 4 (1998): 261-280. The text was found along with a few administrative texts scattered on the floor of Room 73 in the royal palace of Ugarit in 1952. It appeared that the room (possibly an archive) had been cleared out except for the few tablets left on the floor. *KTU* 1.83 was the only literary text among them. About half of the text is missing from the broken tablet. It was originally published as *PRU* II:3, but Pitard has made several corrections to the transliterations offered in *PRU* and *KTU* (Pitard, "The Binding of Yamm," 261-262).

¹⁸¹ That is, the grammatical forms may be, respectively: 3rd person, feminine, singular; 2nd person, masculine, singular; or 3rd person, masculine, plural.

¹⁸² This line seems to fit Mot's characteristics: "[One lip to ea]rth, one lip to the heavens, [...] to]ngue to the stars" (*KTU* 1.5 II 2-3). Perhaps we are seeing a blending of the characterizations of Baal's various enemies, but we cannot be certain due to the fragmentary nature of this text.

Dried up [or, to the desert], you will be scattered, O Yamm!
To the multitude of *ht*, O Nahar!
You will not see [or, Indeed, you will see),
Then you shall foam up! [or, you will be parched!] (*KTU* 1.83)¹⁸³

Regardless of whether Baal or Anat binds Yamm in this passage, the combat event is consistent with the defeat(s) of Yamm in the *Baal Cycle*, and this text testifies to the use of conflict motif in Ugaritic traditions outside of the narrative of the *Baal Cycle*.¹⁸⁴

Unfortunately, we cannot know more about how the motif was used in this text.

Yahweh

Several books within the biblical anthology include references to a battle in which Yahweh defeated his enemies, including the sea (*yām*), an unnamed dragon (*tannîn*) or dragons (*tannînīm*), or dragon figures identified as Rahab or Leviathan. We have seen thus far that the hierarchic taxonomy of the conflict topos was flexible: among and even within various ancient west Asian societies, different gods were portrayed as the victorious warrior deity. In biblical traditions Yahweh is characterized as the victorious warrior deity. I have found that Yahweh's past victories against superhuman figures are often (but not always) cited in conjunction with statements about his status as a divine king and/or acts of creation. Victory and divine kingship are causally related; the warrior deity attains, secures, and defends his throne through victory. Divine kingship and acts of

¹⁸³ Pitard presents all three possible translations, with the subject as a 3rd person, feminine, singular; 2nd person, masculine, singular; or 3rd person, masculine, plural (Pitard, "Binding of Yamm," 273-274). I include only the first two options since one of these is most likely.

¹⁸⁴ Cross considered these to be "alloforms" of the basic cosmogonic myth," as I discuss in Chapter 1 (Cross, *CMHE*, 149).

creation are thematically related within biblical traditions; the political idea of kingship is used to assert Yahweh's authority and dominion, and acts of creation are cited in order to characterize his dominion as universal. There are also several passages in which the conflict motif is combined with the exodus motif, and this combination is especially significant because Yahweh's combat is placed temporally within a historiographic narrative. This shift in temporal location for Yahweh's combat establishes the narrative possibility that Yahweh will intervene in human time against human enemies. I first discuss references to Yahweh's victories over superhuman entities, such as the sea, Leviathan, and Rahab, and then discuss examples of the conflict motif that focus on human enemies. Throughout, I argue that references to Yahweh's past victories exhibit four possible rhetorical functions: to assert Yahweh's dominion; to claim that his dominion is universal; to portray present enemies as destined for defeat; and to invoke Yahweh to intervene against contemporary enemies. These notions are obviously overlapping and may occur simultaneously.

Several passages assert Yahweh's dominion particularly by claiming that he has authority over the sea, emphasizing the superiority of Yahweh's voice over the sea's voice. Psalm 93 describes Yahweh as a king from olden times who is greater than the floods/waters that raise up their waves and voice (Ps 93:1-5). In Psalm 29, Yahweh's thunder and voice is over the waters/flood, and he is enthroned over the flood (Ps 29:3, 10). Yahweh silences the roaring of the seas and their waves (Ps 65:7-8). In a storm theophany, he rebukes and dries up the sea/rivers (Nah 1:3b-5). These passages reference a conflict between Yahweh and the sea: the sea lifts up and raises its voice and its uproar, and Yahweh rebukes and silences the sea. The features of the sea are obviously consistent

with the physical characteristics of a sea: it has waves that rise and produce sound. However, the sea also has agency: it raises and lifts its voice. Moreover, the sound of the waves constitutes a threat such that Yahweh needs to rebuke and silence it. Among these passages, Psalm 93 and Psalm 29 explicitly describe Yahweh's superiority over the sea in royal terms: he is a king, enthroned over the flood. His authority to rebuke and silence the sea is presented as evidence of his dominion. We gain further insight into this notion from passages in which Yahweh's conflict with the sea occurs alongside references to Yahweh's conflict with other superhuman entities, such as Leviathan or Rahab, for example Ps 89:6-15 and Ps 74:12-17, discussed below.

All instances of the conflict motif within the biblical anthology pertain to the authority and dominion of Yahweh, often explicitly characterized as divine kingship, as seen in Psalms 29 and 93. Some texts also interweave themes of creation with the conflict motif in order to bolster the claim that Yahweh's dominion is universal. Throughout the biblical anthology, Yahweh is characterized as the creator and father god. His two roles, that of the warrior god and the father creator god, which can be distinct in more extensive pantheons, are subsumed under one god in the biblical tradition. This is similar to some texts in Assyrian and Babylonian traditions in which Aššur and Marduk take on the role of the creator deity in addition to their victorious warrior role.¹⁸⁵ Yahweh also shares

¹⁸⁵ In Marduk and Aššur traditions we have enough evidence to identify Marduk and Aššur as warrior gods who (over time and in select texts) take on the roles of creator gods (*EE* IV-VI; *SAA* 3, 1; *SVAT* 4-5: 7-8). Though El does not act as a warrior in the *Baal Cycle*, his epithets indicate that he also had warrior characteristics: "bull" (*tr*), "hero" (*ḡr*), and "mighty" (*gbr*); Patrick Miller also cites many names that combine warrior appropriate terms (strength, attacks, strikes, etc.) with the divine element El, including a Ugaritic name *ilmhr* "El is a warrior" (Patrick Miller, "El the Warrior," *HTR*, 60 [1967]: 411-431).

characteristics and roles of both Ugaritic El (creator and father) and Baal (victorious warrior), and the combination of these roles in the characterization of Yahweh-Elohim occurred early in Israelite tradition.¹⁸⁶ Thus, the interweaving of the conflict motif and themes of creation is consistent with Yahweh's dual roles as warrior and creator. The ideological effect of juxtaposing these motifs is that Yahweh's dominion, won through combat, is characterized as being universal because he has created everything, examples of this include Ps 89:6-15, Ps 74:12-17, and Psalm 104.

Psalm 89:6-15 describes Yahweh defeating an enemy, alongside references to Yahweh "founding" and "creating" things, especially the heavens and earth. His authority is related to both his victories over enemies and his establishment of the heavens and earth:

(In) the heavens they praise your wonders,¹⁸⁷ O Yahweh,
 Indeed, your fidelity in the assembly of the holy ones.
 For who in the clouds is comparable to Yahweh?
 (Who) among the divine ones¹⁸⁸ (is like) Yahweh?

¹⁸⁶ Cross argues that Yahweh was a form of El, citing the following: the name Israel uses El, not Yahweh; there are no biblical polemics against El; El and Yahweh are rarely distinguished; the name El becomes a generic noun; Yahweh shares characteristics and epithets of El (Cross, *CMHE*, 44-75). M. S. Smith, however, interprets these observations as indicating that Yahweh and El, originally distinct deities, were identified with one another at an early stage (M. S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* [2nd ed; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 32-42). While both hypotheses are well developed and account for the evidence, I am compelled by M. S. Smith's interpretation of Deut 32:8-9, which "suggest[s] a literary vestige of the initial assimilation of Yahweh," that is, these verses characterize El and Yahweh as distinct deities (M. S. Smith, *The Early History of God*, 33). Regardless of which hypothesis one prefers, however, the biblical evidence clearly shows that Yahweh-Elohim was described with the roles of father/creator (typically, El roles) and warrior (typically, Baal roles) very early in Israelite tradition.

¹⁸⁷ Reading the plural, "wonders" (*pēlā'êkā*), with several LXX, Syriac, and Targum mss, rather than the singular form of the MT.

El, terrifying in the council of the holy ones,
 Great¹⁸⁹ and feared above all those around him!
 O Yahweh, god of hosts, who is like you?
 Strong Yah, your fidelity surrounds you.¹⁹⁰
 You indeed rule over the swelling of the sea,
 When its waves rise, you still them.
 You indeed crushed Rahab like a corpse,
 With your strong arm you scattered your enemies.
 Yours are the heavens, yes yours is the earth,
 The world and all that fills it, you have founded them.
 North and south, you created them,
 Tabor and Hermon ring out your name.¹⁹¹
 You have a mighty arm,
 Your hand is strong, your right hand is raised.
 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne,
 Covenant loyalty and fidelity come before you (Ps 89:6-15).¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ As Cross convincingly argues, the Hebrew phrase *bēnê 'ēlîm* is best understood as being comparable to the Ugaritic “sons of El,” indicating the category “gods” or “divine ones.” The form *'lym* here, then, is singular with an enclitic *m* (Cross, *CMHE*, 45-46).

¹⁸⁹ Reading the masculine *rab*, rather than the feminine form *rabbâ* of the MT.

¹⁹⁰ Cross and *BHS* propose to emend, reading: “Your strength and your fidelity surround you” (Cross, *CMHE*, 160 n.66; *BHS* Ps 89:9).

¹⁹¹ For a discussion of the translation and significance of north, south, Tabor, and Hermon, see Day, *God's Conflict*, 25; Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms 51-100* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1968), 314; Cross, *CMHE*, 161 n.70.

¹⁹² Ps 89:6-15 is a hymn to Yahweh that has been incorporated into a composite poem, including the hymn, a portion expounding upon the Davidic covenant (vss. 4-5, 20-38), and a lamentation (vss. 39-52). I discuss below the other two sections and how the motif functions in each section. On the division and development of the psalm, see Nahum M. Sarna, “Psalm 89: A Study in Inner-Biblical Exegesis,” in *Biblical and Other Studies* (ed. Alexander Altman; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 29-46, 30-31; Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part Two and Lamentations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 147-157; Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51-100* [ed. Klaus Baltzer, trans. Linda M. Maloney; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005], 402; Knut M. Heim, “The (God-)Forsaken King of Psalm 89: A Historical and Intertextual Enquiry,” in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. John Day; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 296-322, 296-297; Hans U. Steymans, *Psalm 89 und der Davidbund: Eine strukturelle und redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2005), 302-319.

This passage begins by claiming that Yahweh is incomparable among the other divine beings (Ps 89:6-9), and this incomparability is then justified and displayed through references to Yahweh's victories and acts of creation. Yahweh rules the sea's raging and stills the sea's rising waves. He controls the sea, and this is related to a battle (or various battles) in which Yahweh crushed Rahab and scattered his enemies.¹⁹³ Yahweh's authority follows from his victories in battle. The reference to Yahweh's throne indicates that his authority is royal (Ps 89:15). His current royal dominion is also associated with his possession and founding of the heavens and earth, and this theme serves to portray his dominion as universal. In the flow of the passage, creation occurs subsequent to Yahweh's victory, and this sequence is comparable to that in *Enuma Elish* where Marduk defeats his enemies and then reorders the cosmos and creates geographical features; we see this pattern in Ps 74:12-17 as well. The passage continues with a reference to Yahweh's mighty arm and strong hand, reiterating his superiority as a warrior and further associating Yahweh's foundation and possession of created order with his role as victorious warrior, by describing acts of creation between references to his formidability in combat.

Psalm 74:12-17 also interweaves themes of authority, combat, and creation:

¹⁹³ The "enemies" in Ps 89:11 are not identified explicitly as being divine or human. In other passages where Yahweh "scatters" (*p̄zr*) humans or the bones of humans, as in Ps 53:6, the context requires that the enemies be human. Ps 89:11 may be referencing one battle in which Yahweh defeats Rahab and various divine enemies (whereby, perhaps, Yahweh secures his authority over the sea), or it may be referencing various victories of Yahweh, including a battle against Rahab and battles against various human enemies (whereby Yahweh continually displays his sovereignty). If the latter interpretation is more accurate, the placement of human enemies in parallel with the divine enemy Rahab in Ps 89:11 is similar to passages in which specific human enemies are compared to or identified with defeated divine enemies (Ezek 29:3; Ezek 32:2; Jer 51:34-37).

It is God, king of old,
 Accomplishing victories in the midst of the earth.
 It was you who divided Sea by your might,
 You broke the heads of the dragons on the waters.
 It was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan,
 You made him food for the people of the wilderness.¹⁹⁴
 It was you who cleaved open springs and streams,
 You indeed dried up ever-flowing rivers.
 Yours is the day, yes yours is the night,
 You indeed established the moon and the sun.
 It was you who fixed all the boundaries of earth,
 The summer and winter, you indeed devised them (Ps 74:12-17).

In Psalm 74, Yahweh's authority is explicitly royal authority. He is a victorious king whose authority has been established in the distant past (Ps 74:12). This authority was

¹⁹⁴ The term *lě'ām lěšyyîm* is difficult to interpret. Dahood proposed repointing the phrase to read "to be gathered by desert tribes" (*lě'amol šyyîm*), though he considered this reading dubious (Dahood, *Psalms II*, 199 and 206). *BHS* emends the text to read "to the sharks of the sea" (*lě'amlēšê yām*), originally proposed by I. Löw, and surprisingly followed by Hossfeld and Zenger, with no discussion of the Hebrew text (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 241). Day suggests deleting the second *lě*, reading "to the people of the wild beasts," as if the "people" are animals (Day, *God's Conflict*, 21, 22, n.57). The word *šyyîm* only occurs six times in the MT, so it is somewhat obscure. It is the plural of *šî*, a wild beast, and four of the six occurrences are clearly references to animals. Ps 72:9 uses *šyyîm* to refer to people, though this text is usually considered corrupt and the word emended to better fit its parallel. The LXX translation shows that the word was unclear to ancient interpreters as well; it renders the phrase *laois tois Aithiopsin* (to the Ethiopian peoples) (LXX Ps 73:14). Much earlier than Day, Hermann Hupfeld also suggested deleting the second preposition, translating the phrase "Volk der Wüstentiere" ("the people of the desert animals") (Hermann Hupfeld, *Die Psalmen*, Vol. 3 [Gotha: Perthes-Verlag, 1860], 313). I agree with Hupfeld and the LXX as far as maintaining the literal sense of the Hebrew "for the people." However, *lěšyyîm* remains uncertain, and deleting this second *lě* seems to be the most simple solution to finding a readable phrase. Whitney, however, chooses to delete *lě'ām* altogether, arguing that scribes inserted "to the people" in an attempt to clarify *šyyîm*. He thinks this insertion occurred relatively late, possibly under the influence of traditions about Leviathan being served as food to Yahweh's people in an eschatological banquet (William K. Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts: Leviathan and Behemoth in Second Temple and Early Rabbinic Judaism* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 170, n.53). His proposal is reasonable from a text critical perspective since it is more likely that someone would add the more common phrase "to the people" than the obscure phrase "to the wild beasts." The insertion of "to the people," however, predates the targumic translation, which elaborates on the two phrases separately.

gained specifically through violence toward and mutilation of the sea, Leviathan, and various water-ways (Ps 74:13-15).¹⁹⁵ Such violence and mutilation is characteristic of actions we have seen towards defeated enemies after divine combat in Ugaritic texts (*KTU* 1. IV 21-27; *KTU* 1.83), *Enuma Elish* (IV 123-140, V 1-66), and Ps 89:11.¹⁹⁶ As in Ps 89:6-15 and *Enuma Elish*, acts of creation occur after the deity defeats his enemies. Here, Yahweh manipulates waterways and stations heavenly bodies in order to establish daily and seasonal temporal order (Ps 74:15-17). This is remarkably similar to Marduk's creation of waterways through the manipulation of Tiamat's body, followed by his stationing of heavenly bodies (*EE* IV, 123-140; V 1-66). While Ps 74:15 does not

¹⁹⁵ Ps 74:13-15 has also been considered to refer to the Reed Sea event, however this interpretation has been rejected within modern scholarship (Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2*, 78). The division of the sea, splitting and drying of waterways, and giving of Leviathan as food for people in the wilderness were each interpreted as pertaining to events from the exodus narrative in the targumic exegetical translation of this psalm. Subsequently, some early scholars followed this reading (Eduard König, *Die Psalmen* [Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1927], 485; Edward J. Kissane, *The Book of Psalms 2* [Dublin: Browne and Nolan Ltd., 1954], 89). Below I discuss instances of the conflict motif combined with the exodus motif, and it is possible that the targumic reading of Ps 74 was influenced by such texts. Hossfeld and Zenger acknowledge the association of Ps 74:15 with exodus traditions as possible, but consider it more likely that the drying of rivers refers to the crossing of the Jordan in Josh 3 (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 248-249). My reading is closest to and elaborates on that of John Day, who also rejects the exodus interpretation for these verses and considers verse 15 to refer to the creation of springs and streams (Day, *God's Battle*, 23, 25).

¹⁹⁶ The narrative theme of a divine warrior mutilating and exposing the corpse of his/her defeated divine enemy is consistent with the broader ancient west Asian literary trope and historical practice of mutilating and/or exposing the corpses of defeated enemies and/or disfavored icons. Within ancient West Asian cultures and literature, the mutilation of (living or dead) enemies and icons was a way to bring shame upon the defeated and to emphasize the power of the victor (Tracy Lemos, "Shame and Mutilation of Enemies in the Hebrew Bible," *JBL* 125 [2006]: 225-241, 225-226; S. M. Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: Interpreting Mental and Physical Differences* [New York: Cambridge University, 2008], 38-45; idem., "The Ascription of Physical Disability as a Stigmatizing Strategy in Biblical Iconic Polemics," *JHS* 9 [2009]: 1-15; Nathaniel B. Levtow, *Images of Others: Iconic Politics in Ancient Israel* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008], 109).

indicate that Yahweh used Leviathan's body to create waterways, this does occur immediately after he cleaves the sea and crushes the heads of Leviathan (Ps 74:13-14), and moreover, he gives Leviathan's corpse to the "people of the wilderness" as food, suggesting that the corpse was exposed rather than disposed properly. By highlighting these thematic and specific parallels, I wish to illustrate that the articulation of the conflict motif within Ps 74:12-17 is quite intricate. Furthermore, through comparison with fuller articulations of the conflict topos, we may see more clearly the ideological significance of the set of details that Ps 74:12-17 contains.

Both Ps 74:12-17 and Ps 89:6-15 begin with claims about Yahweh: he is king of old and he is incomparable, respectively. Both psalms then justify these claims through references to Yahweh's victory over Leviathan and Rahab, respectively, his defeat or authority over the sea and, his subsequent acts of creation. We may infer that Yahweh's royal dominion and incomparability follow from his victories—this is the ideological work accomplished through the conflict motif within these passages. The narrative logic joining these notions (kingship, victory over the sea/dragons, creation, and incomparability), which is implicit in Ps 89:6-15, Ps 74:12-17, and other biblical instances of the conflict motif, is confirmed through comparison with fuller articulations of the conflict topos, such as the *Baal Cycle* and *Enuma Elish*, which elaborate the narrative movement of the warrior deity from facing a rival, through victory, to kingship, (and for Marduk, Aššur, and Yahweh, but not Baal) creation and incomparability among divine beings.

Psalm 104 exhibits a similar structure to Ps 89:6-15 and Ps 74:12-17, in that it begins by declaring that Yahweh is great and then justifies this claim by listing his

various achievements, including acts of creation; a conflict with the sea, though this conflict is less violent than that in Ps 74:13; and the formation of Leviathan, who here is a living plaything rather than a slain and mutilated enemy as are Leviathan in Ps 74:14 and Rahab in Ps 89:11. Psalm 104:1-5 lists some of Yahweh's creative acts: he has stretched the heavens like a tent (Ps 104:2b), constructed an abode on the waters (Ps 104:3a), made a cloud chariot (Ps 104:3b),¹⁹⁷ and set the earth on its foundation (Ps 104:5). The act of securing the earth on its foundation is then elaborated as follows:

He set the earth on its fixed place,
It will never ever be shaken.
Deep covered it like clothing,
Over the mountains stood waters.
They fled from your rebuke,
From the sound of your thunder they hurried away.
They went up the mountains, they went down the valleys,
To this place you established for them.
The boundary you set, they will not cross,
They will not return to cover the earth (Ps 104:5-9).

It is integral in founding the earth that Yahweh took control over the deep/waters, and he did so with his roar/thunder. Once the deep/waters were overcome, he sets boundaries for the waters (Ps 104:9). The psalm continues with Yahweh further controlling water-ways

¹⁹⁷ The notion of Yahweh using the clouds as a chariot or riding on the clouds/heavens occurs in Isa 19:1; Ps 68:34; Deut 33:26; and probably Ps 68:5. The "one like a son of man" in Dan 7 is also said to arrive "with the clouds of heaven." This is comparable to the Ugaritic notion of Baal as the "rider on the clouds" (*KTU* 1.2 IV 8, 29; 1.4 III 11, 18, V 60; 1.5 II 7), the Babylonian notion of Adad as the "cloud-rider" (*Enki and the World Order*, 1.311; CT 15, 15 8: "Hymn to Iškur"), and the description of Marduk riding on a storm-chariot (*EE* II 151, IV 50). The characteristic of riding on the clouds/storms/heavens was obviously a widespread and seemingly fitting description for ancient west Asian storm deities (Alberto Green, *The Storm-God in the Ancient Near East* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003], 195; M. S. Smith, *Early History of God*, 80-82; Moshe Weinfeld, "'Rider of the Clouds' and 'Gatherer of the Clouds,'" *JANES* 5 [1973]: 421-426; Antoine Vanal, *L'iconographie du dieu de l'orage dans le Proche-Orient ancien* [Paris: J. Gabalda, 1965], *passim*).

to provide for animals and agriculture (Ps 104:10-18). Yahweh's rebuke of the waters in Psalm 104 is not as violent as his manipulation of water-ways in Ps 74:12-17; rather it is more like descriptions in Psalms 93, 29, and 65, which refer to Yahweh's voice being superior to the sea's voice or waves, and most like Nah 1:3b-5, in which Yahweh rebukes the sea during a storm theophany. The notion of Yahweh gathering and placing boundaries for the waters is most like the summary of creation in Psalm 33:

By the word of Yahweh the heavens were made,
By the breath of his mouth, all their hosts.
He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap,
He puts the deeps into chambers (Ps 33:6-7).

Psalm 33:6-7 (among other passages) includes setting boundaries for the waters as an aspect of creation, and Ps 104:6-9 associates this act with Yahweh rebuking the deep/waters, preserving the notion of conflict and the personification of the waters. Psalm 104:25-26 continues by pointing to the sea as an exhibit of Yahweh's great works:

This is the sea,
Great and wide reaching,
There—the innumerable creeping things,
Living creatures, small and great.
There—the ships go,
Leviathan, this one you fashioned to play in it (Ps 104:25-26).

The sea is great and wide, but as the psalm narrates, Yahweh overcame the deep/waters. It currently houses “creeping things” and “living things,” which elsewhere are always things Yahweh has created (Gen 1:20-21; 6:7). Finally, the psalm points to “Leviathan, this one you fashioned to play in it,” who here is characterized as a pet and not at all as an enemy who ever posed a threat to Yahweh. Overall, we are presented with a list of creative acts that aims to exhibit Yahweh's greatness. The list of creative acts includes rebuking the deep/waters, and the psalm offers both the great sea and Leviathan as

entities that visually display Yahweh's great works, and these details are representative of the conflict motif. The psalm claims that Yahweh is superior to the deep/waters, as indicated by his authority to rebuke and set boundaries for them, and portrays the great sea and Leviathan as non-threatening displays of his works. The inclusion of the conflict motif within this creation narrative, that is, the incorporation of a personified deep/waters and references to the sea and Leviathan, simultaneously increases the magnitude of Yahweh's accomplishments and deflates the status of the sea and Leviathan, which elsewhere are formidable enemies. Job 40-41 preserves a similar characterization of Leviathan, though without incorporating an elaborate creation theme.

Job 40-41, like Ps 104:26, characterizes Leviathan as a plaything, but details Yahweh's taming of Leviathan and offers this feat as an example of Yahweh's superiority. Both Leviathan and Behemoth are tamed by Yahweh:

He (Behemoth) is the first of the ways of El.
Only he who made him can draw his sword.
...
(Who) will take him by the eyes,
Or pierce his nose with snares?
Can you draw out Leviathan with a hook,
Or press down his tongue with a cord?
Can you put a line in his nose,
Or pierce his jaw with a hook?
Will he multiply supplications to you?
Or speak gentle words to you?
Will he make a covenant with you,
Will you take him as your perpetual servant?
Will you play with him as with a bird?
Or leash him for your maidens? (Job 40:19; 24-30)

This is followed by a reference to battling and capturing Leviathan, who frightened "even the gods" with his strength, indestructible physique, and ominous appearance (Job 40:32-41:22). The fright of divine beings at the sight of Leviathan stands in contrast to

Yahweh's ability to tame him, and this contrast serves to bolster the claim that Yahweh is incomparable among divine beings.¹⁹⁸ The passage concludes by comparing Leviathan to the sea/deep, stating that he is incomparable among earthly creatures, and calling Leviathan "king over all the proud":

He (Leviathan) makes the deep boil like a pot,
He makes the sea like a pot of ointment.
He leaves behind a shining wake,
One would think the deep to be grey-haired.
On earth he has no equal,
A creature without fear.
He surveys everything that is lofty,
He is king over all the proud (Job 41:23-26).

Leviathan is unequaled, a king of sorts, and even upsets the sea/deep, elsewhere described as a powerful entity.¹⁹⁹ The rhetorical force of boasting about Leviathan's greatness however, is to draw out the implications of Yahweh taming and binding this formidable creature. Leviathan frightens the gods, disturbs the sea/deep, and has no equal on earth, yet Yahweh can make him his plaything and servant. According to the logic of the text, Yahweh is thus greater than all of these entities: Leviathan, Behemoth, the gods, the sea/deep, and all earthly beings.

¹⁹⁸ The rhetorical effect of the fear of divine beings at the sight of Leviathan is comparable to the rhetorical effect of the demur of the divine council at the arrival of Yamm in the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle* (KTU 1.2 II 21-24). In both cases, the intimidation of other divine beings stands in contrast to the ability of the victorious divine warrior (Baal or Yahweh) to face the terrifying opponent. Furthermore, the superiority of the divine warrior (Baal or Yahweh) over his foe (Yamm or Leviathan) indicates that he (Baal or Yahweh) is also superior to all the divine beings who feared the foe (Yamm or Leviathan).

¹⁹⁹ The manner in which Leviathan disturbs the sea is reminiscent of the stirring and churning that the younger gods and Marduk cause inside Tiamat (EE I 22-28).

The rhetorical effect of the conflict motif in Job 40-41 is similar to the inversion of the conflict motif in Mot's speech in the *Baal Cycle* (KTU 1.5 I 1-8). Mot enumerates Baal's victories to buttress his own claims to power: even though Baal is a great warrior Mot still expects to defeat him. Likewise, in Job 40-41, Yahweh emphasizes Leviathan's fierce appearance and the gods' fear of Leviathan in order to heighten the implications of his victory over and taming of Leviathan. In both passages, the authors play with the legitimating ideology of the conflict motif: within speeches delivered by divine characters, the authors invert the legitimating ideology in favor of an enemy in order to bolster the claims of the speaker. In the *Baal Cycle*, this appears to increase Mot's threat to Baal, though Baal ultimately overcomes this threat, whereas in Job 40-41, Yahweh offers his victory over Leviathan as an exhibit of his own incomparability in response to the character Job's challenge to him.

Several other passages in Job reference Yahweh's conflict with the sea and associated creatures (the dragon, Rahab, and the serpent). These passages aim to show that Yahweh is incomparable, in response to the rhetorical question "Who can contend with Yahweh?"²⁰⁰ As evidence of Yahweh's incomparability, the various passages state that Yahweh set a guard over the sea/dragon (Job 7:12); trampled the waves of the sea (Job 9:8); subdued the "helpers of Rahab" (Job 9:14); stilled the sea, struck down Rahab, and pierced the serpent (Job 26:10-13); shut the sea, set its boundary, and said, "Thus far you may come, but no further, here it (the boundary) will be set against your majestic waves!" (Job 38:8-11). These passages, like the psalms discussed above, promote

²⁰⁰ This rhetorical question is suggested in many verses of Job, and most directly asked in Job 40:2, "Will a plaintiff bring suit against Shaddai? The one who convicts god will answer."

Yahweh by exhibiting his victories over the sea and associated creatures. The victory over the sea includes both combat against water-based enemies and, as in Psalm 104, setting boundaries for bodies of water. The latter feature is also associated with acts of creation in Pss 104:9 and 33:6-7, and according to Ps 89:6-15; Ps 74:12-17; Psalm 104; and Job (*passim*), both creation and victory over the sea and water-based enemies display Yahweh's dominion and incomparability. The promotion of Yahweh through both the conflict motif and creation theme is comparable to the elevation of Marduk in *Enuma Elish*.

Enuma Elish narrates Marduk's rise to power including the defeat of his rivals (Tiamat, the sea and her associates), his enthronement, his ordering of the cosmos, and his creation of geographical and cosmological features (out of Tiamat's mutilated corpse). During his enthronement and throughout the account of his ordering of the cosmos and creative acts, the other gods declare him to be incomparable among all the divine beings. Though Ps 89:6-15, Ps 74:12-17, Psalm 104, and Job 40-41 and *passim* do not provide a full narrative of Yahweh's rise to power, they share these narrative elements in various combinations: Yahweh is incomparable (Ps 89:7-9; Job 41:2-3) or at minimum great and majestic (Ps 104:1; Job 40:10); he has defeated superhuman enemies (including specifically Rahab, the sea, sea-dragons, and Leviathan) (Ps 89:11; Ps 74:13-14; Job 7:12; 9:8; 9:14; 26:12-13) or is otherwise superior to them (Ps 104:25-26; Job 40:15-41:26); he is a formidable warrior (Ps 89:14; Ps 74:13; Job 40:9); he rules over the sea (Ps 89:10) and has rebuked, stilled, bound, or dried up the sea/rivers/waters (Ps 89:10; Ps 74:15; Ps 104:7-9; Job 38:8-11; Job 26:10); he is king (Ps 89:15; Ps 74:12); and his authority is enacted through and exhibited by his acts of creation, including founding

the entire heavens and earth (Ps 89:12-13; Ps 74:16-17; Ps 104:2-6; Job 38:4). Through the conflict motif authors of various biblical texts promoted their preferred deity Yahweh. By making references to his past victories and authority over the sea/sea-dragons, authors portrayed Yahweh as an incomparable deity, a victorious divine warrior, a divine king, and a creator with universal dominion. Biblical combat traditions were not only used in service of promoting Yahweh. Authors also employed the conflict motif to promote and to attack particular human individuals, groups, polities, and institutions.

Yahweh's Combat Against the Sea/Dragon and Its Relevance for Humans

The examples just discussed primarily focus on promoting Yahweh through references to his past victories over superhuman entities and to his current status of authority over defeated enemies. I consider this to be the ideological foundation of the conflict motif within biblical traditions. From this ideological basis, we see several secondary applications of motif, that is, instances in which the status of Yahweh or his divine and royal prerogatives (these being derived from his victories) are purported to have implications for human figures.²⁰¹ Such secondary applications include the use of the motif to promote particular individuals or groups and to attack disfavored individuals

²⁰¹ In distinguishing between what I call the primary and secondary applications of the conflict motif, I do not wish to suggest that the “primary” application developed before the “secondary.” Rather, the secondary application (making statements about humans) depends on the ideological basis of the primary application (making statements about deities), because statements made about the authority or legitimacy of humans assume or claim that the authority of the god is relevant to humans. One could argue that these applications developed simultaneously or that the secondary application developed first, especially in instances in which the humans are royal individuals. I discuss this further with regard to Mari Letter A.1968 below. We have explicit evidence for secondary applications of the motif within Mesopotamian, biblical, and Mari literature, but not Ugaritic traditions.

or groups. The efficacy of these secondary applications of the conflict motif depends on the claim that Yahweh can act on behalf of or against humans within the current temporal framework, in the contemporary present or immediate future. This broader range of temporal settings for Yahweh's divine combat is assumed when authors use the conflict motif to make statements about contemporary politics and agents, whether to portray disfavored politics or agents as destined for defeat or to invoke Yahweh to act on behalf of a favored group or individual. Authors portray entities within the narrative present as comparable to characters from combat traditions, and in doing so they link the narrative present to cosmic time and events.

Within biblical traditions, perhaps the most widely cited example of divine combat used to describe the narrative present is the Reed Sea event. John J. Collins identifies the exodus narrative as a "paradigmatic story" for the notion of Yahweh intervening on behalf of the people "Israel" within a human temporal and socio-political circumstance.²⁰² Events from the narrative of the exodus are referenced as examples of Yahweh's past actions on behalf of the people, in order to suggest that he can and will act on behalf of the people in a current situation. This use of the exodus motif is parallel to the use of the conflict motif for the same purposes—to make statements about particular human groups, individuals, and/or their contemporary circumstances.²⁰³ In addition to

²⁰² John J. Collins "The 'Historical Character' of the Old Testament in Recent Biblical Theology," in *Israel's Past in Present Research: Essays on Ancient Israelite Historiography* (ed. V. Philips Long; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 150-169, 163.

²⁰³ Likewise, the projection of divine combat into the present and immediate future, or alternatively the linking of the present to divine combat of the mythic past, is parallel to the use of the exodus narrative tradition as a "paradigmatic story," for example, the description of post-exilic restoration as a new exodus in Second Isaiah, discussed below.

this thematic parallel, there are also several passages in which the exodus motif and conflict motif are combined in descriptions of the Reed Sea event. In the following section, I discuss the combination of the exodus and conflict motifs. Thereafter, I discuss the use of the conflict motif and the combined exodus and conflict motifs to portray disfavored polities as destined for defeat and/or to invoke Yahweh to intervene on behalf of the people.

The Conflict Motif and the Exodus Motif: Divine Combat within Historiography

The story of the exodus, including the Reed Sea event, describes Yahweh acting on behalf of the people (*hā'ām*), identified as “Israel” and the “children of Israel,” against the Egyptian king and people. Narratives of and references to this event, however, sometimes show that the event was reconceived as a battle between Yahweh and the Reed Sea, rather than Yahweh and only the Egyptian king and his army. The incorporation of the conflict motif into depictions of the Reed Sea event adds to the portrayal of Yahweh as the victorious warrior and enhances the portrayal of the Egyptian king and army as illegitimate. The most significant effect of the combination of the conflict and exodus motifs, however, is that the temporal location of Yahweh’s combat with the sea changes. While the exodus narrative is not historical, it is the beginning of Israelite historiography, that is, it purports to be the foundational history of the Israelites.²⁰⁴ Through the combination of the conflict and exodus motifs, Yahweh’s

²⁰⁴ The historicity of the exodus narrative is problematic, and its genre is better understood as historiography. There are no external references to the Israelites spending time in Egypt, nor to the exodus, and evidence used to support the hypothesis that the Raamasid period was the historical setting of these events is minimal (James M. Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Israel and Judah* [Westminster: John Knox Press, 1986],

combat with the sea is placed within this foundational story. As a result, additional layers of temporal possibility and historiographic significance are added to biblical combat traditions: the Reed Sea event may be cited to bolster the claim that Yahweh's divine combat may reoccur within historical time.

There are several passages in which the conflict motif is intertwined with the exodus motif: Ps 77:14-21; Ps 106:7-12; Exodus 14 (P portions); and Ps 78:13. These passages describe the event at the Reed Sea as a conflict between Yahweh and the sea:

O Elohim, your dominion is in holiness,
Who is a great god like Elohim?
You indeed are the god who accomplished a wonder,
You made your strength known among the peoples.
With your arm you redeemed your people,
The descendants of Jacob and Joseph.
The waters saw you, O Elohim, the waters saw you, they writhed,
Even the deeps trembled.
Storm clouds poured out water,
Clouds thundered,
Indeed your arrows went back and forth.
The sound of your thunder was in the whirlwind,
Your lightning illuminated the world,
the earth trembled and quaked.
Your way was through the sea,
And your path through the great waters,
But your footprints were not evident.
You led your people like a flock
By the hand of Moses and Aaron (Ps 77:14-21).

The passage begins with a statement of the incomparability of Elohim, and offers the event at the Reed Sea as an example of his formidability in battle. The exodus motif is indicated by the following: the verb “redeem”²⁰⁵; the reference to the people as the

64, 67-68; Neils P. Lemche, “Is It Still Possible to Write a History of Ancient Israel?” in *Israel's Past in Present Research*, 391-414, 398-399).

²⁰⁵ The verb “redeem” (*g'l*) is used regarding the exodus in Exod 6:6; 15:13; Pss 74:2; 77:16; 78:35; and 106:10.

descendants of Jacob and Joseph, the primary narrative figures who relocate the people to Egypt before the exodus; the reference to the path through the sea/waters; and finally, the reference to Moses and Aaron. The conflict motif shapes the description of the interaction between Elohim and the waters/deep, which are afraid and tremble in response to Elohim's storm theophany. The Reed Sea event, described as a conflict between Yahweh and the sea, is given as an example that proves the deity's incomparability and formidability. Similarly, Ps 106:7-12 summarizes the event at the Reed Sea and casts the interaction between Yahweh and the Reed Sea in terms similar to passages discussed above (Psalms 93, 29, 65, Nahum 1) in which Yahweh rebukes the sea:

Our ancestors in Egypt did not pay attention to your wonder;
They did not remember the abundance of your covenant loyalty,
They were rebellious at the sea, at the Reed Sea.
But he saved them for the sake of his name,
To make his might known.
He rebuked the Reed Sea and it became dry,
He led them through the deep as through a desert.
Thus, he saved them from the hand of the foe,
He redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.
The waters covered their adversaries,
Not even one of them remained.
Then they believed his words;
they sang his praise (Ps 106:7-12).

While the enemy of the people is still the Egyptians who were covered by waters, the way in which Yahweh rebukes and dries the sea indicates an adversarial manipulation and command of the sea/deep/waters that is consistent with instances of the conflict motif in which Yahweh rebukes or commands the sea, showing that Yahweh has authority over the sea and that he can quell its threatening waves. Here, the conflict motif adds to the

portrayal of the “mighty power” of Yahweh: he not only defeated human enemies by drowning them, he rebuked and dried the sea/deep itself.

The two more extensive descriptions of the event at the Reed Sea occur in Exodus 14 and Exodus 15. The prose account in Exodus 14 contains JE material that has been substantially supplemented and revised by P.²⁰⁶ The P portion states that Moses divides the sea and the Israelites pass through the sea on dry ground, between two walls of water (Exod 14:16, 21c-22, 26, 29).²⁰⁷ Yahweh manipulates the sea, which is divided, dried up, and then allowed to return to its normal state. Like Pss 77:14-21 and 106:7-12, the P revision of Exodus 14 reflects a re-imagining of the Reed Sea event through the conflict motif, portraying Yahweh acting violently towards the sea as well as human enemies. This is evident when we compare the P prose account to the poetic account in the “Song of Moses” (Exod 15:1b-18), in which Yahweh casts/throws Pharaoh’s chariots, horses, and riders into the sea, and they sink (Exod 15:1, 4-5, 10, and 21). In the “Song of Moses,” the sea is not divided or dried up, and the people do not cross through it. Rather, Yahweh throws the Egyptian enemy into the sea, and the sea/deeps cover them (15:5, 10). There is no violence toward the sea, only toward the Egyptian enemy, and the waters

²⁰⁶ Cross, *CMHE*, 318; Martin Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 105.

²⁰⁷ Cross identifies Exod 14:22, 26 as P and Exod 14:21, 27 as J (Cross, *CMHE*, 133). Of the verses with which I am most concerned (Exod 14:15-31), Noth identifies as P material Exod 14:15-18; 21a α b; 22; 23; 26; 27a α ; 28; 29; he identifies as J Exod 14:19b, 20, 21a β , 24, 25b, 27a β b, 30, 31 (Noth, *A History of Pentateuch Traditions*, [trans. Bernard W. Anderson; Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1971], 18, 30). Similarly, among these verses Richard E. Friedman identifies as P material Exod 14:15-18; 21a; 21c-23; 26-27a; 28-29 (Richard Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed* [San Francisco: Harper, 2003], 142-144).

are an instrument of Yahweh.²⁰⁸ Exodus 15:19, when the narrative returns to prose after the poetic account, is consistent with the P account in chapter 14: “For Pharaoh’s horse, with his chariot and riders went into the sea, and Yahweh brought the waters of the sea back over them; but the children of Israel walked on dry ground in the midst of the sea.” Thus, Exod 15:19 reiterates P’s description from Exod 14:16, 21c-22, 26, 29, assuming that the sea has been divided and dried up for the people and Egyptians to walk through it. The placement of the poetic account (Exod 15:1b-18) within the prose account (which itself combines P and JE versions) privileges the retelling of the event that incorporates the conflict motif. The second description of the Reed Sea event (Exod 15:1b-18) is read in light of the first (combined) description, the prose account that precedes and frames the poetic account.

Similarly, Ps 78 foregrounds details from the version of the Reed Sea narrative that incorporates the conflict motif, thus privileging the combined conflict and exodus motif. Psalm 78 recounts the demise of the northern kingdom of Israel and provides a poetic overview of the foundational narrative of Israel and Judah, including the Reed Sea event:

They [Ephraim] forgot his deeds,
 and his wonders which he had shown them.
 Before their ancestors he accomplished a wonder
 in the land of Egypt, the plain of Zoan:
 He divided the sea and brought them through it,
 He caused the waters to stand like a heap (Ps 78:11-13).

Psalm 78 explicitly cites details from both Exod 14 and 15. Psalm 78:13a states that Yahweh divided the sea and that the people passed through it, details from Exod 14:21c-

²⁰⁸ Cross and David N. Freedman, “The Song of Miriam,” *JNES* 14 (1955): 237-250, 239; Cross, “The Song of the Sea and Canaanite Myth,” *CMHE*, 131-132.

22; whereas Ps 78:13b states that Yahweh made the waters stand as a heap, a detail from Exod 15:8, where the floods stand as a heap, churning and covering the enemy so that they sink (Exod 15:8, 10). However, within the single verse, Ps 78:13, these differing versions are referenced as if there is no discrepancy between the two. The detail that Yahweh made the waters stand as a heap is read as an additional description of what happened when Yahweh divided the sea.

In sum, Ps 77:14-21; Ps 106:7-12; the P portions of Exod 14; and Ps 78:13 each describe or reference the Reed Sea event in a manner that incorporates the conflict motif.²⁰⁹ Yahweh acts against the sea as an adversary: dividing, rebuking, and drying the sea. The Reed Sea event is re-imagined as a combat between Yahweh and the sea, though according to Exod 15:1b-18, the original enemy was the Egyptian king and his armies whom Yahweh defeated at the sea and even by means of the sea. The conflict motif adds an additional superhuman element to the Reed Sea event, in that Yahweh not only faces human enemies, but also the sea. In turn, Yahweh's conflict with the sea is situated within a narrative that is imagined and presented as the foundational story of the Israelites and Judeans. This represents an innovative interpretation of both the conflict motif and the Reed Sea event within Israelite/Judean historiography that is comparable to the use of the conflict motif in Assyrian royal inscriptions describing historical battles.²¹⁰ In both traditions, human enemies are associated with the victorious warrior deity's enemies.

²⁰⁹ Psalm 136:15; Ps 66:6; Ps 106:9; and Neh 9:11, brief references to the Reed Sea event, also assume the description of the event that incorporates the conflict motif.

²¹⁰ As I discuss in Chapter 2, Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions depict kings' battles with political enemies as comparable to Ninurta's battles against Anzu and Asakku; and Sennacherib's account of his battle against Halule may be shaped by the Assyrian version of the *EE*.

However, in the Israelite/Judean references to the Reed Sea event, there is no king who is equated with or compared with the victorious warrior deity. Rather, Yahweh fights against human and superhuman enemies on behalf of the people.

The notion that Yahweh has intervened on behalf of the people in the past, specifically in the paradigmatic story of the exodus, contributed to the thematic possibility that Yahweh would do so again. We have several examples where present enemies are compared to or identified with Yahweh's past defeated enemies (Isa 30:7; Ps 87:4; Ezek 29:2-6; Ezek 39:2-15; Jer 51:34-37; and Habakkuk 3), and thus portrayed as destined for defeat, as well as examples in which Yahweh's victories against superhuman enemies are invoked in order to provoke Yahweh to intervene in the present (Isa 51:9-15; Psalm 89; and Psalm 74).

Yahweh versus Human Enemies: Combat with Contemporary "Dragons"

Many instances of the conflict motif within the biblical anthology show that Judean authors used the motif in order to make statements about their current socio-political contexts. Among these examples the conflict motif functions in two ways: to portray present enemies as destined for defeat, and to invoke Yahweh to intervene in the contemporary situation on behalf of the people. These two functions represent secondary applications of the motif: the writer assumes that Yahweh's past divine victories have import for humans in the narrative present, and so the motif is used to make (positive or negative) statements about humans. Such secondary applications of the motif depend upon the ideological basis of the primary application of the motif: to make statements about the preferred deity, here specifically to assert Yahweh's universal dominion and

incomparability. According to the logic implicit in these texts, if Yahweh was victorious in the past, he can be victorious in the present; the defeat of Rahab, Leviathan, and/or sea-dragons proves that he was victorious in the past, and therefore he will be victorious in the present. This logic is applied in two ways: current enemies are compared to or identified with Yahweh's past defeated enemies in order to portray them as destined for defeat, and Yahweh's past victories are invoked in order to provoke Yahweh to act on behalf of the people in the present.

In Isa 30:7; Ps 87:4; Ezek 29:2-6; Ezek 39:2-15; Jer 51:34-37; and Habakkuk 3, specific polities and individuals are identified with or compared to superhuman characters whom Yahweh defeated in the past. In this way, authors portray Egypt, the king of Egypt, Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar as enemies who are defeated or destined for defeat. These are disfavored within biblical historiography for political reasons, and the negative portrayal of them via the conflict motif is consistent with broader traditions of disfavor within this historiography. By utilizing the conflict motif in particular to portray these polities and individuals negatively, authors linked the unfavorable socio-political situations with which they were concerned with divine actions and cosmic events, specifically divine combat, whereby heavenly and earthly orders were established. Passages that identify a disfavored polity or individual with one of Yahweh's defeated superhuman enemies also implicitly or explicitly reference Yahweh's past victories, and thereby suggest that the disfavored state or ruler is destined for defeat and that Yahweh will correct the current unfavorable socio-political situation.

Egypt is identified with Rahab in Isa 30:7 and Ps 87:4, and the king of Egypt is described as “the great dragon,” and “a dragon in the seas” in Ezek 29:3 and 32:2, respectively. Psalm 87:4 and Isa 30:7 read as follows:

As for Egypt, it helps in vain and emptiness,
therefore I named her Rahab, the destroyed one (Isa 30:7).²¹¹

I will recall Rahab and Babylon among those who know me,
Here are Philistia and Tyre with Cush... (Ps 87:4).

In Ps 77:14-21; Ps 106:7-12; the P portions of Exodus 14; and Ps 78:13, the Reed Sea event is described as or assumed to have been a conflict between Yahweh and the sea. These texts exhibit a combination of the conflict and exodus motifs. The conflict motif serves to enhance the portrayal of Yahweh as a divine warrior because he faces not only the Egyptian king and army but also the sea. However, none of these passages mention Rahab or a dragon. According to Ps 89:11, Yahweh crushed Rahab, an action parallel to scattering his enemies, and this is described immediately after a verse stating that Yahweh rules over the sea and stills its waves (Ps 89:10). Job 26:12 also states that Yahweh killed Rahab, and this is parallel to stirring up the seas; the following verse states that Yahweh killed the “fleeing serpent,” a phrase also used to describe Leviathan in Isa 27:1. Similarly, Isa 51:9 indicates that Yahweh divided Rahab in pieces, an action parallel to Yahweh piercing the dragon, and the following verse references Yahweh drying the sea. These verses clearly state that Yahweh killed Rahab, and this is associated with Yahweh’s combat against a sea-dragon and his authority over the sea. In sum, Rahab

²¹¹ The Hebrew of the MT, *hēm šābet*, is a crux that does not make sense. Many modern translations read the verb as a form of *yšb*: “Rahab who sits still.” However, Blenkinsopp (and others) have proposed re-dividing the consonantal text to render the verb a hophal participle of *šbt*: *hammošbāt* (Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [New York: Doubleday, 1964], 413).

appears to be the name of a sea-dragon whom Yahweh defeated in divine combat.

Therefore, when Isa 30:7 names Egypt as Rahab, it characterizes of Egypt as one of Yahweh's defeated enemies.

Isaiah 30:7 occurs within a critique of Egypt, which claims that its people cannot benefit Judeans who make the effort to travel there (Isa 30:6). This oracle is typically read as a continuation of the political statement of the previous oracle, which criticizes Judeans for seeking help from Egypt/Pharaoh without Yahweh's consent, predicting that Egypt/Pharaoh will be of no help (Isa 30:1-5).²¹² Isaiah 30:7a states that the political assistance of Egypt would be vain and empty, that is ineffective. Isaiah 30:7b then begins, "therefore, I named her Rahab," a designation that might seem to stand in contrast with the description of Egypt as ineffective, since Rahab is elsewhere a threatening sea-dragon. However, Isa 30:7b continues, possibly describing Rahab as "the destroyed one." The oracle states that Egypt would be a useless political ally, and this stands in contrast with Egypt's former great power. The characterization of Egypt as Rahab plays upon the same contrast between Rahab as a threatening sea-dragon that was defeated by Yahweh, and is therefore now powerless. The use of Rahab as a name for Egypt in Isa 30:7 contributes to its characterization of Egypt as unable to help Judah by identifying Egypt as an entity that Yahweh has defeated, rendering it powerless. Psalm 87:4 indicates that

²¹² This critique fits the historical context of 705-701 BCE, when Hezekiah sought assistance from Egypt in his revolt against Assyria, and the contemporary prophet Isaiah disapproved of this political policy (Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 411; Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990], 134). Göran Eidevall, who is not convinced by the consensus view that this is an 8th century oracle, adds that if it is an exilic or post-exilic oracle, the critique of Egypt could refer to both Hezekiah's failed reliance on Egypt and Zedekiah's unsuccessful pro-Egyptian policies (Göran Eidevall, *Prophecy and Propaganda: Images of Enemies in the Book of Isaiah* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009], 98-101).

this type of characterization of Egypt was sufficiently known, such that Rahab became a “poetic name” for Egypt.²¹³

The king of Egypt is also compared to a dragon in Ezek 29:3-5 and 32:2-6, which describe the Pharaoh as “the great dragon” and “a dragon in the seas,” respectively, and state that Yahweh will hook or net and kill this dragon and leave his body exposed as carrion:

Speak and say: “Thus says Adonai Yahweh: Beware that I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon who lies stretched out in the midst of his streams, who has said, ‘My river belongs to me, it is I who made it for myself.’ But I will put hooks in your jaws, and I will make the fish of your streams cling to your scales. Then I will draw you up from the midst of your streams, and all the fish of your streams will cling to your scales. Then I will abandon you in the wilderness, you and all the fish of your streams. You will fall on the field, you will not be collected, you will not be gathered. I have given you as food to the creatures of the earth and to the birds of the heavens (Ezek 29:3-5).

This passage and the similar passage in Ezek 32:2-6 purport to contain statements directly from Yahweh to the king of Egypt that are threats. In Ezek 29:3, Yahweh says he is against the king of Egypt and in Ezek 32:2 the prophet is commanded to make a lamentation for the king of Egypt, suggesting the content of the oracle will be negative for the king.²¹⁴ In both passages Yahweh threatens the king, who is identified as a dragon,

²¹³ In Ps 87:4, Rahab is simply the name used for Egypt in a list of cities, and the denotation of Rahab as a sea-dragon has no significance for the rest of the psalm. It is not a psalm about combat or victory; rather it is concerned with the issue of foreigners participating the Jerusalem cult (Dahood, *Psalms 51-100*, 300; Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2*, 140). The issue of the participation of foreigners in the Jerusalem cult is also treated in Exod 12:43-51; Deut 23:2-9; and Isa 56:1-8.

²¹⁴ As Moshe Greenberg explains, doom is followed by dirge, and here Yahweh is requesting a dirge that foretells the doom of the king of Egypt (Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [New York: Doubleday, 1997], 655).

and Yahweh describes exactly how he will trap, kill, and expose the dragon's corpse. In Ezek 29:4, Yahweh says that he will hook the dragon and draw him out of the water, and in Ezek 32:3 he says he will draw him out with a net. These instruments, a net and hooks, were typical for drawing fish out of water, but the hooks (*haḥîm*) in Ezek 29:4 are also reminiscent of Job 40:25-26, which indicates that only Yahweh can bore Leviathan's jaw with a hook (*hōah*). Both passages also portray the king of Egypt as maintaining a self-understanding characterized by hubris: Ezek 29:3 states that the king of Egypt claims to have created and to possess his river, which runs counter to the biblical claim that Yahweh has created everything and that all creation belongs to him (Ps 89:12; Deut 10:14; Isa 45:18; etc.); Ps 95:5a reads in a manner similar to this verse, speaking of Yahweh: "His is the sea, it is he who made it." Ezek 32:2 states that the king of Egypt seemed or imagined himself to be (*nidmêtā*)²¹⁵ like a lion, but that he is actually a dragon in the seas that has troubled the waters and fouled rivers.²¹⁶ In both cases the king of Egypt is characterized as thinking positively of himself in a way that Yahweh directly

²¹⁵ I agree with Greenberg that the sense of the niphal form of *dmh* here is passive or reflexive, emphasizing the contrast between how the king of Egypt seems or fashions himself and what he "actually" is (Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, 650).

²¹⁶ Lewis proposes an alternate interpretation of Ezek 32:2, though he accepts that reading the verse as exhibiting a contrast between the king of Egypt as a lion and dragon is possible. After reviewing Mesopotamian traditions of lion-dragon composite figures in literary and iconographic traditions, he proposes that Ezek 32:2 states: "You are like a lion among the nations, You are like a dragon in the seas" (Lewis, "CT 13.33-34 and Ezekiel 32," 40). In his reading, the king of Egypt is identified as a lion-dragon figure similar to those in Mesopotamian traditions, including several combat traditions. This reading is certainly compatible with my analysis of Ezek 32:2-16, and would only change the hypothesis that 32:2 offers a contrast between the king's self-understanding and his "actual" identity, which I have compared with other instances of disfavored polities being portrayed arrogantly, including Ezek 29:2-6. Otherwise, the image of the king of Egypt as a composite lion-dragon figure heightens the mythological portrayal of the king, which in turn heightens the implications of Yahweh slaying him.

counters in his statements. Both passages also describe Yahweh leaving the dragon's corpse exposed for animals or birds to feed upon it, and the exposure rather than proper disposal of the corpse would be particularly humiliating. Moreover, both passages state that after Yahweh kills the dragon, the people of Egypt will know "that I indeed am Yahweh" (*kî 'ănî YHWH*) (Ezek 29:6 and 32:15), that is, Yahweh's slaying of the dragon is narrative proof of his incomparable status and of the king of Egypt's weakness.

The identification of the king of Egypt as a dragon was probably bolstered by the association of Egypt with its prominent geographical feature, the Nile River, as well as Egyptian traditions portraying its king as a fierce crocodile.²¹⁷ However, the notion of the Nile River as an emblem for Egypt and the portrayal of Egypt's kings as crocodiles cannot account for the elaborate details in Ezekiel 29 and 32. Rather, these passages fit within the conflict topos, and I propose that the representation of the king of Egypt as the dragon (and of Egypt as Rahab) of combat traditions was compatible with and possibly attracted by the identification of Egypt with a prominent body of water and the king of Egypt with the crocodile. Several specific narrative details of Ezek 29:2-6 and 32:2-16 are similar to earlier and later articulations of the conflict topos: the enemy is portrayed as arrogant (*KTU* 1.5 I 1-8; Job 38:16; Dan 7:8; 2 Macc 5:21, 9:8; Rev 13:3-8; 2 Thess 2:1-12); the enemy is portrayed as a sea-dragon (*KTU* 1.3 III 35-47; *KTU* 1.83; Ps 74:13-14; Isa 27:1; Revelation 12 and *passim*); the deity uses hooks or nets to secure the enemy (*EE* IV *passim*; Job 40:25-26); the corpse of the slain enemy is left exposed (*EE* IV 129-

²¹⁷ The Egyptian god Sobek had the form of a crocodile, and he represented the role of the Nile river in fertilizing the land; at least two literary representations of Egyptian royal ideology compare the king to a crocodile (Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, 612; *ANET*, 374b; Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973], 40).

140, V 53-63; *KTU* 1.2 IV 21-27; *KTU* 1.5 II 30-37; Ps 74:14); and the defeat of the enemy indicates the victorious deity's incomparability (*EE* V 133-136; Ps 89:6-15; Job 41:2-3). By emphasizing these shared features, I wish to show that Ezek 29:2-6 and 32:2-16 exhibit continuity with a wide range of conflict traditions. At the same time, Ezek 29:2-6 and 32:2-16 employ the motif in a way that suits the particular socio-political context of Ezekiel. According to the text, Ezekiel was written after the destruction of Jerusalem, and within this context Ezek 29:2-6 and 32:2-16 claim that Yahweh will punish the king of Egypt. The motivation for this punishment is that Egypt failed as an ally to adequately support Judah (Ezek 29:6-7), thus contributing to its destruction.²¹⁸ In order to criticize the king of Egypt within this socio-political setting, Ezekiel combined the identifications of Egypt with the Nile River and its king as a crocodile with the combat tradition in which Yahweh defeats a sea-dragon. He used the conflict motif to invert pro-Egyptian imagery associated with Egypt's abundance and its king's power, claiming that Yahweh will capture, kill, and expose "the great dragon"/"dragon in the seas," the king of Egypt.

Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon are also portrayed as Yahweh's enemies, and compared to a dragon and a sea, respectively, in Jer 51:34-37. In this passage, the inhabitants of Jerusalem are said to summon Yahweh to avenge them against Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar is described as a dragon who has attacked

²¹⁸ Within this specific historical context, Lewis identifies the king of Egypt in Ezek 29:2-6 and 32:2-16 specifically as Pharaoh Hophra (Lewis, "CT 13:33-34 and Ezekiel 32," 38, 47). Zedekiah made an alliance with Hophra as part of his revolt against Assyria, and Hophra dispatched an army to relieve Jerusalem while it was besieged (Jer 37:5, 11), however, the Egyptian army was ultimately unsuccessful (Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, 608-609).

Zion/Jerusalem, and Babylon is compared to a sea that Yahweh will “dry up,” in defense of Zion/Jerusalem:

He has devoured me,
Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon has vexed me.
He made me an empty vessel,
He swallowed me like a dragon.
He filled his belly with my delicacies,
He has rinsed me out.²¹⁹
The inhabitant of Zion will say,
“My violated flesh is on account of Babylon.”
Jerusalem will say,
“My blood is on account of the inhabitants of Chaldea.”
Therefore thus says Yahweh:
“Know that I will defend your cause,
I will avenge your enemies.
I will dry up her sea,
I will make her fountain dry.
Babylon will become a heap, a dwelling of jackals,
A horror, an object of hissing, without inhabitant” (Jer 51:34-37).

In this passage, the outcry of the “inhabitants of Zion” describes their suffering as Nebuchadnezzar devouring them “like a dragon,” and this elicits Yahweh’s response. The enemies of Zion/Jerusalem are equated with Yahweh’s superhuman enemies, the sea and dragon, and by analogy it is anticipated that the enemies of Zion/Jerusalem will share the fate of Yahweh’s enemies: defeat. The passage envisions destruction for Babylon and describes this with the metaphor of Yahweh “drying up” her sea. The conflict motif is exhibited within the comparison of Nebuchadnezzar with the a dragon and the metaphor of Yahweh drying up Babylon’s sea. While it is possible that both of these details could be developed independently from the notion of divine combat, the combination of these two details makes the conflict motif explicit. The images of the sea and dragon are clearly

²¹⁹ For the suffixed pronouns on these verbs, I am following the *qere*, reading a singular object, which fits the singular pronoun of “my delicacies” as well as the singular speakers “the inhabitant of Zion” and Jerusalem, rather than the *ketib*, which has plural pronouns.

associated with one another. The people complain about their enemy Nebuchadnezzar, who acts “like a dragon,” and Yahweh responds that he will destroy Babylon, clearly associated with its king Nebuchadnezzar, and “dry up her sea.” Just as Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon are two representations of the same political enemy, the dragon and sea are two of Yahweh’s defeated superhuman enemies.

The statement that Yahweh will “dry up her sea” in Jer 51:36 may also suggest the exodus motif, but this is not certain. Exod 14:16, 21c-22, 26, 29; Ps 66:6; Ps 106:9; Isa 51:10; and Neh 9:11 describe the Reed Sea event as Yahweh drying up the sea, and it is possible that the notion of Yahweh “drying up” the sea in Jer 51:36 assumes such descriptions of the Reed Sea event imagined as divine combat against the sea, though this passage does not mention the Reed Sea or exodus at all. However, Ugaritic texts possibly describe Yamm being dried up (*KTU* 1.2 IV 27 and *KTU* 1.83),²²⁰ so this detail in Jer 51:36 is not necessarily dependent upon the exodus motif. Moreover, the notion of “drying up her sea” may be best explained by Jer 51:43, which uses drying as a metaphor for the desolation of Babylonian cities.²²¹ Ultimately, exodus traditions are so prominent within the Israelite foundational narrative that it might be impossible to determine whether the notion of Yahweh drying up the sea in Jer 51:36 reflects the conflict motif or the combined conflict and exodus motifs. Regardless, Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar are portrayed as destined for defeat when they are identified with Yahweh’s past defeated enemies. Jeremiah 51:34-37 explicitly calls for Yahweh to intervene against a disfavored

²²⁰ M. S. Smith, *UBC 1*, 352-354; idem., *UBC 2*, 254; Pitard, “The Binding of Yamm,” 277.

²²¹ Jack Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37-52: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 476.

polity and its king on behalf of the people in order to improve their current situation, and Yahweh is said to respond affirmatively that he will take vengeance on Babylon.²²²

Habakkuk 3, like Jer 51:34-37, employs the conflict motif to portray an enemy, possibly Babylon, as destined for defeat. The passage describes Yahweh in battle and interweaves divine warrior imagery with a description of Yahweh defending his anointed against an enemy polity. Habakkuk 3:8-10 indicates through rhetorical questions that Yahweh was enraged against the sea/rivers, describes Yahweh's weapons, and like several passages discussed above (Ps 93:1-5; 29:3, 10; 65:7-8; and Nah 1:3b-5) references the deep's voice and personifies the deep:

Was your anger against the river,²²³ O Yahweh?
Indeed your rage against the river?
Or your fury against the sea?
When you mounted your horses,
Your chariots of victory?
The nakedness of your bow was bared,²²⁴
Oaths, rods, saying²²⁵

²²² The historical context for this oracle is sometime after Nebuchadnezzar has subjugated Jerusalem. Lundbom prefers a date closer to 597 BCE, the first instance of deportation to Babylon, rather than 586 BCE, the final destruction of Jerusalem, because in this oracle there are still "inhabitants" of Zion (Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 37-52, 469). However, the city describes itself as "an empty vessel" and as "rinsed out," and the "inhabitants of Zion" certainly lamented from Babylon as well.

²²³ Reading *něhārîm* as a singular form with an enclitic *mem*. Here, I am persuaded by Theodore Hiebert, who supports his reading of *něhārîm* as a singular with the observation that Hab 3:9 uses the more common plural form *něhārôt* for "rivers" (Theodore Hiebert, *God of My Victory: The Ancient Hymn in Habakkuk 3* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986], 23).

²²⁴ Or possibly, "You laid bare your bow," reading a *pi'el* infinitive absolute followed by a *pi'el* 2ms imperfect, rather than a noun followed by the *nip'al* 3fs imperfect (Hiebert, *God of My Victory*, 25-26).

²²⁵ The three words in this phrase may be clear, but the meaning is unintelligible. For a range of proposed translations and discussions of each word, see Francis I. Anderson,

You split the rivers of earth.
The mountains saw you and writhed.
A flood of water swept by,²²⁶
The deep gave forth its voice (Hab 3:8-10).

These verses refer to a combat between Yahweh and the sea/rivers, and throughout the chapter, Yahweh is clearly characterized as a divine warrior in battle. He has various battle implements: a chariot and horses (Hab 3:8, 15), bow and arrow (Hab 3:9, 11, 14), and spear (Hab 3:11). He acts violently against various geographical entities: Yahweh shakes and tramples the earth (Hab 3:6), shatters the mountains (Hab 3:6), splits the earth (Hab 3:9), and treads over and churns the sea (Hab 3:15). These features, including the conflict motif, divine warrior imagery, and theophany, exhibit Yahweh's prowess in battle, which in this passage is exercised not only against the sea/deep but also against human enemies. In addition to affecting the earth, mountains, and sea, Yahweh also defeats human enemies who threaten his anointed:

He stood and shook²²⁷ the earth;
He looked and startled the nations...
With indignation you paced the earth,
In anger you trampled nations.
You marched out to save your people,
To save your anointed.²²⁸
You crushed the head from the wicked house,²²⁹

Habakkuk: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 320-325; Hiebert, *God of My Victory*, 26-28.

²²⁶ Hiebert emends to read "Clouds poured down water," based on the parallel expression in Ps 77:18 and the Murabba'at manuscript (Hiebert, *God of My Victory*, 6, 30).

²²⁷ Reading *yēnōdēd* from the root *nûd* rather than "he measured" from *mdd*. This offers a better parallel with the following line and is supported by the LXX and Targumic translations.

²²⁸ Hiebert emends the text to read, "for the victory of the militia of your anointed one" (Hiebert, *God of My Victory*, 6, 33-36).

Stripping foundation to neck.²³⁰
 With his rods you hammered the head of his warrior.²³¹
 They stormed in to scatter me,
 Gloating as if to devour the poor in secret.
 You trampled the sea with your horses,
 Churning the mighty waters (Hab 3:6, 12-15).

The human enemies are called “nations” and “the wicked house,” but it is unclear throughout Habakkuk exactly who the enemy is or whether there are various enemies from various historical contexts.²³² The human enemy is not explicitly identified with the sea/dragon; rather it is portrayed as comparable to Yahweh’s superhuman foes. The description of Yahweh defeating the “wicked house” exhibits similar wording to passages

²²⁹ Hab 3:13c-15, especially v.14, exhibits many textual difficulties and the ancient versions vary, indicating that the text was corrupt from an early stage. For discussion of the problems and possible translations, see Hiebert, *God of My Victory*, 36-46.

²³⁰ This line refers to a violent action performed on either the “wicked house” or a person from the “wicked house,” and translations vary accordingly, stripping the “foundation” of a house or the “tail-end” of a person. Regardless, the poetic sense is that the object is stripped thoroughly.

²³¹ The text and meaning of *przw* is uncertain (Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 338; “*prz*,” *BDB*, 826; Hiebert, *God of My Victory*, 43).

²³² Habakkuk is difficult to date as a book, and it appears that various portions of the text could have developed independently. Moreover, within the book, there is no certain proof of the date of any given portion. The specific detail with which most discussions of date are concerned is the identity of the “wicked,” typically thought to be either Assyria or Babylon (Childs, “The Enemy from the North and the Chaos Tradition,” *JBL* 78.3 [1959]: 187-198, 191; Marvin A. Sweeney, “Habakkuk, Book of,” *ABD* 3:1-6). Habakkuk 1 refers to the rise of the Babylonians to power, indicating the Neo-Babylonian period (Sweeney, “Structure, Genre, and Intent in the Book of Habakkuk,” *VT* 41.1 [1991]: 63-83, 64, 67-69; William L. Holladay, “Plausible Circumstances for the Prophecy of Habakkuk,” *JBL* 120.1 [2001]: 123-130, 125, 130). Anderson speculates that the oracles, if they are responding to the threat of Babylon’s power, may have been written between 605 BCE and 575 BCE (Anderson, *Habakkuk*, 24-27). Hiebert’s analysis focuses only on Habakkuk 3, which he contends to be an early Israelite hymn that was incorporated into the later work; he maintains that the enemy in the original hymn is a superhuman figure, which is “historicized” over time but never explicitly identified (Hiebert, *God of My Victory*, 129, 107-108).

in which he defeats nonhuman enemies: “You crushed the head from the wicked house” (Hab 3:13a). This is similar to Yahweh crushing the heads of dragon/Leviathan (Ps 74:13-14). Moreover, the description of Yahweh defeating human enemies is framed by references to Yahweh defeating the deep/sea/waters. The juxtaposition of Yahweh acting violently against the deep/sea/waters with Yahweh defeating human enemies suggests that the former is relevant to the latter; this constitutes a secondary application of the conflict motif, that is, Yahweh’s past victory is assumed to have import for humans. In fact, this assumption is made explicit in the passage, in that Yahweh’s defeat of human enemies is narrated as if it has already occurred, in conjunction with his defeat of superhuman enemies. In sum, Habakkuk 3 utilizes the conflict motif to enhance its description of Yahweh in battle and to portray the enemy of the anointed as a defeated enemy.

In Jer 51:34-37, Yahweh is called to action against Babylon by the invocation of his enemy the dragon, and Yahweh responds that he will certainly defend the inhabitants of Zion. In Habakkuk 3 Yahweh has defended his anointed, acting as a fierce warrior against both human and superhuman enemies. Similarly, Isa 51:9-11 recalls Yahweh’s former victories over his enemies, Rahab/dragon and the sea/waters/deeps, as setting a precedent for Yahweh to act on behalf of people in the present. Specifically, Isa 51:9-11 uses the combined motifs of combat and exodus to promote the process of restoration after Babylonian exile.²³³

²³³ S. M. Olyan, “The Search for the Elusive Self in Texts of the Hebrew Bible,” in *Religion and the Self in Antiquity* (eds. David Brakke, Michael L. Satlow, and Steven Weitzman; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 42-43; Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1970), 59-

Awake, awake, put on strength, O Arm of Yahweh!
 Awake, as in days of old, generations long past!
 Was it not you who cut Rahab to pieces, who pierced the dragon?
 Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep;
 Who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to cross?
 So the ransomed of Yahweh will return,
 They will come to Zion with joy,
 Perpetual gladness on their heads.
 Rejoicing and gladness will overtake (them),
 But grief and sighing will flee²³⁴ (Isa 51:9-11).

The passage summons Yahweh to act in the current historical context of restoration as he acted in the past on behalf of the “redeemed” who crossed the Reed Sea. The passage describes the Reed Sea event as Yahweh drying up the sea and making a way within its depths for the people to safely cross. This manipulation of the sea occurs in parallel with Yahweh piercing the dragon and cutting Rahab into pieces. The conflict and exodus motifs are fully intertwined, and the combined motif serves as a hermeneutic for restoration. The return of the people to Judah is portrayed as another exodus; just as Yahweh enabled the “redeemed” to cross the sea, he will facilitate the “ransomed” returning to Zion.²³⁵ The passage continues, describing Yahweh as a comforter (Isa 51:12), who reassures the people as they face threat from an oppressor (Isa 51:13) by invoking his acts of creation (Isa 51:13) and victory over the sea:

98; Patricia T. Wiley, *Remember the Former Things: The Recollection of Previous Texts in Second Isaiah* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 72-74, 132-137.

²³⁴ Reading *wēnāsû* for *nāsû* (Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 330).

²³⁵ In Isa 51:11, the term “ransomed of Yahweh” (*pēdûyê yhw̄h*) is used to refer to those returning to Zion after Babylonian exile. This term is similar in meaning to the term “redeemed” (*gē’ûlîm*), which is used to refer to the Israelites in the context of exodus in Isa 51:10 as well as in Deut 7:8; 2 Sam 7:23; Micah 6:4 (S. M. Olyan, “The Search for the Elusive Self,” 43; Johann J. Stamm, “g’l to redeem,” *TLOT* [ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann; trans. Mark E. Biddle; 3 vols. Peabody, MA; Hendrickson, 1997], 1:293).

I alone am Yahweh your God,
 who stirs up the sea,
 so that its waves roar;
Yahweh of hosts is his name (Isa 51:15).

The author utilizes the combined conflict and exodus motifs to establish Yahweh's prowess in battle, and he offers Yahweh's past victories against Rahab/the dragon and the sea/deeps as a precedent for Yahweh acting on behalf of the people. The "ransomed" returning to Zion are compared implicitly to the "redeemed" of the exodus story, such that Yahweh's achievements in the past are cited as a narrative guarantee that the contemporary process of restoration will be successful.

Ezekiel 29:2-6, Ezek 32:2-15, Jer 51:34-37, Habakkuk 3, and Isa 51:9-11 use the conflict motif to promote the prowess of Yahweh in battle; to portray disfavored polities (Egypt, the king of Egypt, Babylon, or Nebuchadnezzar) negatively, as defeated or destined for defeat; and to claim that Yahweh has defeated human enemies in the present, will defeat them in the immediate future, or will otherwise intervene on behalf of the people in the present. Isaiah 51:9-11 and possibly Jer 51:34-37 also use the exodus motif, specifically citing the Reed Sea event as a paradigmatic instance of Yahweh intervening within a contemporary situation on behalf of the people. These passages identify or compare disfavored polities with Yahweh's defeated superhuman enemies, and also implicitly or explicitly reference Yahweh's past victories. They suggest or explicitly claim that the disfavored polity is destined for defeat, and this implies that Yahweh will correct or has corrected the current unfavorable socio-political situation.

Psalm 89 and Psalm 74 (discussed above) also employ the conflict motif to promote the prowess of Yahweh in battle and offer his past victories against superhuman enemies as a precedent for Yahweh acting against human enemies. However, these

psalms exhibit less certainty about whether Yahweh will indeed intervene in the present than do Ezek 29:2-6; Ezek 32:2-15; Jer 51:34-37; Habakkuk 3; and Isa 51:9-11. Ps 89:39-52 and Ps 74:1-11, 18-23 clearly indicate that the context of the conflict motif within the final forms of these two psalms is lamentation.²³⁶ The context of lamentation provides an additional layer of significance for the conflict motif within these psalms: Yahweh's past victories are cited in order to provoke Yahweh to act in the present.²³⁷ These lamentations hope for the sort of awaking to action described in Ps 78:65-66, which states that Yahweh awoke to engage in battle, and suggested in Isa 51:9-11, which calls for Yahweh to awake and engage in battle as in olden times and appears relatively confident that he will do so. However, Ps 89:47 accuses Yahweh of hiding, and Ps 74:22 asks that Yahweh arise to action but there is no certainty that he will. Psalm 89:39-52 accuses Yahweh of breaking his covenant with David (discussed below), not defending him in battle, making his enemies rejoice, and shaming him (Ps 89:39-46). Likewise, Ps 74:1-11, 18-23 asks Yahweh to abide by his covenant (Ps 74:20) and asks why Yahweh has not defended the people against enemies and shame (Ps 74:10-11). Both psalms implore Yahweh to remember the taunting/reproach of enemies (Ps 89:51; Ps 74:18). It appears that the editors of these psalms inserted poems describing Yahweh's divine victories within

²³⁶ On the development of the final forms of Psalm 89 and Psalm 74, see Sarna, "Psalm 89," 30-31; Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2*, 26, 147-157; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 241-244, 402, 406-407.

²³⁷ On the genre of communal laments within the Psalms, see Paul Wayne Ferris, *The Genre of Communal Lament in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 89-99, 109-135; Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 1*, 9-14, 245-247. For a full discussion of the communal lament in Ps 89, see Hans Ulrich Steymans, "Traces of Liturgies in the Psalter: The Communal Laments, Psalms 79, 80, 83, 89 in Context," in *Psalms and Liturgy* (ed. Dirk J. Human and Cas J. A. Vos; London: T & T Clark, 2004), 168-234.

lamentations in order to contrast his past action with present inaction. Psalm 74:3-8 references the destruction of the temple, suggesting that the contemporary unfavorable situation is Babylonian oppression, which is also possibly the context of the final form of Psalm 89.²³⁸ The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and the demise of the Davidic dynasty at this time provides a suitable context for these psalms' accusation that Yahweh has abrogated his covenant with David and the people.²³⁹ I will discuss Psalm 89 further with respect to the Davidic covenant in the final section of this chapter. In the following section, I discuss the Temple with respect to the conflict motif. There are several indications that Yahweh's temple was associated with his victories in divine combat, and this further elucidates why Psalm 74 and Psalm 89 would make reference to Yahweh's past victories at a time when the temple has been destroyed, an event that would call into question Yahweh's whereabouts and status.

²³⁸ There is general consensus that the final form of Ps 74 as a national lament dates to the exile (Day, *God's Conflict*, 22; Dahood, *Psalms 51-100*, 26; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 243). Gerstenberger, William M. Schniedewind, Heim, Hossfeld, and Zenger date the final form of Psalm 89 to the exile or post-exile (Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2*, 154; William M. Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise to David* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1999], 41; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 406; Heim, "The (God-)Forsaken King of Psalm 89," 297-298). Day and Dahood however maintain a pre-exilic date because the king appears to still be alive and concerned with the covenant (Day, *God's Battle*, 26; Dahood, *Psalms 51-100*, 311).

²³⁹ For discussion of debates about the status of the covenant during the exile, see S. M. Olyan, "The Status of Covenant During the Exile," in *Berührungspunkte: Studien zur Sozial- und Religionsgeschichte Israels und seiner Umwelt* (ed., Ingo Kottsieper, Rüdiger Schmitt, and Jakob Wöhrle; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2008), 333-44.

The Temple

In traditions related to Ninurta, Marduk, Aššur, and Baal, we have whole narratives that detail how the deity attained kingship after his victory in battle and that describe the god enthroned and ruling over his dominion. In traditions related to Yahweh, however, we do not have narrative descriptions of Yahweh ascending to his throne. Rather, we have a multitude of references to Yahweh—already and from olden times—enthroned as king, with royal accoutrements, ruling over the sea and all of creation. As with other victorious warrior deities who attain kingship, Yahweh is proclaimed to be incomparable and potential rivals to his authority pale in comparison.

We have no surviving visual evidence pertaining to Yahweh's battles and kingship. However, the description of Solomon's temple complex in Jerusalem includes one feature that may have exhibited imagery associated with Yahweh's victory over the sea: the "molten sea" (*hayyām mûṣāq*). 1 Kings 7:13-40 describes several temple-related objects that Solomon commissioned Hiram of Tyre to build, and verses 23-26 describe a large water basin that is particularly interesting in light of the passages discussed above about Yahweh ruling over the sea. The "sea" in the temple courtyard was round, 10 cubits in diameter, and 5 cubits deep.²⁴⁰ Though 2 Chron 4:6 explains that priests used the "sea" for bathing, its large size makes this unlikely.²⁴¹ Elizabeth Bloch-Smith

²⁴⁰ Using Asher S. Kaufman's calculation of the cubit for this time, the "sea" measured 14 feet and ½ inch in diameter. Based on literary and archeological evidence, he determines the cubit to be 42.8 cm during the time of Solomon's temple (Asher S. Kaufman, "Where the Ancient Temple in Jerusalem Stood," *BAR* 9:2 [1983]: 40-59).

²⁴¹ Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, "Solomon's Temple: The Politics of Ritual Space," in *Sacred Time, Sacred Place: Archeology and the Religion of Israel* (ed. Barry M. Gittlen; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 83-94, 83. The "sea" in the temple courtyard sat upon 12 oxen (1 Kings 7:25). E. Bloch-Smith mentions archeological parallels, various large basins that

interprets the molten sea within the context of psalms such as those discussed above in which Yahweh defeats the sea and is enthroned in his temple for eternity. The molten sea within the temple courtyard, she proposes, symbolized Yahweh's triumphant enthronement.²⁴²

In addition to the representation of the sea in the temple courtyard, the temple itself exhibited Yahweh's victories and functioned to establish Yahweh's authority. The temple was Yahweh's house and palace. The building narrative of Solomon's temple for Yahweh is consistent with the motif of the victorious temple builder in ancient West Asian literature.²⁴³ The deities Ea, Marduk, Aššur, and Baal each attained their divine palaces or temples after victory over their enemies. This pattern among deities is parallel to the pattern of human kings building their own palaces after securing their kingdoms. The conception of Yahweh's authority (and the authority of other deities in other kingdoms) as kingship implied authorization of the institution of kingship. This would

are supported by oxen or bulls: a late-eight century Assyrian relief depicting two large basins supported by bull forelegs in front of a temple; two Cypriot stone bowls, 2 m in diameter, with bulls on the handles; and oxen bases at Tell Halaf and Tell Tayinat (Bloch-Smith, "Who is the King of Glory?: Solomon's Temple and Its Symbolism," in *Scripture and Other Artifacts: Essays on the Bible and Archeology in Honor of Philip J. King* (ed. Michael D. Coogan, J. Cheryl Exum; Westminster: John Knox Press, 1994), 18-31, 20). However, these basins attest more to the common use of bull and oxen bases than to the meaning or function of the "sea" at Solomon's temple. There was also a large basin in the temple courtyard at 'Ain Dara, about 2/3 the size of the "sea" in Jerusalem. Bloch-Smith cites this among several elements at 'Ain Dara and elsewhere that indicate the superhuman size of deities, but she does not speculate about the function or possible symbolic meaning of the 'Ain Dara basin (Bloch-Smith, "Who is the King of Glory?," 23).

²⁴² Bloch-Smith, "Solomon's Temple," 84; "Who is this King of Glory?," 20.

²⁴³ Victor (Avigdor) Hurowitz, *I Have Built You and Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in the Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 163-165; Bloch-Smith, "Who is the King of Glory?," 27.

have been visible in the landscape of Jerusalem, because the temple displaying Yahweh's authority stood next door to the king's palace. 1 Kings 5 describes Solomon's dominion and prominence as an impetus for his decision to build Yahweh's temple, and the subsequent description of the building of the temple in 1 Kings 6-7 includes the building of his own palace. The palace-temple complex was a common archeological feature in ancient West Asia, and the proximity of the temple and palace promoted, that is, it exhibited and functioned to establish, the legitimacy of the human king by displaying the deity's endorsement of the ruling dynasty.²⁴⁴ This notion is clearly articulated in 2 Sam 7:13, which explicitly links the patron deity's establishment of the king's dynasty with the king's building of his patron deity's temple: "As for him, he will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."

The conjunction of Yahweh's dominion and the king's dominion, exhibited by the palace-temple complex, was also possibly recorded in inscriptions at the entrance of the temple. 1 Kings 7:15-22 describes two free-standing pillars that were placed on the porch of the temple, named "Jachin" (*yākhîn*) and "Boaz" (*bō'az*).²⁴⁵ Robert B. Y. Scott first proposed that these names were most likely the first words of two longer inscriptions that came to designate the two pillars.²⁴⁶ Based on the frequent use of the verb "to establish"

²⁴⁴ See Bloch-Smith's discussion in "Who is this King of Glory?," 26-27.

²⁴⁵ For descriptions of the physical nature of the pillars, see Carol Meyers, "Jachin and Boaz," *ABD* 3.597-598, as well as the two classic articles that more recent works cite: William F. Albright, "Two Cressets from Marissa and the Pillars of Jachin and Boaz," *BASOR* 85 (1942): 18-27; Herbert G. May, "The Two Pillars before the Temple of Solomon," *BASOR* 88 (1942): 19-27.

²⁴⁶ For summaries of the various interpretations of the pillars, see Karel van der Toorn, "Boaz," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 176-177; Meyers, "Jachin

(*kûn*), from which “Jachin” (*yākîn*) is derived, in passages about Yahweh establishing David’s reign, Scott first proposed that “Jachin” was the first word of an inscription regarding the establishment of the Davidic dynasty, possibly: “He (Yahweh) will establish the throne of David, and his kingdom to his seed forever.” Similarly, based on the frequent use of the noun “strength” (*‘ōz*) in psalms about the enthronement and sovereignty of Yahweh, he proposed that “Boaz” was the first word of an inscription about Yahweh performing some deed or being enthroned “in strength” or “with strength” (*bē‘ōz*).²⁴⁷ Such inscriptions, if present at the entrance of the temple on the two free-standing pillars, would have reflected the legitimating ideology displayed in the construction of the temple-palace complex.

The visual landscape of Jerusalem displayed Solomon’s dominion, and bound up with that, it exhibited the authority of Yahweh, the deity who endorsed Solomon. Furthermore, the temple and the “sea” in its courtyard may have displayed Yahweh’s

and Boaz,” *ABD* 3.597-598; Theodor A. Busink, *Der Tempel von Jerusalem von Salomo bis Herodes. Band 1: Der Tempel Salomos* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 13-17. For the range of possible meanings of the names, see Martin J. Mulder, “Die Bedeutung von Jachin und Boaz in 1 Kön. 7:21 (2 Chr. 3:17),” in *Tradition and Re-Interpretation in Jewish and Early Christian Literature* (ed. Jan W. van Henten and Jürgen-Christian Lebram; Leiden: Brill, 1986), 19-26; Robert B. Y. Scott, “The Pillars Jachin and Boaz,” *JBL* 58 2 (1939): 143-149. Scott argued that Jachin and Boaz were not two elements of one inscription, “He establishes with strength,” as many commentators had suggested before him. Rather, he proposed that the two names are the opening words of two separate inscriptions (Scott, “The Pillars Jachin and Boaz,” 148-149). Alternatively, Julian Obermann proposes that the two names indicate two of Yahweh’s principle roles: “Establisher/Sustainer” and “Smiter” (Julian Obermann, “The Divine Name YHWH in Light of Recent Discoveries,” *JBL* 68 4 [1949]: 301-323, 318). In support of Scott’s hypothesis, see Hurowitz, *I Have Built*, 257-258.

²⁴⁷ Scott’s proposal, as well as the proposals of others before him who reconstructed a single inscription, presupposes that the vocalization *bō‘az* is a corruption of *bē‘ōz*, “in/with strength,” which is supported by select Greek and Latin versions (Scott, “The Pillars Jachin and Boaz,” 147-149).

control over the sea and alluded to this specific combat. Thus, the palace-temple complex, on a symbolic level, was a physical monument to Yahweh's victories. The relationship between Yahweh's dominion and the king's authority, visible in Jerusalem's layout, is explicit in Ps 2:6-9; Psalm 18; Psalm 21; Psalm 72; Psalm 78; Ps 89:2-38; Psalm 110; Ps 132:11-18; Deut 17:14-15; and 2 Sam 7:8-9; of these Ps 89:2-38 and Psalm 78 specifically reference Yahweh's combat with the sea. I discuss these two texts in the following section along with other examples of the conflict motif that contribute to royal ideology.

The Conflict Motif in Royal Ideology

The conflict motif was employed to promote royal figures within traditions from Mesopotamia (discussed in Chapter 2), Mari, Judah, and Elephantine. In this section I discuss Mari Letter A.1968, Ps 89:2-38, Psalm 78, and a proverb from the Elephantine text of *Ahiqar*. These texts exhibit a secondary application of the conflict motif; that is, the victory and dominion of the victorious warrior deity is claimed or assumed to have import for humans, here specifically with regard to their royal authority. Whole narrative examples of the conflict topos (*Anzu*, *Enuma Elish*, and *Baal Cycle*) and examples of the conflict motif that focus on the royal status of victorious warrior deity (various psalms discussed above) implicitly legitimize the institution of kingship, because the deity's power is conceived as kingship, a human political institution. This implicit promotion of the institution of kingship is made explicit in instances of the conflict motif that focus on the rule of human kings.

The two clearest examples of how the conflict motif was employed in royal ideology are Mari Letter A.1968 and Ps 89:2-38. In both texts, the victorious warrior deity (Adad and Yahweh, respectively) extends his authoritative prerogative to a particular human ruler. These texts first reference or summarize the deity's victory over his enemies, by which he secured his own authority. Second, the authors of these passages assert a relationship between the victorious deity and the king such that the king is endorsed by being associated with the deity's victory. In Mari Letter A.1968, Adad gives Zimri-Lim his weapons with which he fought Sea, and in Ps 89:26, Yahweh states that he will place David's hand on the sea/rivers. These actions show that the deity endorses the king explicitly through the conflict motif.

In an eighteenth-century BCE letter from Nur-Sin of Aleppo to Zimri-Lim of Mari, Nur-Sin reports that the god Adad has restored Zimri-Lim to the throne of his fathers and has given to him the weapons with which he fought Sea:

Speak to my lord:

Thus (says) Nur-Sîn your servant: Abiya, prophet of Adad, the lord of Alep[po], came as such and said:

Thus (says) Adad: "I gave the whole country to Yahdun-Lim. Because of my weapons, he never confronted his equal. But he abandoned me, so I g[av]e the land which I had given to him to Šamši-Adad [...]"

[break]

[...]let me re[st]ore you! I restored you to the th[rone] of your ancestors]. Those weapon[s] with which I crushed Sea, I gave you. I anointed you with the oil of my luminosity/victory. No one will stand to face you.

Hear my one command: When someone appeals to you for judgment, saying 'I have been robbed!' Be there and judge his case; an[swer him fai]rly. [Th]is is what I wa[nt] from you. When you march [out] to war, do not march out [wi]thout an oracle. [W]hen I myself appear in [my] oracle, you may march out to war. If [not] so, do [not] march out of the city gate."

This is what the prophet said to me. No[w I have sent the hair of the prophet] and a fri[nge of his garment to my lord] (Mari Letter A. 1968).²⁴⁸

Adad's message to Zimri-Lim stipulates to the king that he must administer justice fairly and always consult his oracle before going to war. To encourage Zimri-Lim to abide by these terms, he offers previous kings as examples of rulers from whom he has withdrawn his endorsement for failing to uphold his wishes. In the past, Adad endorsed Yahdun-Lim, the previous king of Mari and possibly a relative of Zimri-Lim, and subsequently, Šamši-Adad, who controlled Mari from Aššur after Yahdun-Lim was killed. The letter describes Yahdun-Lim's initial success as resulting from his possession of Adad's weapons, and now Adad has transferred his endorsement and his weapons to Zimri-Lim. Another message, in letter A.1858, reports that the weapons of Adad have arrived and are being stored in the temple of Dagan at Terqa, the cultic center of Mari, indicating that actual weapons of some origin were associated with this tradition.²⁴⁹ A summons for the deity to join Zimri-Lim in battle, "March, Adad, at his [Zimri-Lim's] left side," clearly anticipates the association of the king with Adad to result in success.²⁵⁰

The victory of the deity Adad over Sea is referenced to assert Adad's divine authority; his authority was won through divine combat. From a comparative perspective,

²⁴⁸ The original text is available in Jean-Marie Durand, "Le mythologème du combat entre le dieu de l'orage et la mer en Mésopotamie," *MARI* 7 (1993): 41-61, 45. I am following Durand's restorations.

²⁴⁹ Objects associated with deities were objects of veneration in OB temples in general (Van der Toorn, "Mesopotamian Prophecy between Immanence and Transcendence," in *Prophecy in its Ancient Near Eastern Context* [ed. Martti Nissinen; Atlanta: SBL, 2000], 71-88, 85).

²⁵⁰ The original text is presented by Dominique Charpin, "De la joie à l'Orage," *MARI* 5 (1987): 661.

the Mari tradition portrays the deity Adad as having legitimate authority by characterizing him as the warrior who defeated the sea. Within the hierarchic taxonomy of the conflict topos, he is comparable to Ninurta, Marduk, Aššur, Baal, and Yahweh in their respective combat traditions, and as with Ninurta, Marduk, Aššur, and Yahweh, Adad's status as a victorious warrior is used to endorse particular human individuals. Specifically, Adad transfers his weapons to human kings in order to guarantee their success in war against human enemies: Yahdun-Lim "never confronted his equal" and Adad marches at Zimri-Lim's side. In turn, the kings' victories in war secure their earthly royal authority. The author of the letter employs the conflict motif to assert the authority of Adad, a primary application of the conflict motif. Then the author promotes the legitimacy of Zimri-Lim on the basis of Adad's authority, a secondary application of the conflict motif, claiming that the deity's victory has import for a human figure. Adad also states that he has anointed the king with his victory/luminosity oil, and this accompanying act of endorsement confirms the legitimating effect of the conflict motif.

Furthermore, in a context where Zimri-Lim is being "restored" to his throne, there would be a palpable need to promote his legitimacy. There is a break in the letter just before the verb "let me restore you" (*lutêrka*), so we do not know if the letter expounded on this context. However, from other sources, we learn that Yahdun-Lim, the previous king of Mari, was assassinated during a coup, at which time Zimri-Lim fled Mari. Subsequently, Šamši-Adad, the king of Aššur, ruled Mari and passed control of Mari to his son Yasmah-Addu. When Šamši-Adad died, Yasmah-Addu lost control of Mari and Zimri-Lim succeeded him. The conditions under which Zimri-Lim took the throne are unclear. While many have assumed that he forcefully took power from Yasmah-Addu,

Wolfgang Heimpel argues that surviving documents do not support this reconstruction. He shows that the king of Ešnunna Ibal-Pi-El, not Zimri-Lim, drove Yasmah-Addu from Mari in an effort to secure his own borders. Meanwhile, Zimri-Lim had taken control of Tuttul, another area controlled by Yasmah-Addu, but he only gained control of Mari with the help of the king of Aleppo Yarim-Lim, more than three months after Yasmah-Addu had left Mari.²⁵¹ Thus, Zimri-Lim gained his royal authority in Mari primarily through the exploits and assistance of other kings, not through his own victories. If this reconstruction is accurate, Zimri-Lim certainly would have benefited from the legitimating ideology of the conflict motif, especially since he could not (or for some inexplicable reason, does not) boast of his own victories over Yasmah-Addu or re-taking of Mari. The letter explicitly credits Adad of Aleppo for securing Zimri-Lim's power.²⁵² Regardless of the conditions that led to his authority, the letter employs the conflict motif to portray his rule as legitimate. He is endorsed by the deity's royal prerogative, and moreover he possesses the same symbols of divine approval as the most recent king of Mari: Adad's weapons.

²⁵¹ Wolfgang Heimpel, *Letters to the King of Mari* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 37-41.

²⁵² Among ancient west Asian traditions, it was typical for kings to attribute their victories to their patron deities. Aaron Tugendhaft has rightly observed, however, that in Mari Letter A. 1968, the patron deity of Aleppo takes credit for the victories of Mari's rulers, while the royal seals of Zimri-Lim show that his patron deity was Dagan, not Adad. Tugendhaft is currently exploring the implications of this for our understanding of Mari Letter A.1968. He emphasizes that Mari Letter A.1968 is not an example of self-legitimation by a king, but rather of a foreign polity claiming that its patron deity is responsible for another king's authority and that this patron deity can remove his favor based on stipulated conditions. By highlighting the political and military interactions between Mari and Aleppo exhibited in various Mari letters, Tugendhaft has challenged how Mari Letter A. 1968 is typically cited in discussions of the conflict topos within Ugaritic and biblical traditions (Aaron Tugendhaft, "Baal among the Storm-gods: Distinguishing Mythic Meaning from Mythic Motifs" [paper presented at the annual meeting of the SBL, Atlanta, Ga., 20 November, 2010]).

The letter states clearly that the king's authority is not absolute; rather, it is contingent on the god's favor, which may change depending on the king's behavior.²⁵³ Thus, the king is still the deity's subordinate and the god exercises his authority over the king. The god can take away his weapons from the king, as he did with Yahdun-Lim. It is particularly fitting that Adad, according to the letter, is concerned with the king's behavior in war, since the means by which he gives him authority are weapons and both the god's authority and the king's authority are bound up in victory. The conditional characterization of Adad's endorsement of Zimri-Lim, and of Yahdun-Lim before him, seems to fit the apparently insecure nature of Mari's autonomy and international relations: Yahdun-Lim had been assassinated in a coup; Mari was then controlled by a foreign ruler; and despite Zimri-Lim's successful twenty year reign, it ended when Hammurabi conquered and sacked Mari.²⁵⁴

Mari letter A.1968 is our earliest extant example of the conflict motif, and it predates most extant whole narrative articulations of the conflict topos as well. This letter establishes the early development of the secondary application of the conflict motif, especially within royal ideology, whereby a deity's victory is assumed or claimed to have

²⁵³ The terms of exchange between Adad and the king are clearly stated: Adad gives his weapons and endorsement and in exchange the king must administer justice fairly and consult the god's oracles before going into war. The weapons, therefore, are physical evidence of a contract between the god and king. The terms of exchange are explicit and there is no misrecognition of the exchange or reciprocal obligations between the god and king. As such, this exchange is not a "gift" in the Maussian sense. However, this example of exchange illustrates well Mauss's notion of the "power" residing in a given object by which one "make[s] a present of some part of oneself" (Marcel Mauss, *The Gift* [New York: Norton, 1967], 12).

²⁵⁴ Heimpel, *Letters*, 3, 161-163. Hammurabi took the city in his 33rd year and destroyed its walls in his 35th year, according to middle chronology, this would be 1760 and 1758 BCE, respectively.

significance for humans. We have no full narrative articulation of Adad's victory over Sea from Mari or Aleppo. This may be a result of the chance nature of archeological findings or because no such narrative was ever written down. While it is reasonable to assume there was at least an oral story about Adad defeating Sea, to which the letter refers, we must admit that there is no way to be certain which came first—the notion of a deity establishing his authority through victory or the notion of a victorious warrior deity endorsing a human king. From a practical standpoint it is plausible that narratives of divine combat followed by divine kingship initially developed in service of particular kings, possibly drawing upon existing cosmological stories that employed divine combat to explain cosmic and natural phenomena. It is also important to recognize the complex nature of Mari letter A.1968 with regard to the conditionality of the relationship between the deity and kings, and especially with regard to the fact that Adad was not Zimri-Lim's patron deity. The complexity of our earliest example of the conflict motif should serve as a caution for interpreting particular instances of the conflict topos without adequately situating them in their particular socio-political and literary context.²⁵⁵

Psalm 89:2-38 employs the conflict motif within Judean royal ideology. David's patron deity Yahweh shows his endorsement of David's royal authority by placing David's hand(s) on the sea/rivers. Psalm 89:2-38 exhibits some features that are similar to letter A.1968 from Mari. The letter first asserts the deity's authority by reference to his victory over Sea and then promotes the legitimacy of the king by associating him with the

²⁵⁵ This was essentially the concluding point of Tugendhaft's presentation on Mari Letter A.1968 (Tugendhaft, "Baal among the Storm-gods").

deity's victory. Likewise, Ps 89:2-38 first describes Yahweh ruling over the sea, having conquered his enemies (discussed in detail above):

You indeed rule over the swelling of the sea,
When its waves rise, you still them.
You indeed crushed Rahab like a corpse,
With your strong arm you scattered your enemies (Ps 89:10-12).

The psalm then claims that Yahweh has endorsed the Davidic dynasty by portraying Yahweh placing David in a position superior to the sea and rivers:

I will set his [David's] hand on the sea,
His right hand on the rivers (Ps 89:26).

The author promotes David by associating him with Yahweh's divine victories, particularly by claiming that the deity himself endorses the king by sharing with David his authority over the sea/rivers, Yahweh's defeated enemies over whom he rules. The establishment of David's royal authority is linked to the mythic past by being associated with Yahweh's foundational acts and divine combat. Likewise, David is portrayed as participating in the continued subjugation of the sea/rivers, thus sharing in Yahweh's authority won through past divine combat.

Psalm 89:6-19, the older hymn to Yahweh (discussed above), employs the conflict motif to show the incomparability and dominion of Yahweh, but within Ps 89:2-38, a combined unit of the earlier hymn and pro-David material, the divine authority of Yahweh and the conflict motif primarily serve to promote the legitimacy of David.²⁵⁶ The

²⁵⁶ On the possible ritual background of Ps 89:20-38, see Klaus Koch, "Königpsalmen und ihr ritueller Hintergrund; Erwägungen zu Ps 89,20-38 und Ps 20 und ihren Vorstufen," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception* [ed. Peter W. Flint and Patrick D. Miller; Leiden: Brill, 2005], 9-52. For a form-critical comparison of Ps 89:20-38 with the prophecy to Esarhaddon in SAA 9, 1.6, see Hans U. Steymans, "'Deinen Thron habe ich unter den großen Himmeln festgemacht'. Die formgeschichtliche Nähe von Ps 89,4-5.20-38 zu Texten vom neuassyrischen Hof," in *'Mein Sohn bist du' (Ps*

section focusing on Yahweh's dominion is framed by statements of Yahweh endorsing David. First, Yahweh makes a covenant with David that extends to his progeny for perpetuity:

I have made a covenant with my chosen,
I have made an oath with my servant David:
For perpetuity I will establish your seed,
I will build your throne for all generations (Ps 89:4-5).

Following the description of Yahweh's dominion, the psalm continues to elaborate on Yahweh's covenant with David. Yahweh has chosen David and anointed him with oil:

Then you spoke in a vision to your loyal ones,²⁵⁷
You said, "I have placed a crown²⁵⁸ over a warrior,
I have raised a chosen one from the people.
I have found my servant David
With my holy oil I have anointed him" (Ps 89:20-21).

The act of anointing with the deity's oil, here as in Mari letter A.1968, confers a substance belonging to the deity upon the king, displays the deity's endorsement of the king, and corroborates the legitimating effect of the conflict motif. The passage continues as Yahweh elaborates on his commitment to strengthen David and defeat David's enemies:

On account of my hand he will be secure,
Indeed, my arm will strengthen him.
No enemy will rise against him,
No unjust one will afflict him.

2,7): *Studien zu den Königpsalmen* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk GmbH, 2002), 184-251.

²⁵⁷ Multiple mss read a singular, "loyal one," which Cross prefers (Cross, *CMHE*, 258 n.172), though the LXX and Targum also have a plural.

²⁵⁸ Reading "crown" (*nēzer*), as *BHS* proposes, rather than "help" (*ēzer*). Cross, however, interprets 'zr as comparable to Ugaritic *ḡzr*, and translates: "I have made a stripling ruler over the warrior" (Cross, *CMHE*, 258).

I will crush his rivals from before him,
As for those who hate him, I will smite (them) (Ps 89:22-24).

The rhetorical effect of these verses, especially considering the reference to Yahweh's "arm," is to communicate that just as Yahweh crushed and scattered his own enemies with his mighty arm, he will beat and smite David's enemies with his hand/arm. Yahweh promises to defeat David's human enemies just as he defeated divine enemies in the past. The psalm continues with additional affirmation of David's dominion, specifically the exaltation of David's "horn," indicating the attainment of power;²⁵⁹ the conflict motif; and divine parentage, whereby David is said to be the foremost earthly king:

Indeed my fidelity and covenant loyalty will be with him,
By my name his horn will rise.
I will set his hand on the sea,
His right hand on the rivers.
He indeed will call to me: "You are my father,
My god and the rock of my victory."
Moreover, I will make him the first-born,
The highest of earthly kings (Ps 89:25-28).

²⁵⁹ Dahood considers the raising of David's horn to denote victory (Dahood, *Psalms 51-100*, 317). Likewise, Hossfeld and Zenger consider the horn to represent the might of the king, which in Ps 89:18 and 25 is dependent upon Yahweh (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 410). This is consistent with broader ancient west Asian traditions of the horn as a symbol for power (Benjamin Kedar-Kopfstein, "qeren, qāran," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 8:167-174; Margit L. Süring, *The Horn-Motif in the Hebrew Bible and Related Ancient Near Eastern Literature and Iconography* [Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1982]). Hossfeld and Zenger cite the following relevant biblical passages: horns symbolizing kingship, Pss 89:18, 25; 92:11; 132:17; 2 Sam 2:1, 10; the lifting of horns indicating attaining power or victory, Lam 2:17; Ps 112:9; Zech 2:2-4; cutting off the horn indicating loss of power, Lam 2:3; Jer 48:25; Ps 75:11 (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 256).

The notion of divine parentage employs the concept of a father-son relationship to portray the king as having an intimate relationship with the deity.²⁶⁰ Moreover, here Yahweh makes David the first-born, a position of prominence within a patriarchal family hierarchy. David's status as first-born is then applied to the political sphere when Yahweh states that David is superior to all other earthly kings.²⁶¹ This obviously complements the covenant ideology present throughout the psalm. The eternal covenant with David, Yahweh's promise that his dynasty will maintain the throne forever, would depend upon the Davidic king being able to defend his political autonomy against rival kings. Or, in theological language, the eternal covenant would depend upon Yahweh constantly defeating David's human rivals, just as Yahweh defeated his own rivals in past divine combat. Thus, the conflict motif is one of five complementary ways that the psalm articulates Yahweh's endorsement of David: covenant language, the act of anointing, exalting David's "horn," the conflict motif, and divine sonship. Each of these features contributes to the pro-Davidic ideology of Ps 89:2-38, which concludes with a reiteration of the unconditional nature of the Davidic covenant (Ps 89:29-38).

The lamentation portion of the psalm (Ps 89:39-52), however, accuses Yahweh of breaking this covenant, rejecting his anointed, not defending him in battle, making his

²⁶⁰ Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2*, 152. He also cites similar examples: 2 Sam 7:14 (regarding Solomon), "I will become his father, and he will become my son," and Ps 2:7, "You are my son, today I have begotten you." For broader ancient west Asian notions of divine sonship, parentage, and adoption pertaining to kingship, see Hallo, "Kingship," 188-211.

²⁶¹ This is consistent with broader ancient west Asian royal ideology in which the king is the son or first-born of his patron deity, and the father-son relationship is offered as a guarantee of the king's dynasty, for example SAA 9 1.6 (Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 410).

enemies rejoice, and shaming him (Ps 89:39-46). It concludes with a call for Yahweh to respond to the taunting of his anointed by his enemies (Ps 89:47-52). It is clear that we have several layers of poetic material from various historical contexts joined in one psalm.²⁶² The final layer of lamentation (Ps 89:39-52) uses the conflict motif and Davidic covenant to summon Yahweh to act on behalf of his anointed. As discussed above, this is similar to Psalm 74, another lament that invokes Yahweh's past victories to provoke Yahweh to intervene in the present unfavorable situation. Both Psalm 89 and Psalm 74 reference the covenant and suggest that Yahweh has not upheld the covenant. This runs counter to the notion of the Davidic covenant being eternal (Ps 89:4-5, 29-38; also 2 Sam 7:14-16), and attests to the ability of a patron god to remove his favor.²⁶³ The notion that Yahweh may remove his favor from the Davidic dynasty, indicating a conditional covenant, is attested in 1 Kings 2:2-4; 8:25; 9:4-9; and Ps 132:11-12.²⁶⁴ Among examples

²⁶² On the development of the final form of Ps 89, see Sarna, "Psalm 89," 30-31; Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 2*, 147-157; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 402, 406-407; Heim, "The (God-)Forsaken King of Psalm 89," 296-297; H. U. Steymans, *Psalm 89 und der Davidbund*, 302-319.

²⁶³ Abraham Malamat discusses the development of the literary notion of deities revoking kingship in Abraham Malamat, "Deity Revokes Kingship—Towards Intellectual Reasoning in Mari and the Bible," *Mari and the Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 157-164.

²⁶⁴ Ps 89:30-38 and 2 Sam 7:14-16 describe an unconditional covenant, whereas Ps 132:11-12; 1 Kgs 2:2-4; 8:25; 9:4-9; and 1 Chron 17 describe a conditional covenant with David. Cross proposes that the earliest notions of covenant were conditional, the monarchic (and Deuteronomistic) conception of covenant was unconditional, and the exilic Deuteronomist adopted the conditional covenant (Cross, *CMHE*, 232-237, 251-252, 259-260, 264-265). Gary N. Knoppers argues that there were competing notions of the Davidic covenant throughout biblical history (Gary N. Knoppers, "David's Relation to Moses: The Contexts, Content and Conditions of the Davidic Promises," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East* [ed. John Day; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998], 91-118, 116). For an overview of the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel, 2 Kings, and Chronicles, see H. U. Steymans, *Psalm 89 und der Davidbund*,

of the conflict motif in particular, Mari letter A.1968 exhibits a conditional covenant between Adad and the kings of Mari. As soon as Yahdun-Lim “abandoned me,” Adad withdrew his support of the king, and Zimri-Lim’s endorsement is contingent upon his agreement to consult Adad’s oracle before engaging in battles. Within Psalm 89, the establishment of an eternal covenant with David contributes to the pro-David layer of the psalm, and the accusation that Yahweh has abrogated the covenant contributes to the lamentation layer of the psalm. This use of covenant ideology complements the functions of the conflict motif within both the pro-David portion of the psalm and the lamentation portion. As a whole, Psalm 89 employs the conflict motif for three purposes: to exhibit the dominion of Yahweh, to promote the legitimacy of David, and to summon Yahweh to act on behalf of his anointed in a later historical context.

Psalm 78 also employs the conflict motif to endorse the royal authority of David as well as the site of Jerusalem for Yahweh’s temple. I discussed Ps 78:11-13 above with reference to the combined conflict and exodus motifs, but here I focus on the portrayal of Yahweh as the victorious divine warrior and his choice of David as king subsequent to his victories. Psalm 78:65-66 portrays Yahweh as a warrior who wakes from a deep sleep to defeat his enemies:

Then he awoke like one asleep,
Adonai like a drunk warrior.
He smote his adversaries (at their) rearguard;
He gave them perpetual shame (Ps 78:65-66).

Throughout the summary of Israelite and Judean history within Psalm 78, Yahweh acts as a violent warrior: against the sea/waters (Ps 78:13), rocks (Ps 78:15, 20), rebellious

367-421. On the relationship between the specific articulations of covenant in Ps 89 and 2 Sam 7, see Heim, “The (God-)Forsaken King of Psalm 89,” 299-306.

Israelites (Ps 78:31-34), and Egyptians (Ps 78:49-51). Even the fall of Israel is attributed to Yahweh's actions and inactions as a warrior (Ps 78:59-64). Once he wakes and defeats his enemies (Ps 78:65-66), he builds his temple, reflecting the pattern of the victorious temple builder. The building of the temple is also compared to Yahweh's foundation of the earth (Ps 78:69). The endorsement of the temple utilizes the theme of creation in addition to the conflict motif to link the temple to Yahweh's past actions and to portray the temple as an enduring structure and monument to Yahweh's choice of Judah and Jerusalem.²⁶⁵ Finally, the summary of the foundational story of Israel and Judah culminates in Yahweh's choice of David as king (Ps 78:70-72). David's kingship is the final result of Yahweh's victories against human and superhuman enemies. By suffusing a summary of the narrative of Israel's and Judah's origins with divine warrior imagery, especially including a reference to the splitting of the sea and the image of Yahweh waking up to engage in battle, the author of Psalm 78 employed the conflict motif to promote Judah, Jerusalem, the temple, and the Davidic dynasty.²⁶⁶ Yahweh is portrayed as exercising his authoritative prerogative, attained through victories in combat, to choose a site for his temple and to choose a ruler for his people. Thus, the Jerusalem temple and

²⁶⁵ See also Adele Berlin's discussion of Ps 78 as an exilic poem whose author aims to prove, through his historical overview, that the Temple will be rebuilt and the line of David will continue (Adele Berlin, "Psalms and the Literature of Exile: Psalms 127, 44, 69, and 78," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception* [ed. Peter W. Flint and Patrick D. Miller; Leiden: Brill, 2005], 65-86, 65, 75-84).

²⁶⁶ The poetic narrative of Ps 78 promotes Judah at the expense of Israel. It states that Ephraim neglected its covenant with Yahweh and forgot his great deeds, including the splitting of the Reed Sea and other exodus events (exhibiting the combined exodus and conflict motifs) (Ps 78:9-16). It states further that Israel angered Yahweh, leading to his inaction as divine warrior, which resulted in Israel's rejection and fall. This may indicate a date of composition around the fall of Israel in 721 BCE (Dahood, *Psalms 51-100*, 78; Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 299).

Davidic dynasty are linked to Yahweh's victories and dominion. These institutions are portrayed as being divinely endorsed and therefore legitimate.

My final example of the conflict motif within royal ideology is much more brief and of a different character than those just discussed (Mari Letter A. 1968, Ps 89:2-38, and Psalm 78). The story of *Ahiqar* offers a brief and generalized example of the conflict motif being used to promote the authority of a royal individual. *Ahiqar* is an Aramaic text found at Elephantine that contains a story about the wise scribe Ahiqar, followed by a series of proverbs.²⁶⁷ One portion of the proverbs contains several sayings about the power of a king and the importance of executing royal commands diligently. It states: "the king's tongue is gentle but it breaks the ribs of a dragon; (it is) like death, which is not seen (*Ahiqar* col. 6, l. 89b-90)."²⁶⁸ Because this line is a proverb, it is a brief and generalized statement; "the king" is not any particular king. However, the proverb exhibits a characterization of royal power and legitimate rule. This proverb focuses on the high importance of the king's verbal orders and suggests the negative consequences of acting counter to his commands. Royal commands are represented as the king's word in a previous proverb (*Ahiqar* col. 6 l. 84) and here as the king's tongue. The import and

²⁶⁷ The Aramaic version of *Ahiqar* is the oldest extant version of the story, and it survives in one papyrus manuscript (P. 13446) found in 1907 at Elephantine. The manuscript itself dates to the late-fifth century BCE, but the composition most likely dates to the sixth century BCE. The manuscript was broken, but the five columns of narrative were easily reconstructed according to the story. The sequence of the fragmentary columns of proverbs, however, is uncertain. It is most likely that the proverbs and narrative developed independently (James M. Lindenberger, *The Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983], 8, 11, 19).

²⁶⁸ The Aramaic original is available in Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt*, Vol. 3 (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1986), text C 1.1.

effectiveness of royal commands are communicated by comparing the king's word with a dagger (*Ahiqar* col. 6 l. 84), by describing the king's tongue as a weapon that "breaks the ribs of a dragon," and by comparing the king's tongue to death. This proverb employs the conflict motif to describe the severity of the king's commands, one aspect of the authority of the king.

A dragon figure is one of several enemies that victorious warrior gods defeat (*KTU* 1.3 III 35-47; *KTU* 1.83; Ps 74:13-14; Isa 27:1; Rev 12 and *passim*). The king's commands, represented by his tongue, are depicted as formidable and effective through comparison with a weapon used against the dragon. Other instances of the conflict topos do not mention breaking the dragon's ribs specifically, though Baal strikes Yamm in the torso and between the arms (*KTU* 1.2 IV 14-15, 16-17). Several later examples of the motif reflect the notion of the victor using his mouth or breath as a weapon (*1 Enoch* 62:2; *4 Ezra* 13:9-11; 2 Thess 2:8; Rev 19:19-21), but we have no descriptions of a king or human figure doing so. Within wisdom traditions, the power of the tongue to break bones is referenced in Prov 25:15b, "as for a gentle tongue, it breaks bone," and Ben Sira 28:17-18, "The stroke of a whip makes a mark, but the stroke of a tongue breaks bone; Many have fallen by the lip of daggers, but not as many as those who have fallen by the tongue." These proverbs share the notion that words, represented by the tongue, are powerful, perhaps even more powerful than weapons. However, the figure of the dragon cannot be explained by reference to wisdom traditions. Rather, it is better understood as representing a formidable mythical entity, functioning rhetorically to heighten the claim

being made about the king's authority. The notion that the king's tongue breaks ribs would be less impressive than the notion that the king's tongue breaks a dragon's ribs.²⁶⁹

The subsequent comparison of the king's tongue with death is more difficult to interpret, specifically the description of death as invisible. In the Hebrew Bible, death is characterized as insatiable (Hab 2:5) and powerful (Song 8:6), but not invisible, so it seems that we do not fully understand this line of the proverb.²⁷⁰ Presumably, this comparison also serves to communicate the power of the king's commands, which is the focus of several proverbs in this column. Another specific proverb that may be relevant occurs two sentences below this one: "A king is like the Merciful, indeed his voice is high; Who is there who can withstand him, but he with whom El is?" (*Ahiqar* col. 6 l. 91). This proverb compares the king to the deity El, using El's epithet "the Merciful"; states that the king has a superior voice; and portrays the king as somewhat incomparable. These claims are similar to those made in other instances of the conflict motif, for example passages which emphasize the superiority of Yahweh's voice/rebuke over the sea (Ps 93:1-5; Ps 29:3, 10; Ps 65:7-8; Nah 1:3b-5), and statements of incomparability such as Ps 89:6-9, claiming that Yahweh is incomparable among the gods, and Ps 89:28, claiming that David is incomparable among earthly kings. Certainly, the royal ideology in these two proverbs of *Ahiqar* could have developed independently from combat traditions. However, the presence of the dragon and death together, both

²⁶⁹ Likewise, if the proverb mentioned some formidable beast, such as a lion or bear, rather than the dragon, the claim being made about the king's authority would be somewhat less than it is in the present text. It is also possible that the *tannîn* here is a serpent (as in Deut 32:33 and Exod 7:9, 10, 12) rather than a dragon.

²⁷⁰ Lindenberger, *The Aramaic Proverbs of Ahiqar*, 91.

serving to elevate a claim being made about the king's authority, and also occurring in close proximity to a statement of incomparability, certainly constitutes a constellation of figures and legitimizing functions that fits within the conflict topos.

In sum, Mari Letter A.1968, Ps 89:2-38, Psalm 78, and *Ahiqar* col. 6 l.89b-91 each employ the conflict motif to promote human royal figures. Within these texts, the conflict motif works alongside other means of promoting kings and their dynasties to contribute to royal ideology specific to each literary tradition. These texts show that authors adapted the widespread ancient West Asian theme of divine combat against the sea/sea-dragon to explicitly promote the human political institution of kingship and to claim that specific victorious warrior deities endorsed select individual kings and their dynasties.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have analyzed instances of the conflict motif that occur in a variety of genres (poetry, historiography, lament, epistolary, prophecy, and proverbs), from the literature of several ancient cities and states, over the span of ca.1300 years. These texts show that authors employed the conflict motif in order to promote particular preferred deities (Adad, Baal, and Yahweh), particular kings (Yaḥdim-Lim, Zimri-Lim, David, and Solomon), the office of the king in general (*Ahiqar*), and select groups ("Israel," the "inhabitants of Zion," and "the redeemed") and to portray disfavored polities (Egypt, the king of Egypt, Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar) as destined for defeat, by referencing divine combat with the sea/sea-dragon outside of a full narrative articulation of this combat.

Among Ugaritic texts, I discussed *KTU* 1.3 III 35-47; *KTU* 1.5 I 1-8; and *KTU* 1.83, which describe Baal or Anat defeating Yamm and/or Lotan. Within the biblical anthology I discussed texts that emphasize Yahweh's authority over the personified sea (Ps 93:1-5; Ps 29:3; Ps 65:7-8; Nah 1:3b-5; Ps 104; Ps 33; Job 7:12 Job 9:8; Job 38:4a, 8-11, 16); texts that use the conflict motif to promote Yahweh's royal authority (Ps 93 and Ps 29); passages that describe battles against Rahab, Leviathan, dragon/s, and/or the sea (Ps 89:6-15, Ps 74:12-17, Job 26:10-13); descriptions of Leviathan as Yahweh's plaything (Ps 104 and Job 40-41); and passages that interweave the conflict motif with creation themes in order to portray Yahweh's dominion as universal (Ps 89:6-15, Ps 74:12-17, Ps 104:2-6; Job 38:4).²⁷¹ I argued that the conflict motif was employed in Ugaritic and biblical literature to promote the prowess of Baal and Yahweh, respectively, as victorious warrior gods deserving of temples. Baal and Yahweh are each attributed with victories over the sea and associated figures such as a dragon, Lotan/Leviathan, and a multi-headed serpent, and each attains a temple. I also highlighted many parallels

²⁷¹ This chapter has firmly established the existence of the conflict motif in the HB. David Tsumura, in his 2005 publication *Creation and Destruction: A Reappraisal of the Chaokampf Theory in the Old Testament*, updates and expands his 1989 study of the creation stories in Genesis 1 and 2. The new material pertains to some of the biblical texts I discuss. Tsumura argues that passages making reference to the sea, Leviathan, Rahab, or dragons "have nothing to do with primordial combat." He concludes that such references "could be paraphrased 'just as you crushed your enemies of old, crush them now'" (David Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction: a Reappraisal of the Chaokampf Theory in the Old Testament* [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005], 195). Though I agree that this would be a fair paraphrase of some passages, I think his treatment overlooks the ideological work that the motif accomplishes. In downplaying the motif of the combat, he misses the most interesting questions that arises from these passages: Why were these particular images or characters referenced? What do these characters connote? Why would an author who wanted to say (using Tsumura's words) "just as you crushed your enemies of old, crush them now," say it by making reference to a conflict with the sea, Leviathan, Rahab, or dragons, rather than some human enemy?

between Judean and Mesopotamian combat traditions, most significantly the use of the conflict motif to support the claim that the victorious warrior deity is incomparable. Mari letter A.1968 preserves a tradition about Adad defeating the sea as well. Though we have no full narratives of Yahweh or Adad defeating divine enemies, these victorious warrior deities, along with Baal, Ninurta, Marduk, and Aššur, attained their kingship and dominion through combat with their enemies.

After discussing examples of the conflict motif that focus primarily on the status of the victorious deity, which I describe as the primary application of the motif, I discussed the secondary application of the motif, that is, instances in which the conflict motif is claimed or assumed to have import for humans. Examples of the combined conflict and exodus motifs (Ps 77:14-21; Ps 78:13; Ps 106:7-12; the P portions of Exodus 14; Isa 51:9-11; and possibly Jer 51:36) are particularly relevant here. This combination of motifs constitutes a significant development within biblical historiography, in that Yahweh's divine combat was inserted within the foundational story of Israel and Judah, into the "paradigmatic story" of Yahweh intervening within a human socio-political circumstance on behalf of the people. In several texts disfavored polities or rulers are compared to or identified with Yahweh's defeated enemies (Isa 30:7; Ps 87:4; Ezek 29:2-15; Ezek 32:2-6; Jer 51:34-37; Hab 3) in order to portray them as defeated or destined for defeat. Despite the actual power these states or individuals have, the legitimacy of their authority is attacked when they are equated with the deity's defeated enemies. Some of these texts (Ezek 23:2-15; Ezek 32:2-6; Jer 51:34-37; Hab 3) as well as Isa 51:9-11 also claim that Yahweh can intervene in the narrative present on behalf of humans, and the final forms of Psalm 89 and Psalm 74 invoke the conflict motif to provoke Yahweh to do

so. Yahweh's past victories are recalled and he is summoned to action in the narrative present.

In Babylonian, Assyrian, Mari, and Judean traditions, we have explicit examples of the victorious warrior deity extending his divine royal prerogative to endorse particular kings. In the final section of this chapter, I discussed Mari Letter A.1968, Ps 89:2-38, Psalm 78, and *Ahiqar* col. 6 l.89b-91, which explicitly promote the human political institution of kingship through the conflict motif. Mari Letter A.1968, Ps 89:2-38, and Psalm 78 claim that specific victorious warrior deities endorsed select individual kings and their dynasties. I also discussed the association of combat traditions with the Jerusalem temple, evident in Psalm 78 and in the description of various features of the palace-temple complex. Instances of the conflict motif within royal ideology show continuity with whole narrative articulations of the conflict topos as well as with instances of the conflict motif that promote the royal status of the victorious warrior deity, all of which imply that the institution of kingship is legitimate. However, these texts exhibit a secondary application of the conflict motif, whereby the deity's defeat of the sea and/or dragon figures is claimed or assumed to have import not only for deities but for humans. These texts, therefore, share a similar function with instances of the conflict motif that promote a specific group at the expense of its enemies, various disfavored polities or rulers. Likewise, many examples I discuss in the following chapter show continuity with Mari Letter A.1968, Ps 89:2-38, Psalm 78, and the proverb from *Ahiqar*. Within first- and early-second-century CE Judean traditions, authors adapted the conflict motif and biblical royal ideology to an eschatological narrative framework, and

the use of the conflict motif to assert divine endorsement of royal humans served as a paradigm for the endorsement of secondary divine figures.

The next chapter continues with examples of the conflict motif that date ca. 500 BCE-1000 CE. The conflict motif continues to be employed to promote the legitimacy of particular favored deities and individuals and to attack the legitimacy of particular disfavored divine beings, polities, and individuals. Most of the texts from these later periods, however, describe divine combat within an eschatological framework, a development that builds upon the reconfiguring of Yahweh's combat as an event that can happen in the narrative present or immediate future (exhibited in many examples above). The widespread and continued use of the conflict motif suggests that its legitimating ideology was effective. This efficacy would have depended on various authors and their perceived audiences recognizing the implications of the warrior deity's victory. This recognition involves understanding the hierarchic taxonomy of the primary relationship in any given example of the conflict topos: the victorious warrior defeats his enemy and thus gains his authority; his victory proves the legitimacy of his authority. The variety of ways that authors employed the conflict motif reflect the development of further implications of the deity's victory: the victorious warrior deity possesses legitimate authority that he may extend to whomever he favors, through royal endorsement and/or defending humans against threats. Likewise, the enemies of favored humans are also the deity's enemies, and therefore he will defeat human enemies now as he defeated his divine enemies in the past.

CHAPTER 4: THE CONFLICT MOTIF, FURTHER ADAPTATIONS

[...] until the Most High visits the earth, he coming as a human, eating and drinking with humans, and in quiet crushing the head of the dragon in the midst of [the] water. In this way he will save Israel and all the nations, God playing the part of a man (*T. Asher* 7:3).²⁷²

The *Testament of Asher* 7:3 envisions a moment when a deity will come to the earth, defeat a dragon, and save Israel. This chapter treats passages such as this from late biblical texts, first- and early-second-century CE Judean texts, including those focused on Jesus/*Christos*, and late antique Jewish texts. Among these texts, there are many passages that describe and look forward to a victorious warrior deity saving Israel, or some other select set of people, through combat with an enemy, most often in the form of a sea dragon. The combat envisioned in such passages is similar to the combat referenced in the texts discussed in Chapter 3, in that a victorious warrior deity defeats an enemy. However, in the texts discussed below, the combat is recast as an event that will occur in an idealized future. These examples are distinct from those, such as Ps 89:10-11, in which the combat is an event that occurred in the past, and from passages such as Isa 51:9-11, which makes reference to a past combat and uses the conflict and exodus motifs to describe the current process of restoration. That is, the examples discussed in Chapter 3 describe the combat as a past event or as an immediately anticipated event that relates

²⁷² The Greek text of *T. Asher* is available in Marinus de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text* (Leiden: Brill, 1978).

to the deity's past victories. The examples discussed in the first section of this chapter, however, exhibit an eschatological rendering of the conflict motif.²⁷³ In some of these texts, the combat is part of an overhaul of some world order that is portrayed as disadvantageous from the narrator's perspective. In other texts, the eschatological aspect of the motif is less explicit but is still indicated by the future tense, temporal markers such as "in that day" and other thematic elements, for example, various things somehow coming to an end.

Through my analysis of eschatological renderings of the conflict motif, I have found that authors employed the motif to accomplish four legitimating functions,

²⁷³ The notion of an "eschaton" is derived from the Greek *eschatos*, meaning "last" or "last things." Eschatology, then, is speculation about "last things" or about the end of the current state of affairs. Paul Hanson contrasts "prophetic eschatology" and "apocalyptic eschatology" as follows. In "prophetic eschatology" gods can reform and restore a desired situation within the current historical and political context by bringing a new king who will end current injustices. However, in "apocalyptic eschatology" the current state of affairs is so dismal that even the gods cannot fix it within the current political or historical framework. The present world order has to be transformed (Paul Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979], 27, 30). Stephen Cook has criticized Hanson's reconstruction of the development of prophetic eschatology into apocalyptic eschatology, and cautions biblical scholars against implicitly adopting deprivation theory as a cause for the emergence of apocalyptic traditions (Stephen Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism: The Post-Exilic Social Setting* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995], 8, 34-35, 44). Acknowledging Cook's critique of Hanson, we can still contrast prophetic and apocalyptic eschatologies without insisting that there was a trajectory from one to the other. Thus, by "eschatological rendering of the conflict motif," I mean that authors make the conflict an integral part of the desired or imagined transformation of the current world order, and this transformation occurs outside of history. Here, I am influenced heavily by John J. Collins' many discussions of "apocalyptic" and "eschatology." See for example his description of "apocalyptic eschatology" or "transcendent eschatology" (J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* [2nd ed; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 11-12). However, I agree completely with Cook, in his criticism of Collins' emphasis on "apocalypse" as a genre, that we should maintain distinctions between apocalypticism as a literary phenomenon, a worldview, and a social phenomenon, while defining each of these phenomena according to a set of loosely shared family resemblances (Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*, 21-23).

sometimes all exhibited within a single text. First, I argue that authors continued to use the conflict motif to promote the legitimacy of Yahweh/*Theos* throughout early and late antiquity. Second, authors continued to employ the motif to attack the legitimacy of disfavored divine beings, such as Satan/Devil, and antagonistic polities, such as Rome or “earthly powers” in general, by associating them with Yahweh’s defeated superhuman enemies. Third, I argue that the conflict motif is used to promote secondary figures (such as the Messiah, Elect One, or Son of Man) by claiming that Yahweh/*Theos* or the Ancient of Days endorses them and enthrones them, and/or by portraying these secondary figures as the eschatological divine warrior. The use of the conflict motif to promote a secondary divine figure is a substantial innovation, and while this innovation builds upon older Davidic royal ideology, the claims made about these secondary figures go well beyond any statements made about David. Finally, I show that several Judean texts employ the conflict motif to bolster some group by offering a narrative guarantee that this group will have a reversal of fortunes, a positive outcome resulting from the efforts of divine beings on their behalf. This final ideological function is also an innovation. Earlier biblical texts utilize the motif (recalling Yahweh’s past victories) to invoke Yahweh to intervene within a current situation for the benefit of individuals and groups. However, texts exhibiting an eschatological rendering of the conflict motif claim that Yahweh/*Theos* and/or a secondary figure will certainly intervene in the future and completely change the present socio-political circumstance. I discuss examples of these four functions of the conflict motif in the first section of this chapter.

In the second section of this chapter, I focus on texts that utilize the conflict motif to promote or attack the royal and/or divine authority of specific individuals. In Chapter

3, I discussed the use of the conflict motif within royal ideology. I argued that authors promoted royal individuals (Yahdun-Lim, Zimri-Lim, David, and “the king”) by claiming that victorious warrior deities endorsed them through enthronement, through sharing their divine qualities or weapons with them, and/or through granting them a position of authority over their defeated enemies. Despite the loss of autonomous political authority within Judea, authors continued to use the conflict motif to make statements about the authority of individuals. For example, Jesus had no actual political authority, but authors used the conflict motif to portray him as having divine authority over the sea/waters, thus bolstering these authors’ claims that Jesus had some divine status and special social status. By the same logic, but to opposite ends, the author of 2 Maccabees employs the conflict motif to attack the legitimacy of a disfavored political figure, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, by accusing him of imagining that he possesses power over the sea. Finally, *b. Baba Meši’a* 59b relates a story about Gamaliel invoking the “Holy One”²⁷⁴ to calm a life-threatening storm. I argue that this narrative contributes to a positive characterization of Gamaliel by portraying him as ascribing honor and power to the “Holy One,” while also asserting that the “Holy One” alone has power over the sea/waters. While these examples show continuity with earlier examples of the conflict motif that promote specific royal individuals, they also show a substantial amount of innovation and

²⁷⁴ When discussing specific rabbinic passages, I use the designation given in the text, such as “Holy One” and “Ruler of the Universe.” In my comparative discussion, I also refer to the primary Judean god as Yahweh/*Theos*. While rabbinic texts do not use the name Yahweh, they quote biblical passages about Yahweh and equate the “Holy One” with him. On the various rabbinic designations for deity, see Louis Isaac Rabinowitz, “Rabbinical Names of God,” *Encyclopedia Judaica* (ed. Cecil Roth and Geoffrey Wigoder; 16 vols.; Farmington Hills, MI; Thomson Gale, 1971-1972), 7:677.

creativity in adapting the conflict motif to suit their specific socio-political and theological aims.

Authors employed the conflict motif to make particular statements about their contemporary socio-political contexts and their preferred divine figures. Whether the victorious deity's combat is envisioned as a past event, present event, or future eschatological event, the conflict motif functions to validate the power of particular deities and to promote the legitimacy of particular individuals and groups associated with the victorious deity. Likewise, authors employed the motif in order to attack the legitimacy of disfavored divine beings, polities, and individuals. Because of the relatively late date of the examples treated in this chapter, compared to the Mesopotamian, Ugaritic, and early Judean examples, most previous treatments of the conflict topos only reference these later texts in footnotes, if at all.²⁷⁵ These examples are underrepresented in discussions of the conflict topos, and they have not been analyzed for their rich ideological significance. However, these texts show that authors continued to use the conflict motif to perform ideological work throughout late antiquity and into the medieval

²⁷⁵ Generally, studies of the conflict motif briefly discuss or note Isa 24-27, Dan 7, and Rev 12, but do not discuss these texts fully or mention any later examples. John Day discusses Isa 24-27 and Dan 7 (Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, 98-128; Day, *God's Conflict*, 112, 141-178). Batto mentions Isa 27:1, and his epilogue on "Mythopoeism in the New Testament," discusses Dan 7, Revelation, and relevant gospel passages (Batto, *Slaying the Dragon*, 154, 217, 225, 229, 174-185). N. Wyatt mentions Isa 27:1 several times (N. Wyatt, *Myths of Power*, 90, 96, 97, 122, 159, 188, 194). He also mentions the composite beasts of Dan 7 but does not discuss Dan 7 with reference to the conflict motif (N. Wyatt, *Myths of Power*, 212). He includes Mark 4:35-41 on 401 n. 55, and mentions Rev 12 briefly (N. Wyatt, *Myths of Power*, 401 n.55; 90; 401). Mary K. Wakeman uses Isa 27:1 in her characterizations of Leviathan, Tannin, and Tehom, and once mentions Rev 21:1 (Mary K. Wakeman, *God's Battle with the Monster: A Study in Biblical Imagery* [Leiden: Brill, 1973], 56-105, 26 n.5). Cross references Isa 27:1, Dan 7, and Rev 12 (CMHE, [Isa] 119 n.24, 120, 135; [Dan 7] 16, 17, 165 n. 86, 345 n.9; [Rev 12] 119, 119 n.24).

period, and that the motif was adapted within a variety of historical and literary contexts.²⁷⁶ The contemporary context of each example shaped how the motif was

²⁷⁶ Andrew R. Angel offers a thorough treatment of examples of the “Hebrew *Chaoskampf* tradition” in texts dating from 515 BCE to 200 CE. He proposes the following criteria for evaluating possible instances of the “Hebrew *Chaoskampf* tradition” and for determining whether or not this was a “living” tradition in the period of 515 BCE to 200 CE: cultural provenance, geographical provenance, similarity (of imagery), reference, creativity, number (of texts), multiplicity of sources, and continuity (Andrew R. Angel, *Chaos and the Son of Man: The Hebrew Chaoskampf Tradition in the Period 515 BCE to 200 CE* [New York: T & T Clark, 2006], 30-34, *passim*). I appreciate especially his criterion of creativity, and I agree that authors exhibited innovative interpretations of the conflict motif to serve their particular purposes. However, I find Angel’s collection of “*Chaoskampf*” texts too broad. He includes many texts in which there is no reference, imagery, allusion, or presumption of divine combat. For example, he considers the metaphor of a sailor having a rough time on the sea, in *1QH* 14.22-25, to reflect “chaos waters.” This imagery is not necessarily derived from or reflective of a divine combat with a water-based enemy, even though it may be slightly similar to HB passages in which Yahweh rebukes rough waters: in both cases there is rough water. However, not all rough water is “chaos” water. Furthermore, the characterization of divine enemies as “chaos” is not accurate. The divine enemies defeated by the victorious warrior deity are not agents of “chaos,” but rather agents of an alternate power structure. The notion that the divine enemies are agents of “chaos” is a result of two factors: First, in line with the ideology of some texts (*EE* and Revelation are two great examples in this regard), the alternative power structures represented by the divine enemy (Tiamat in *EE*, and the dragon and associated beasts in Revelation) are characterized as acting counter to a preferred “legitimate” order. Thus, characterizing them as “chaos” reflects the delegitimizing ideology of the text. Second, there is a slippage between “chaos” as “a state of disorder,” “chaos” as “primordial matter,” and the Greek deity “Chaos.” The term “*Chaoskampf*” in early studies of the ancient west Asian conflict topos, which focused on comparison between Mesopotamian and biblical traditions (beginning with Gunkel, as discussed in Chapter 1), incorporates both a specialized use of “chaos” as “primordial matter” and a notion of primordial divine enemies, patterned after Tiamat (who is “primordial matter,” a divine enemy, and a rival for authority among the gods). However, the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle* confirms that divine enemies (in the *Baal Cycle*: Yamm, Mot, and the sons of Athirat) are not agents of disorder, but rather of an alternate order, and shows that divine enemies are not necessarily representatives of primordial matter. What is at stake in these conflict narratives is kingship, which is obviously central to socio-political order. As I discussed in Chapter 3, the HB contains both examples in which Yahweh’s victories are associated with acts of creation, and thus possibly with “primordial matter,” and examples that do not incorporate acts of creation. However, every example of the conflict motif, as I argue throughout this study, bears a legitimating ideology and functions to validate a particular divine and/or socio-political hierarchy.

articulated, and exegetes recast earlier biblical passages to make statements about their contemporary concerns.²⁷⁷

The Conflict Motif and the Eschaton

In Chapter 3, we saw that most examples of the conflict motif reference a combat that the victorious warrior deity fought against enemies in the past. The victory serves to exhibit the prowess of the warrior deity and to justify the authority conferred upon the deity. Several Hebrew Bible passages, however, showed that authors invoked Yahweh's defeated enemies in order to summon Yahweh to act against a contemporary enemy. With this innovative development of the conflict motif, authors reconfigured the combat as an event that could recur in the present historical context. In this section, I discuss texts that exhibit a further temporal shift of the conflict motif: various authors reconceived the combat as an event that will happen in the future. This future combat is an integral part of a greater reordering of the present world order that is ushered in by a divine warrior figure. Various eschatological divine warrior figures include Yahweh, Michael, an unnamed angel, the Son of Man, Messiah, "my son," Elect One, and Jesus/*Christos*. Various defeated enemies include the Sea, Leviathan, Behemoth, Satan/Devil, Death, a serpent, a dragon, beasts from the sea, beasts from the earth, earthly rulers, and the "lawless one." Several texts identify two or more of these figures with one another (e.g., Jesus and the Messiah, Satan and a serpent).

²⁷⁷ Even when specific HB verses are not quoted directly, it appears that the authors of these texts depended upon some form of the HB, LXX, and/or bible-based traditions.

Two relatively late Hebrew Bible passages employ the conflict motif within an eschatological framework: Isa 27:1 and Daniel 7. In Isa 27:1, Yahweh is the victorious warrior, and in Daniel 7, the Ancient of Days defeats enemies and endorses “the one like a son of man.” After discussing each of these texts, I discuss several passages from Revelation in which Michael, an unnamed angel, and the Lamb play the part of the victorious warrior, though the Ancient of Days and Jesus/*Christos* share the royal dominion that the victorious warrior deity secures. I then focus on examples of the conflict motif in which Jesus/*Christos* is characterized as the victorious warrior deity. Finally, I discuss texts that describe both an eschatological banquet involving the defeated enemies, Leviathan and Behemoth, and an eschatological battle featuring a secondary figure as the divine warrior. Finally, rabbinic combat traditions emphasize that defeating and taming Leviathan, Behemoth, and the Prince of the Sea is a prerogative of the “Holy One” alone.

Hebrew Bible Eschatological Battles

Isaiah 24-27, the so-called “Isaiah Apocalypse,” describes an overhaul of the existing world order in which Yahweh defeats divine and human enemies and then reigns in Zion/Jerusalem. The exact historical context and date of this section of the Isaiah anthology is uncertain. It appears to be a post-exilic work, and is most likely a Persian period composition.²⁷⁸ It describes an upheaval of the earth (Isa 24:1, 3-4, 18-20), in

²⁷⁸ Opinions for the dating of Isa 24-27 range from the 8th century to the 2nd century BCE, and typically depend on questions of genre (proto-apocalyptic, early apocalyptic, or apocalyptic) and on the identification of the destroyed city of Isa 27:10. Most recently, commentators prefer a wide date range, somewhere between 500/450-300 BCE (Willem Beuken, *Jesaja 13-27* [Freiburg: Herder, 2007], 198; Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 13-27*

which social norms will be overturned (Isa 24:2). Yahweh will punish and imprison the “host of the high on high and the kings of the earth on the earth” (Isa 24:21-22), and even the moon and sun are to be confounded and ashamed (Isa 24:23). Yahweh will then reign in Zion/Jerusalem (Isa 24:23), and he is praised for subduing “strangers”/“terrible ones” and destroying their city (Isa 25:1-5; 26:5). Yahweh will make a feast for the people (Isa 25:6), and those dispersed in Assyria and Egypt will return to Jerusalem (Isa 27:13).

These chapters are full of complex details, and it is particularly significant that Yahweh will defeat divine and human authorities and subsequently reign. Yahweh’s victory over rival authorities followed by his reign exhibits the pattern of the victorious warrior deity attaining his throne. This pattern promotes the legitimacy of the victorious deity’s royal authority in that it exhibits Yahweh’s prowess in battle, asserts his ultimate dominion, and portrays defeated rivals as inferior. The conflict motif is made more explicit when the text describes Yahweh slaying the sea-dragon Leviathan:

On that day Yahweh will punish with his sharp, great, and strong sword
 Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent;
 He will slay the dragon that is in the sea (Isa 27:1).

Yahweh’s enemy in this verse is Leviathan, described as “the fleeing serpent”/“twisting serpent” and “dragon that is in the sea.” This figure is present in Ps 74:13-14 (discussed in Chapter 3), where Leviathan is the multi-headed defeated enemy, mentioned directly

[Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997], 462). However, Cross, Hanson, Millar, and Blenkinsopp argue for a 6th century date based on their analysis of the genre (Cross, *CMHE*, 345; Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 313-314; William Millar, *Isaiah 24-27 and the Origin of Apocalyptic* [Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976], 114; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 348), while Otto Plöger argues for a 3rd century date (Otto Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology* [Richmond: John Knox, 1968], 96-97). This text may be closer in date to the post-exilic texts I discuss in Chapter 3, and could very well be discussed along with them. However, the eschatological nature of Isa 24-27 makes it a better fit for the content of the present chapter.

after multi-headed “dragons in the waters” that occur in parallel with “the sea.” This figure is remarkably similar to the Ugaritic figure Lotan, “the Twisty Serpent, the Potentate with Seven Heads,” whom Baal defeated, according to *KTU* 1.5 2-3, and whom Anat defeated according to *KTU* 1.3 III 41-42. In the *Baal Cycle* and Psalm 74, the defeat of Lotan/Leviathan occurred in the past. However, in Isa 27:1, Yahweh will defeat him “on that day” in the future, as part of an eschatological re-establishment of Yahweh’s royal authority and world-order.²⁷⁹

Lotan/Leviathan is typically an enemy whom the warrior deity has defeated in the past. References to him, therefore, recall the deity’s former victory and assert the deity’s current status as a victorious warrior and legitimate authority figure. In biblical passages which invoke Yahweh’s past victories over defeated foes in order to promote Yahweh’s divine royal status, Yahweh’s victory is definite and certain (see examples discussed in Chapter 3, such as Ps 89:6-15). Likewise, passages that invoke his past victories in order to provoke him to act within the contemporary historical context also portray his victory as certain (see examples discussed in Chapter 3, such as Jer 51:34-37; Hab 3:12-15, and Isa 51:9-11). In Isa 27:1, the certainty of Yahweh’s victory over Leviathan is used to characterize “that day” in the future. This reference to Leviathan is not random, but rather furthers the author’s ideological claim that Yahweh will defeat current divine and earthly authorities and take his throne.²⁸⁰ By re-locating the defeat of Leviathan to a future

²⁷⁹ Isa 24-27 uses the phrases “it shall be” or “it shall come to pass” seven times (Isa 24:2, 13, 18, 21; 25:9; 27:12, 13), and the phrase “on that day” seven times (Isa 24:21, 25:9; 26:1; 27:1, 2, 12, 13). These phrases emphasize the future setting of the imagined events and the repetition heightens the sense of expectation.

²⁸⁰ Many scholars have attempted to identify a specific referent or several referents for which Leviathan/the dragon would be an allegory. As summarized by Donald Polaski:

reorganization of social and political order, the author portrays his eschatological speculation as both certain and divinely sanctioned.

In addition to defeating Leviathan and other divine and human enemies, the “Isaiah Apocalypse” also envisions Yahweh defeating Death:

He will swallow up Death for ever;
Adonai Yahweh will wipe away tears from all faces;
Indeed, the reproach of his people will he take away from all the earth;
For Yahweh has spoken (Isa 25:8).

It is particularly interesting that Isa 25:8 describes this act as “swallow up” because in Ugaritic tradition Death (Mot) is characterized as swallowing his enemies, in particular, Baal (*KTU* 1.6 II). Isaiah 25:8 reverses the motif of Death swallowing those he has

Duhm and Marti identify the referents as Egypt, the Seleucid empire, and the Parthians; Box and Cheyne list Babylon, Persia, and Egypt; Kessler and Eissfeldt argue for the Ptolemies and Seleucids; and Gesenius concludes that the referent is Babylon (Donald C. Polaski, *Authorizing an End: The Isaiah Apocalypse and Intertextuality* [Leiden: Brill, 2001], 280-283, 281 n.4). I agree with Polaski’s criticisms of this sort of interpretation. First, most of these scholars propose multiple referents for Leviathan/the dragon, such that the allegorical interpretation requires the verse to describe two or three separate creatures: the serpent Leviathan and the dragon, or two serpents and a dragon. This runs counter to the synonymous parallelism of these poetic lines. For example, the verse describes Yahweh’s sword with three adjectives though it is only one sword; likewise, the verse describes one figure as a fleeing serpent, twisting serpent, and dragon in the sea. Second, most scholars propose the specific political referents in order to buttress their arguments for a specific dating of the text. Conversely, Anderson interprets Leviathan as a symbol for “powers of evil at work in human history” (Bernhard Anderson, “The Slaying of the Fleeing, Twisting Serpent: Isaiah 27:1 in Context,” in *Uncovering Ancient Stones: Essays in Memory of H. Neil Richardson* [ed. Lewis M. Hopfe; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994], 7). However, I find this interpretation too generalizing; it detracts from the ideological significance of the figure of Leviathan. Rather than reading Leviathan in Isa 27:1 as an allegory for a specific polity or polities or for general “evil” or oppression, it is more fruitful to explore how the reference to Leviathan contributes to the description of Yahweh’s series of eschatological actions: it indicates that they are certainties.

defeated in order to assert Yahweh's superiority over Death.²⁸¹ The notion of Yahweh swallowing Death validates Yahweh's divine royal authority: Yahweh's defeat and punishment of divine and human authorities, including the sea-dragon Leviathan and Death, will lead to his reign in Jerusalem. Furthermore, Yahweh's victories will lead to a re-establishment of his authority in Jerusalem, the downfall of disfavored authorities, and an improvement of the socio-political situation of "his people," including a feast, an end to their suffering, and revenge on the "terrible ones." The author innovatively recasts the victorious warrior's combat as a future event in order to legitimate "his people" who are portrayed as experiencing social and political oppression. These people, according to the author, will benefit from Yahweh's actions as divine warrior, their "reproach" shall be taken away and Yahweh will wipe away their tears.²⁸² The removal of reproach and wiping away of tears indicates an end to mourning, and the shift from a state of mourning to rejoicing due to being saved by Yahweh, which is explicit in the next verse (Isa 25:9), suggests victory for Yahweh "on that day."²⁸³ The author describes Yahweh acting on

²⁸¹ In *KTU* 1.2 IV 23-31, Baal mutilates Yamm after defeating him, and he possibly "drinks" Yamm, though that reading is not certain because of the variety of ways the verb *yšt* may be interpreted (see Chapter 2, note 79). If Baal drinks Yamm, then Yahweh swallowing Death could be parallel to this, as well as offering an inversion of the motif of Death swallowing his own enemies.

²⁸² The removal of "reproach" (*herpāh*) is here associated with the victory of a divine warrior, but it occurs frequently in other instances of the improvement of a unfavorable situation that do not employ the conflict motif. Yahweh removes the "reproach of Egypt" from the people in Jos 5:9; in 1 Sam 17:16, David's victory over Goliath will result in the removal of "reproach" for the people; in Isa 54:4; Ezek 36:15, 30; and Joel 2:19, descriptions of a future reversal of fortunes include the removal of "reproach."

²⁸³ Shame and acts of mourning, such as that which is said to end in Isa 25:8-9, are often associated with individual and collective calamities (S. M. Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 97-110). Rejoicing indicates an end of mourning (Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 114) and is the appropriate and expected response to victory (Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 54-55, 151).

behalf of “his people,” which suggests that the deity favors this people in particular. Likewise, the human authorities portrayed as responsible for their suffering are characterized as enemies of Yahweh, and the author envisions Yahweh defeating and punishing them.

The characterization of Leviathan and Death as divine enemies, and of Yahweh as divine warrior in the eschatological setting of Isa 27:1 and Isa 25:8, is parallel to the characterization of divine enemies and the divine warrior in biblical and Ugaritic instances of the conflict motif. In addition to comparable figures and characterizations, Isaiah 24-27 exhibits the pattern of the victorious warrior defeating rival authorities and taking his throne. Thus, we see not only strikingly similar imagery but also remarkably consistent ideology among Isaiah 24-27, earlier biblical passages such as Psalm 74, and the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle*. By highlighting these similarities, I wish to bring into clearer view the connotations of the conflict motif for ancient authors and audiences. However, I also want to stress how creative and innovative these authors were in their re-working of the motif. It follows that various authors found the legitimating ideology of the conflict motif not only particularly effective but also highly adaptable within a variety of historical contexts. Such continuity and creativity, as well as the implied efficacy and adaptability, characterizes the rest of the examples discussed in this chapter as well. The temporal shift to a future eschatological battle, first attested in Isa 27:1, is exhibited in the majority of later instances of the conflict motif, and in fact many of those texts explicitly cite Isa 27:1 as an exegetical basis for their references to Leviathan and the defeat of the sea/waters.

Daniel 7 is a relatively late (2nd century BCE) biblical text that employs the conflict motif within an apocalyptic, eschatological framework.²⁸⁴ The book of Daniel narrates a story about the character Daniel that is set in the context of Babylonian exile, and Daniel 7 describes a vision that the character Daniel sees. At the beginning of the vision, the “four winds of heaven” strike the “great sea” (Dan 7:2), and then four composite beasts rise from the sea (Dan 7:3-8).²⁸⁵ The vision continues, describing the Ancient of Days enthroned, with many thousands before him (Dan 7:9-10). The fourth beast from the sea, because of the “great words” its horn spoke, is slain and its body is destroyed and burned (Dan 7:11), and the dominion of the remaining three beasts is taken away (Dan 7:12). No agent is identified in the slaying the fourth beast, but it is clear that the Ancient of Days has secure authority. The Ancient of Days then gives eternal dominion to “one like a son of man” (Dan 7:13-14), who comes on the clouds of heaven. After seeing these things, Daniel asks for an interpretation of the visions, and he is told that the four beasts are four earthly kings, the last of which will be the worst, but he too will be destroyed in the end (Dan 7:16-28).

The rich imagery of Daniel 7 has been discussed at length, with particular attention to the similarities between certain details of this chapter and details found in the

²⁸⁴ J. J. Collins, “Daniel,” *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 85-115, 88.

²⁸⁵ One is described as destructive, one is given dominion, and one is exceedingly strong. The descriptions of the beasts do not reflect Canaanite mythic topoi. Rather, in ancient west Asia, political oracles the use of animal imagery was widespread, as was an organization of a sequence of kingdoms. See examples in James C. Vanderkam, “Prophecy and Apocalyptic in the Ancient Near East,” *CANE* 3:2083-2094, 2088, 2092.

Ugaritic *Baal Cycle*.²⁸⁶ The Ancient of Days shares characteristics with Ugaritic El, and the “one like a son of man” shares features with Ugaritic Baal.²⁸⁷ Furthermore, the conferral of authority from the Ancient of Days to the “one like a son of man” has been compared to the enthronement of Baal in the *Baal Cycle*, in which El agrees to Baal’s kingship.²⁸⁸ Most previous scholarship which discusses these similarities focuses

²⁸⁶ Paul Mosca summarizes the development of this scholarship beginning with Aage Bentzen, whose work John Emerton used, and continuing with Cross and Collins (Paul G. Mosca, “Ugarit and Daniel 7: A Missing Link.” *Biblica* 67 [1986]: 496-517). Much of this scholarship, especially that of Bentzen and Emerton, is concerned with how “foreign,” “Canaanite” imagery found its way into the book of Daniel. Emerton followed Bentzen, who accepted Mowinckel’s problematic reconstruction of an Israelite autumn festival that included a celebration of Yahweh’s victory over primordial enemies and subsequent enthronement. Bentzen considered this festival to be the occasion in which “Canaanite mythology” was preserved in Israelite tradition, as seen in Dan 7. Bentzen actually considered “the one like a son of man” to be the Davidic king, based on the similarities between the conferral of power from the Ancient of Days to this figure with the endorsement of David in Ps 89. Emerton developed the idea that an Israelite enthronement festival was the vehicle for “Canaanite” mythological imagery. He speculated that the enthronement festival was an adaptation of a pre-Davidic Jebusite ritual. While Emerton’s speculation is creative, it depends on the survival of hypothetically reconstructed cultic events (John A. Emerton, “The Origin of the Son of Man Imagery,” *JTS* n.s. 9 [1958]: 225-242). Likewise, Collins considers the descriptions of the Ancient of Days and “one like a son of man” to reflect Canaanite traditions. However, he concludes that Dan 7 preserves “independent mythological traditions” or represents “direct borrowing of extant Canaanite lore in the second century BCE” (J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel* [Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977], 101).

²⁸⁷ Emerton, “The Origin,” 225-242; Cross, *CMHE*, 17.

²⁸⁸ Though I agree that this comparison is insightful, there are differences: as I discuss in Chapter 2, Baal is not El’s first choice for kingship, and Baal’s authority is declared by characters other than El. Emerton was the first to argue for this similarity. Cross and Collins developed this interpretation and argued that the enthronement scene could not have been derived from royal psalms. Arthur J. Ferch has argued against this comparison. He criticizes it on several accounts. First, he argues that the beasts in Dan 7 are not comparable to Leviathan/Lotan or Rahab; second, he notes that “the one like the son of man” does not suffer a demise as does Baal; third, he argues against the comparison of the Ancient of Days sitting in judgment to El among the gods; and fourth, he questions whether Baal even receives kingship in the *Baal Cycle*. He states that “incidental

primarily on how such “foreign” and “Canaanite” imagery made its way into the biblical book of Daniel. This approach assumes that the imagery of the conflict motif is not “genuinely” Israelite/Judean and therefore needs explanation. However, I have argued that many biblical texts show that Israelite/Judean authors employed the conflict motif in innovative ways, and that we have many examples of “genuine” Israelite/Judean descriptions of and references to Yahweh’s combat with the sea and sea dragons. Once we recognize that the conflict motif was not only a “Canaanite,” by which most scholars mean Ugaritic, literary phenomenon, the burden of explaining how such “foreign” elements ended up in Daniel 7, and elsewhere among biblical texts, dissipates. As a result, the goal of comparison shifts away from a debate about how “Canaanite” this imagery is, towards a more interesting and nuanced discussion of how the conflict motif in Daniel 7 exhibits both continuity with and innovative developments that are distinct from earlier examples, not limited to the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle*.

Throughout this study, I argue that authors, from various ancient West Asian societies and within a variety of historical contexts, used the conflict motif to promote particular divine and/or human royal authorities and to delegitimize others. Daniel 7 is explicitly concerned with issues of royal authority, and its legitimating and delegitimizing functions exhibit a continuity with earlier examples of the conflict motif. The four beasts

correspondences are outweighed by significant differences,” and cautions that “lone motifs must not be wrenched out of their contextual moorings” (Arthur J. Ferch, “Daniel 7 and Ugarit: A Reconsideration,” *JBL* 99.1 [1980]: 75-86). While I appreciate his caution and agree that previous scholars may have overemphasized exact, one-for-one correspondences between Dan 7 and the *Baal Cycle*, I believe there are sufficient details to argue that Dan 7 employs the conflict motif. It exhibits a concern with legitimate royal authority, and uses the conflict motif to portray the Ancient of Days, “one like a son of man,” and “holy ones” as legitimate and the four earthly kingdoms as illegitimate.

in Daniel 7 are identified as representing four earthly kings (Dan 7:17), and these kings are portrayed as illegitimate and destined for defeat when the beasts representing them are stripped of their dominion (Dan 7:12) and the fourth beast is killed (Dan 7:11). Once the final beast is defeated, the Ancient of Days grants royal authority to the one he chooses, the “one like a son of man.” This is similar to the pattern of the conflict myth that we see in Mari Letter A. 1968 and Psalm 89 (discussed in Chapter 3), when the victorious warrior deity grants royal authority to human kings. In each of these examples, a victorious warrior deity has defeated divine rivals to secure his dominion and then exerts his royal prerogative to endorse the authority of another figure. In Mari Letter A. 1968 Adad endorses the king Zimri-Lim, and in Ps 89:26 Yahweh endorses king David. In Daniel 7, the “one like a son of man” is also explicitly a royal figure, endorsed by the Ancient of Days:

To him was given dominion, honor and kingship, so that all peoples, nations, and languages would serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and as for his kingship, it will not be destroyed (Dan 7:14).

The description of an everlasting and universal earthly kingship builds upon Davidic royal ideology (as represented by Ps 89:37-38; 2:8; 18:51; 66:7, and elsewhere).

However, the royal figure in Daniel 7 is not explicitly identified with a specific historical person, and though he is “like a human” his cloud-carriage suggests that he is a divine figure.²⁸⁹ Thus, the author of the vision in Dan 7:2-14 uses the conflict motif to promote

²⁸⁹ Emerton argued that the “one like a son of man” was Baal reinterpreted and “democratized” as the “Jewish nation” (Emerton, “The Origins,” 225-242). Cross accepts this interpretation and adds to the comparison between the “one like a son of man” in Dan 7 and Ugaritic Baal (Cross, *CMHE*, 17). This view is reasonable considering Dan 7:15-28, which allots the “holy ones” and people associated with them the kingdom and dominion that the “one like a son of man” received in Dan 7:1-14. However, it is possible

the legitimacy of the Ancient of Days as the supreme divine royal figure, in that he is enthroned and defeats rival authorities, and also to promote the royal authority of the “one like a son of man” through his endorsement by the Ancient of Days. While the endorsement of the “one like a son of man” draws upon Davidic royal ideology, the historical context in which there is no autonomous political authority within Judea necessitates that the royal figure who will defeat disfavored earthly powers be a heavenly figure of some sort. There is ambiguity as to the human or divine nature of this figure. He is either a future human royal figure appearing in a heavenly vision or a divine figure who will act against earthly powers. Regardless, the political context has necessitated an innovation, specifically the feature of promoting a secondary figure who is not a human king but rather an eschatological figure and future universal ruler. This innovation is highly influential in subsequent first- and early-second-century CE combat traditions, in which the primary deity endorses a secondary figure by giving him a throne. In those later texts, however, the secondary figure also functions as the eschatological divine warrior, whereas in Daniel 7 the “one like a son of man” does not himself engage in battle.

In the interpretation of Daniel’s vision in Dan 7:15-28, the legitimating ideology employed in the vision is extended to “the people of the holy ones of the Most High.”

that the “one like a son of man” in Dan 7:1-14 was not initially identified with “the people of the holy ones.” Furthermore, it is by no means certain that the expression “people of the holy ones” would have meant the entire “Jewish nation,” rather than some subset of Judeans. In later Jewish tradition a “son of man” figure is identified with an angel, such as Michael or Metatron. In Dan 7-12, however, Michael is not equated with the “one like a son of man,” though he is still a prominent figure. He is described as “one of the chief princes” (10:13); “your prince” (10:21); “the great prince who stands for the children of your people”; and he faces the “prince of Greece” and the “prince of Persia” (12:1).

These people are associated with the “holy ones,” which is almost certainly a designation for angels, whose fate is interwoven with and homologous to the fate of the “people of the holy ones.”²⁹⁰ In this latter half of Daniel 7, the conflict motif is used within an eschatological framework to promote these “people of the holy ones” and to delegitimize the earthly kingdom represented by the last beast, and especially the last king of that kingdom, represented by the last horn. This part of the chapter, verses 15-28, alternates between further description of Daniel’s vision in the past and the interpretation of events and figures in the future. The last horn is said to make war against and prevail over the “holy ones” until the Ancient of Days intervenes and the “holy ones” gain possession of the kingdom (Dan 7:21-22). In a further elaboration, the horn is accused of speaking against the Most High, wearing out the “holy ones” and attempting “to change the sacred seasons and the law” (Dan 7:25). This horn will be successful until the divine court takes away his dominion and destroys him. When this occurs:

[T]he kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the entire heaven, these will be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High; their kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions will serve and obey them (Dan 7:27).

This description of a conflict between the last horn and the “holy ones” represents a socio-political conflict between the last king of the kingdom represented by the fourth beast and the “people of the holy ones.” This conflict focuses specifically on the last king assuming authority that, from the narrator’s perspective, he does not rightly possess:

²⁹⁰ Collins reviews the philological evidence for the use of “holy ones.” In the HB, the majority of uses refer to angels, and in Daniel every other use of the term refers to angels. Their conflict with the last king is homologous to the socio-political situation of the “people of the holy ones” (J. J. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 104-107). This is confirmed by the parallel descriptions of the “holy ones” and “people of the holy ones” receiving their everlasting kingdoms in Dan 7:18 and 7:27, respectively.

authority “to change the sacred seasons and the law.” The actions of this king appear to be detrimental and threatening to the “holy ones” and people associated with them, in that he is said to “make war” against them and in that the downfall of this horn/king leads to a positive change in the political status of the “holy ones” and associated people (Dan 7:26-27). The author describes a socio-political conflict between a disfavored earthly royal figure and some group of people (whether an actual group or a narrative construct), whom the author associates with a victorious and royal divine figure, the Ancient of Days, as well as with his “holy ones,” further privileging them by association with the characteristic of “holiness.” The association with the Ancient of Days serves to promote “the people of the holy ones,” and the author provides narrative assurance that these people will be vindicated. Furthermore, the interpretation given in Dan 7:15-28 equates the future dominion of “the people of the holy ones” with the dominion given to the “one like a son of man” in the vision. First, these kingdoms are described in similar terms of everlasting dominion. Second, the relationship of these people to the Ancient of Days in the interpretation of the vision is comparable to the relationship of the “one like a son of man” in the vision: both receive dominion from the Ancient of Days after rival powers are defeated. Finally, the rival powers in the vision, the four beasts are explicitly identified as four kings/kingdoms in the interpretation, and the final king is clearly characterized as an enemy. Thus, “the people of the holy ones” are legitimated in that they are equated with the “one like a son of man” and, like him, they are endorsed by the Ancient of Days. Likewise, the final king and kingdom are portrayed as destined for defeat when they are identified with the slain fourth beast. The eschatological setting of Daniel 7 has provided an opportunity for the author to offer a narrative guarantee of a

positive fate for “the people of the holy ones,” a reversal of their current unfavorable narrative circumstance. In some previous biblical instances of the conflict motif, the past victories of Yahweh are invoked in order to provoke Yahweh to act in the present on behalf of the people, and an immediate future victory is hoped for (Jer 51:34-37, Hab 3, and Isa 51:9-15, for example). In Daniel 7, however, the divine victory is a future, eschatological certainty that claims a positive outcome for those currently suffering. This feature also survives in first-century CE Judean texts that offer a narrative guarantee for the positive outcome and reversal of fortunes for some group characterized in the narratives as suffering unjustly, and yet preferred by the deity.

The historical context for Daniel 7-12 is not the Babylonian exile, as the narrative claims, but rather the second century BCE, most likely the reign of the Seleucid king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes.²⁹¹ Typically, the rulers of various provinces of the Greek empire did not interfere with ancestral religions. However, according to the narrative in 2 Maccabees, Antiochus IV Epiphanes disrupted Yahweh’s cult in Jerusalem. 2 Maccabees presents an account of events that is particularly hostile to Antiochus, and we have no materials with which to balance this account from Judeans who were allied with him. 2 Maccabees claims that Antiochus accepted bribes in return for appointing Jason as high priest and deposing Onias III, and again for appointing Menelaus and deposing Jason. The deposed priest Jason attempted to expel his usurper Menelaus, after he heard a false rumor that Antiochus IV Epiphanes had died in Egypt (2 Macc 5:5-10). However,

²⁹¹ Collins notes that a second century BCE date is accepted for Dan 7-12 throughout critical scholarship. This date is based on the fact that Dan 7-12 purports to predict historical events, and does so accurately up to the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, but not afterwards (J. J. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 87-88). Vanderkam concurs (Vanderkam, “Prophecy and Apocalyptic,” 2090).

Antiochus IV Epiphanes interfered in the local turmoil, and in 169 BCE he entered the temple in Jerusalem and took ornaments (2 Macc 5:11-16). Then in 167 BCE, he pillaged Jerusalem and outlawed Judean religion: there were to be no sacrifices, no Sabbath, and no circumcision; he placed the Syrian god Baal-Shamen in Yahweh's temple and sacrificed a pig on the altar (2 Macc 6:1-11). In 161 BCE, the Hasmonean family successfully recovered control of the temple.²⁹² While 2 Maccabees presents a pointedly interested account of events, it nonetheless reflects a socio-political context in which certain Judeans felt particularly dissatisfied with the Greco-Hellenistic empire and with Antiochus IV Epiphanes. This was, most likely, the historical context in which Daniel 7-12 was written. Within this historical and political context, the fourth beast in Daniel 7 may be understood as representing the Greek empire, which is explicitly referenced elsewhere in Daniel 7-12 (Dan 8:21; 10:20; and 11:2). Furthermore, the description of the final king exercising cultic authority that the author considered illegitimate would fit Antiochus IV Epiphanes' actions in Jerusalem. The author of Daniel 7 employed the conflict motif to portray a series of human empires and kings, especially Greece and Antiochus IV Epiphanes, as illegitimate and destined for defeat, while affirming the legitimacy and authority of the Ancient of Days, "one like a son of man," and "the people of the holy ones." As with many apocalyptic texts the political commentary within these ideological statements is veiled in obscure language.²⁹³

²⁹² For concise summaries of the reconstructed chronology and events see Dov Gera, *Judaea and Mediterranean Politics* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 223-240; Jonathan A. Goldstein, *II Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983), 113-123; and Daniel R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees* (New York: de Gruyter, 2008), 3-15.

²⁹³ Vanderkam, "Prophecy and Apocalyptic," 2093.

Daniel 7 was highly influential among later instances of the conflict motif. The eschatological speculation and obscure vision-based political commentary characteristic of Daniel 7 also occurs in *2 Baruch*, *1 Enoch*, *4 Ezra*, and Revelation, which portray Roman authorities as destined for defeat at the hands of divine warriors who are endorsed and enthroned by a primary deity. The narrative setting of Babylonian exile, featured in Daniel, also occurs in *2 Baruch* and *4 Ezra*, and *4 Ezra* even specifically cites “the vision seen by your brother Daniel” (*4 Ezra* 12:11).

Revelation

Revelation 12-13, 17, and 19-21, especially, exhibit an eschatological rendering of the conflict motif. In Revelation, “the angel”/Michael is the victorious divine warrior, though it is the figure of the “Lamb” and a figure similar to the Ancient of Days of Daniel 7 who are enthroned (Rev 1:14; 4:1-11; 22:3). Throughout the narrative, the issue of legitimate divine and human authority is a concern, and the author employs the conflict motif to portray certain figures as illegitimate and destined for defeat.²⁹⁴ Based on

²⁹⁴ My analysis focuses on passages that employ the conflict motif to promote or attack various figures, and the primary political enemy represented in these passages is Rome. However, other passages within Revelation are more relevant to the immediate social context of the work, that is, the author’s debates with his opponents who are fellow Jesus/*Christos* followers. While these opponents are not mentioned in the passages I analyze, Rev 2:9 and 3:9 identify them as a “synagogue of Satan.” Thus, the author associates his opponents with one of the superhuman enemies of *Theos* and *Christos*, and with a figure who will ultimately be defeated along with his compatriots. This constitutes a substantial criticism and attack on the legitimacy of those within the Jesus/*Christos* movement of whom the author disapproves. On the identification of these “intimate competitors,” see David Frankfurter, “Jews of Not? Reconstructing the ‘Other’ in Rev 2:9 and 3:9,” *HTR* 94.4 (2001): 403-425. As for the author, he identifies himself as John, but it is unclear which John this may be. For discussion of authorship, see Leonard

internal evidence, Revelation was written sometime after the death of Nero in 68 CE, and external references to the text indicate that it was written and known by the mid-second century CE. Typically, the text is dated more precisely to 68-70 CE, just after the death of Nero, or to the reign of Domitian (81-96 CE).²⁹⁵ In either case, the veiled political commentary criticizes the Roman empire. The disfavored divine and human figures are associated with the sea and portrayed as a dragon and as beasts. Various favored divine figures are portrayed as victorious warriors and/or enthroned.

Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 12-13.

²⁹⁵ Timothy Barnes argues for a precise date of composition during the winter of 68-69 CE, based on his interpretation of Rev 13:17-18 and 17:9-11 as referring to Nero (Timothy D. Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History*, [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010], 36-41). John Marshall likewise argues for a date of 69-70 CE (John W. Marshall, *Parables of War: Reading John's Jewish Apocalypse* [Toronto: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2001], 88-97). Those who argue for a date during the reign of Domitian typically cite the following: first, the earliest reference to Revelation, made by Ireneaus in *Adv. Haer.* V, 30, 3, dates it to this period; second, the designation of Rome as "Babylon," they argue, fits a post-70 context better than a pre-70 context, because in later Jewish literature Rome is called "Babylon" in reference to these cities both being associated with destructions of Jerusalem; third, the text's description of the situation of the Christians fits the reign of Domitian (that is, accepting the alleged persecution of Christians under Domitian); fourth, a date during Nero's reign is, perhaps, made less plausible by the text's description of Laodicea in 3:17 as a prosperous city, when the city was recovering from an earthquake in the 60s CE (L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*, 1-10; Steven J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001], 136-151; A. Y. Collins, "Myth and History in the Book of Revelation: the Problem of its Date," in *Traditions in Transformation* [ed. Baruch Halpern and John D. Levenson; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1981], 402; Bert J. Lietaert Peerbolte, *The Antecedents of Antichrist* [Leiden: Brill, 1996], 118-119; idem., *The Book of Revelation*, 13-17). For critique of the speculation that Domitian persecuted Christians, see L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation*, 95-115; L. Thompson, "Social Location of Early Christian Apocalyptic," *ANRW* II.26.3 (1996): 2615-2656, 2630-2631; J. Christian Wilson, "The Problem of the Domitianic Date of Revelation," *NTS* 39 (1993): 587-605; Paul Keresztes, "The Jews, the Christians, and Emperor Domitian," *VigChr* 27 (1973):1-28.

Revelation 12 describes a woman in the pains of child birth being chased by a seven-headed, ten-horned dragon who wants to devour her infant son.²⁹⁶ The son will “rule all the nations” and he is “snatched away” before the dragon can devour him and taken “to God (*theos*) and to his throne.” The woman flees to the wilderness, where she is nourished in a place prepared for her by *Theos* (12:1-6). The next scene describes a war between Michael and his angels and the dragon and his angels, who are defeated and expelled from heaven to the earth.²⁹⁷ The dragon is identified as “that ancient serpent, who is called Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world” (12:7-9).²⁹⁸ After the dragon is thrown down a voice in heaven proclaims “the deliverance and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his anointed” have come because the “accuser” has been thrown down (12:10-12). The dragon/serpent, having been expelled to earth, then pursues the woman and tries to drown her with a river/flood of water from his

²⁹⁶ For detailed commentary on this chapter, see Hermann Lichtenberger, “The Down-throw of the Dragon in Revelation 12 and the Down-fall of God’s Enemy,” in *The Fall of the Angels* (ed. Christoph Auffarth and Loren T. Stuckenbruck; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 119-147.

²⁹⁷ This detail incorporates a tradition preserved in Isa 14, which describes the expulsion of a divine being who attempted to assume undue status. For a complete study of this tradition see Hugh Page, *The Myth of Cosmic Rebellion: A Study of Its Reflexes in Ugaritic and Biblical Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

²⁹⁸ The dragon figure in Revelation has seven heads. In Ps 74, there is a multi-headed dragon, but it is not stated how many heads are imagined; biblical tradition does not record a specific number of heads for this figure. However, in *KTU* 1.3 and 1.5, the comparable Ugaritic dragon/Lotan has seven heads. In Rev 12, the dragon is identified as “that ancient serpent,” Devil/Satan, and “deceiver.” These references incorporate biblical traditions from the J creation story, esp. Gen 3:1, 4, as well as characterizations of Satan (Job 2:1-6; Zech 3:1-2). The conflation of these figures is developed in other apocalyptic literature as well, such as the *Life of Adam and Eve* and *2 Enoch*. For the history of the development of this figure, see Peggy Day, *An Adversary in Heaven: SATAN in the Hebrew Bible* (Alanta: Scholar’s Press, 1988); and Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

mouth, but the earth helps the woman by swallowing the water (12:13-16). The dragon remains angry at the woman and makes war against the rest of her children (12:17).

Finally, the dragon then “takes his stand” on the seashore (12:18).

The conflict between the mother and dragon in Revelation 12 most likely depends on the Greek myth of Leto and Python or the parallel Egyptian myth of Isis and Seth-Typhon.²⁹⁹ However, as a whole the conflict between the dragon and divine figures in Revelation is an articulation of the ancient West Asian conflict topos, and these traditions were obviously compatible. Greek, Egyptian, and ancient West Asian literatures all record stories that exhibit the motif of a child under threat who survives to become an important figure. Within Hebrew Bible and New Testament traditions, both Moses and Jesus survive threats of infanticide decreed by royal authorities. It is also striking that the two ways in which the dragon in Revelation 12 threatens the woman and infant are the same as threats posed by enemies in earlier articulations of the conflict motif.

Specifically, the dragon threatens to swallow the infant and to drown the woman with water spewed from his mouth. Both the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle* and “Isaiah Apocalypse” preserve traditions associating the enemy Mot/Death with swallowing; Mot swallows Baal (*KTU* 1.6 II); Yahweh will swallow Death (Isa 25:8). Likewise, threatening waters are consistent with biblical descriptions of the sea as an enemy. While I would not argue

²⁹⁹ The imagery of a mother being chased by a dragon in Rev 12 is generally thought to depend on the Greek/Egyptian myth of Leto/Isis versus Python/Seth-Typhon (Otto Böcher, *Die Johannesapokalypse* [Darmstadt: Buchgesellschaft, 1988], 68-76). Dieterich and Bousset first argued this, and more recently A. Y. Collins and Jan W. van Henten have developed the hypothesis. A. Y. Collins has produced several studies of the conflict motif in Revelation, and rightly emphasizes that the dragon figure in Rev 12 depends on both a Greek/Egyptian notion and biblical descriptions of a multi-headed dragon figure (A. Y. Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* [Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976], 57-67).

that the author of Revelation 12 knew first-hand Ugaritic traditions about Mot or Yamm and the types of threats they posed, it is reasonable to speculate that the author of Revelation 12 was familiar with similar imagery, both that preserved in the Hebrew Bible and probably much that the biblical anthology does not preserve. The author drew upon and creatively interweaved compatible Greek/Egyptian and Israelite/Judean mythic motifs. Throughout Revelation 12, the issue of authority is a concern, and the statuses of the deities and infant son are described in terms of royalty and kingship. The dragon/serpent is portrayed as a threat to their authority, and as such he is shown to be illegitimate through his defeat. Michael defeats the dragon in heaven and expels him to earth. Unfortunately for the woman and her descendants, however, the dragon remains a threat on earth. The nature of this threat is elaborated in Revelation 13, which continues the scene with the dragon on the seashore.

A seven-headed, ten-horned composite beast rises out of the sea, and the dragon gives this beast “his power and his throne and great authority” (Rev 13:1-2). The “whole earth” worships the dragon and the beast, saying “Who is like the beast, who can fight against him?” (Rev 13:3-4). These rhetorical questions promote the incomparability of the beast, and as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the incomparability formula is a common feature of passages that employ the conflict motif (for example, Ps 89:6-9). The beast speaks “haughty words and blasphemies,” it wages war against and conquers the “holy ones” (*hagioi*), wields authority over the whole earth, and enjoys worship from all its inhabitants (Rev 13:5-8). A second beast rises out of the earth and it “speaks like a dragon,” and “exercises the authority” of the first beast and enforces social and economic strictures on the people (Rev 13:11-18). As with Revelation 12, this chapter focuses on

the issue of authority: the dragon and beasts wield power, but it is illegitimate. The author attacks the legitimacy of the dragon and beasts by accusing them of arrogance and by claiming that their political, social, and cultic activities are detrimental to the populace. The composite beast rising from the sea in Revelation 12 is patterned after the composite beasts coming out of the sea in Daniel 7, and both texts are engaged in political commentary, offering veiled criticisms of reigning empires by portraying them as enemies who are destined for defeat.

Revelation 17 exhibits further concern with issues of legitimate authority. It describes a woman, “the great prostitute, who is enthroned on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have prostituted themselves” (Rev 17:1-2). She is sitting on a multi-headed and multi-horned beast (Rev 17:3). Though she is identified as “Babylon the great,” the text states that her name is a mystery, which suggests another meaning (Rev 17:5), such as the Roman empire. The heads and horns of the beast are said to represent kings and kingdoms whose authority and power they have given to the beast (Rev 17:9-13). They will all wage war against the Lamb who will defeat them (Rev 17:14). As in Revelation 12-13, figures who are disfavored are associated with the composite beast, here the woman “Babylon” and various kings.³⁰⁰ Likewise, the favored divine figure, here the Lamb, is portrayed as a warrior who will defeat his enemies and secure dominion.

The portrayal of the Lamb as the divine warrior constitutes a significant adaptation of the

³⁰⁰ Composite beasts occur in conjunction with the conflict motif elsewhere, such as in Dan 7. Here Babylon, personified as a woman, is associated with a composite beast. Gunkel proposed a connection between this woman/beast and Tiamat with her army of composite beasts in support of his argument that the tradition in Rev 12 is of Babylonian origins (Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos*, 366; *Creation and Chaos*, 231). Gunkel, of course, did not have access to subsequently discovered Ugaritic materials during his analysis of the conflict motif, so his conclusions have required revision.

conflict motif. Elsewhere in Revelation, Michael and the Ancient of Days are portrayed as divine warriors, and the figure of the Lamb is exalted to this position as well. This is comparable to other contemporary first-century CE Judean texts (*2 Baruch*, *1 Enoch*, and *4 Ezra*, discussed below) that both portray the primary deity endorsing and enthroning a secondary figure and that characterize this secondary figure as a divine warrior. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the conflict motif was adapted to varying socio-historical contexts as authors employed the motif to promote the legitimacy of various favored divine beings by situating their preferred deity in the position of the victorious warrior. What is remarkable here is that both the Ancient of Days and the Lamb are enthroned and both function as divine warriors.

The combat in Revelation culminates in chapters 19-20, which describe a rider on a white horse leading heavenly armies. The rider is named “Word of God,” and his tongue is a sharp sword with which he is to strike down the nations.³⁰¹ He will rule/shepherd the nations with a rod of iron (Rev 19:11-16), recalling rod of iron the Davidic king will use to punish other kings in Ps 2:9. This victorious warrior figure faces the beast and his armies, captures the beast and “false prophet,” and throws them into a lake of fire. He kills the rest of his enemies with his sword and the sword of his mouth (Rev 19:19-21). After the Rider kills the beast, false prophet, and armies, an angel from

³⁰¹ The description of a tongue as a sword also occurs in *Ahiqar*, discussed in Chapter 3, where the king’s tongue and command is compared to a dagger and to a weapon that breaks the ribs of a dragon. Collins traces the tongue as sword imagery in Rev 19 to Isa 11:4 in which a messiah is described as using the “rod of his mouth” and “breath of his lips” as weapons. He explains that the LXX rendered the “rod of his mouth” as “the word of his mouth,” and that the notion of the messiah using his mouth as a weapon was developed further, as exemplified in *4 Ezra* 13:9-11: “he sent forth from his mouth as it were a stream of fire and from his lips a flaming breath and from his tongue he shot forth a storm of sparks” (J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 277).

heaven arrests “the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan” and binds him. The angel throws the dragon into a pit where he is locked for one thousand years (Rev 20:1-3). For that thousand years, *Christos* and the martyrs reign (Rev 20:4-6). However, Satan/Devil is released and amasses an army who surround the “beloved city,” but fire from heaven consumes them. Satan/Devil is then thrown into the lake of fire with the beast and “false prophet” (20:7-10). At this point, the divine and human enemies are defeated, and an enthronement scene follows. Among all of our examples of the conflict motif, the battle in Revelation is the most complicated and drawn out, with multiple divine warriors, multiple enemies, and at least two enthroned figures. Regardless, the pattern of victory followed by enthronement is consistent and clear. Once all enemies are defeated by the various divine warriors, the Lamb and *Theos* (the designation Ancient of Days is not used in these chapters) are enthroned and possess ultimate authority, according to Revelation 20-22. The conflict motif is highly visible in Revelation, and I have argued that, as with other examples of the conflict motif, the author of Revelation employed this motif for ideological purposes, both to legitimate preferred divine figures and delegitimize disfavored divine figures and polities. While this articulation of the conflict motif is similar to and draws from that in Daniel 7, it presents many new features and adapts the motif to a different socio-political context.

The final enthronement scene includes several additional specific details that confirm both the presence of the conflict motif and its legitimating function. Revelation 20 describes a great white throne and “one seated on it,” who judges all the dead. Anyone whose name is not in the “book of life” is thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:11-15). The sea (*thalassa*), Death (*thanatos*), and Hades (*hadēs*) give up their dead for judgment,

and both Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:14). The sea also comes to an end—“the sea is no more”—before a new heaven, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem are established (Rev 21:1-2). A voice from the throne says:

See, the dwelling of God is with humans;
He will dwell with them, and the people will be his.
God himself will be with them, their God,
And he will wipe away every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more,
Mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
For the first things have gone away (Rev 21:3-4).

Several details are highly significant. The sea, Death, and Hades each cooperate with the enthroned judge, suggesting that these divine figures are subordinate to the enthroned judge. Furthermore, Death and Hades are also thrown into the lake of fire, and the sea and Death are terminated. The language in Rev 21:3-4 is nearly identical to the language in Isa 25:8 (discussed above) in which Yahweh will swallow Death and wipe away tears from faces. The inclusion of Death, Hades, and the sea among those who are slain before the final enthronement in Revelation 20-21 preserves the tradition of Death and the sea as divine enemies of the victorious warrior deity, such as we have preserved most fully in the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle*, where Mot (Death) and Yamm (Sea) are rivals of Baal, and in many Hebrew Bible texts which reference Yahweh defeating the sea.

Revelation 21:1-4 exhibits the pattern of the victorious temple builder: once enemies are defeated the victorious warrior establishes his palace/temple. In Revelation 21, this notion is rendered as building a new heaven, earth, Jerusalem, and temple. However, the text explicitly states that there will be no actual physical temple, because “the Lord God, Ruler of All, and the Lamb” are the temple (Rev 21:22). There will be no sun or moon because the “splendor” of the deities provide sufficient light (Rev 21:23).

Likewise, “night will be no more; so they will have no need for lamplight or sunlight, for the Lord God will be light for them, and they will reign forever and ever” (Rev 22:5).

Both *Theos* and the Lamb are enthroned, their authority is described as royal and unending. Furthermore, these divine figures are described as being so great that there is no need for other heavenly bodies; the heavenly bodies created in Genesis 1, the heavens, earth, sun, moon, luminaries, are not part of Revelation’s eschatological re-creation. This constitutes a reordered cosmology, which occurs in conjunction with the enthronement of *Theos* and the Lamb, and is comparable to Marduk’s organization of the cosmos after his succession to divine kingship.

The author of the book of Revelation employs the conflict motif in several chapters to promote the authority of preferred divine figures and to attack the legitimacy of disfavored divine and human figures. Throughout, enemies are portrayed as dragons or composite beasts associated with the sea, and each of these figures is portrayed as exercising illegitimate royal power. The victorious warrior figures defeat these enemies to secure divine royal authority for *Theos* and the Lamb, which also secures a favorable socio-political condition for “his people.”³⁰²

³⁰² The favorable socio-political situation, according to Cohn, is a desired overthrow of the Roman empire (Norman Cohn, “The Book of Revelation,” *Cosmos, Chaos, and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001], 216). For discussion of the attitude towards Rome in Revelation, see Christopher A. Frilingos, *Spectacles of Empire: Monsters, Martyrs, and the Book of Revelation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Steven J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); A. Y. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984).

*Jesus/Christos as the Divine Warrior*³⁰³

In several first- and early-second-century CE texts, including Revelation, the conflict motif is employed to promote the figure of Jesus/*Christos* not only as a legitimate authority, but a royal and divine authority. In Revelation, the enthronement of the Lamb occurs alongside the enthronement of *Theos*, and the Lamb is traditionally interpreted as representing Jesus/*Christos*.³⁰⁴ Likewise, the authors of other texts associate *Christos*' authority with *Theos*' authority, and several do so particularly through the conflict motif. Though Revelation does not do so explicitly, elsewhere *Christos* is depicted as involved in a future divine combat and/or as having been involved in a past divine combat. When *Christos* is portrayed as the divine warrior, it follows, explicitly or implicitly, that he is a divine figure, that his divine authority is endorsed by *Theos*, and, within an eschatological framework, that he will defeat divine and earthly enemies just as such enemies have been defeated in the past. *Christos*-centered combat traditions demonstrate that authors

³⁰³ I distinguish between the historical figure Jesus and the narrative figures Jesus/*Christos* and "Jesus Christ." We do not know what claims to authority or divinity the historical figure of Jesus may have made. We have a great deal of literature that reflects later Christological development in which "Jesus Christ" is divine and/or has a special relationship (sonship and/or other endorsement) to a deity. The examples discussed in this section (1 Cor 15:20-28; 2 Thess 2:1-12; *T. Asher* 7:3; and *Odes Sol* 22:5) characterize *Christos* as a divine warrior. In the narrative setting of these texts Jesus is not living as a human; he is a heavenly figure. I discuss elsewhere two gospel traditions in which the conflict motif is used to promote the authority of Jesus within a narrative setting in which he is living as a human. Therefore, I reserve my discussion of these traditions for the second section of this chapter in which I focus on texts that promote the authority of specific human figures.

³⁰⁴ For the uses and connotations of "lamb" in NT literature, see Joachim Jeremias, "*amnos, arēn, arnion*," in *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-76), 1:338-341.

adapted the conflict motif within a newly developing ideological context to promote the legitimacy of the figure of *Christos*. 1 Corinthians 15:20-28; 2 Thess 2:1-12; *The Odes of Solomon* 22:5; and the *Testament of Asher* 7:3 each portray *Christos* as the divine warrior in an eschatological context, and in *Odes Sol.* and *T. Asher*, *Christos*' combat is specifically against a dragon.

The figure of Jesus/*Christos* is promoted in New Testament and early Christian texts through a variety of ways, including both Davidic royal ideology and the conflict motif, two strands of traditions that are themselves intertwined in many biblical texts. Jesus is promoted through Davidic royal ideology, for example, through the claim that he is in the line of David (Matt 1:1-17) and through divine sonship (2 Cor 1:19; Mark 15:39; John 1:49, for example). He is also validated through the conflict motif when he is characterized as a divine warrior. I argue that the portrayal of *Christos* as a divine warrior, and therefore a divine figure, asserts a higher status for Jesus/*Christos* than what was ever claimed for David. In Psalm 110, for example, Yahweh promises David he will make his enemies his footstool and shatter rival kings. In contrast, according to 1 Cor 15:24-25, *Christos* places enemies under his own feet and destroys enemy kings. 1 Corinthians 15:24-25 inverts the roles of Yahweh and the figure whom he endorses; *Christos* defeats earthly enemies himself. This is consistent with other first-century CE Judean texts (*2 Baruch*, *1 Enoch*, and *4 Ezra*) in which secondary figures endorsed by the primary deity defeat earthly rulers in the eschaton. In Ps 89:26, the most elaborate instance in which the conflict motif is used to endorse David's royal authority, Yahweh states that he will place David's hand on the sea/rivers. Yahweh shares his own authority over his defeated enemies with David, which he has won through combat (Ps 89:10-11).

David's authority over these entities is derivative of Yahweh's authority over them. This is also the case in Daniel 7, where the "one like a son of man" is enthroned after the Ancient of Days does battle. *Christos*, however, is portrayed as defeating not only earthly enemies but also divine enemies himself: in 1 Cor 15:26, *Odes Sol* 22, *T. Asher* 7, and possibly in Revelation (depending on the identification of the Lamb), he defeats Death, the dragon, and sea-beasts. In several gospel passages, Jesus is characterized as enacting his authority over the sea, and the narrative conclusion is that he is a superhuman figure with divine authority. In sum, authors concerned with the figure of Jesus/*Christos* characterize him as a cosmic authority, and to varying degrees in various texts, the status of Jesus/*Christos* approaches that of Yahweh in the divine hierarchy.

On account of the development of the characterization of Jesus/*Christos* as a divine figure, the relationship of *Christos* and *Theos* is comparable to the relationship between the Ugaritic Baal and El. *Theos* is complicit in the elevation of *Christos*, just as El is (eventually) complicit in Baal's rise to power. Both Baal and *Christos* defeat enemies on their own behalf, including a sea-dragon figure and Death, before reigning as king. While both Baal and *Christos* reign as king, El and *Theos*, respectively, retain their roles as creator and father deities who also have dominion. In both Ugaritic and *Christos*-focused cosmologies, the topos of combat among deities is used to describe relationships among competing and cooperating divine figures, and the idea of human kingship is used to indicate the preference for a particular deity within their respective pantheons.

1 Corinthians 15:24-25³⁰⁵ describes *Christos* as a divine warrior who will defeat every ruler, authority, and power, and who will put all his enemies under his feet. The author alludes to Psalm 110, in which Yahweh promises David that he will subjugate his enemies, making them like a footstool, and destroy rival kings. However, 1 Corinthians 15 reverses the roles ascribed to Yahweh and David in Psalm 110, and has *Christos* subdue and destroy enemies, acting as the divine warrior himself. The following verse claims that *Christos* will also defeat Death: “The last enemy to be terminated is Death (*thanatos*)” (1 Cor 15:26). The defeat of Death reflects older conflict motif traditions, such as Isa 25:8 where Yahweh swallows Death forever, and the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle* in which Baal defeats Mot, the deity Death. This is also consistent with Rev 21:4, where the final enemies to be terminated before *Theos* and the Lamb are enthroned include the sea, Hades, and Death. In 1 Cor 15:26, the defeat of this divine enemy is incorporated into Paul’s argument about the resurrection of the dead. He refutes the denial of the future resurrection of dead *Christos*-followers, referenced in 1 Cor 15:12b, by arguing that because *Christos* was resurrected from the dead and will utterly defeat Death then certainly, according to his claims, dead *Christos*-followers will also be resurrected (1 Cor 15:12-34).³⁰⁶ Thus, we see that he employs the conflict motif to portray *Christos* as a divine warrior against earthly and divine enemies, and that he incorporates the divine figure of Death in particular to further his specific claims about death and resurrection. This passage is consistent with other first-century CE Judean texts in which a secondary

³⁰⁵ 1 Corinthians was likely written by Paul from Ephesus in 56-57 CE (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *1 Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008], 48).

³⁰⁶ Fitzmyer, *1 Corinthians*, 543, 558, 573.

figure will defeat earthly kings in the eschaton and subsequently reign, but in those texts, the secondary figure does not also face a divine enemy.

Another remarkable feature of this passage is that while *Christos* will reign for some time, he ultimately hands the kingdom back over to *Theos*, “subjecting” himself to *Theos* (1 Cor 15:24, 28). The Greek of 1 Cor 15:24 is not explicit as to who is handing over the kingdom, but the kingdom is given, literally “to God and to father,” understood as a hendiadys meaning, “to God the father.” Verse 28, however, clearly states that “the son” will subject himself to *Theos*.³⁰⁷ This feature is distinct in that *Christos* as the divine warrior wins his own kingdom, but then also gives the kingdom to *Theos*. This presents a further inversion of the typical relationship between Yahweh and the royal figure whom he endorses. Typically, Yahweh grants authority to David, the Davidide, or in later Judean texts, to a secondary figure such as the Messiah or Elect One. However, in 1 Cor 15:24-28, *Theos* endorses the reign of *Christos*, but then *Christos* in turn, after defeating all enemies and Death himself, gives the kingdom back to *Theos*, facilitating his ultimate reign.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12³⁰⁸ discusses the “Day of the Lord,”³⁰⁹ and assures its audience that this day has not yet arrived as some *Christos*-followers were claiming (2:2).

³⁰⁷ Fitzmyer, *1 Corinthians*, 568.

³⁰⁸ Abraham Malherbe proposes that Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians while in Corinth in 51 CE (Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [New York: Doubleday, 2000], 350, 364). A growing minority of scholars, however, regard 2 Thessalonians as pseudonymous. Those who argue for its pseudonymity focus on the literary relationship between 1 and 2 Thessalonians and discrepancies in the language, style, eschatology, and view of apostolic tradition of the two letters. For the history of this debate see, John A. Bailey, “Who Wrote II Thessalonians?” *NTS* 25 (1979):131-145. For the purposes of my argument, it is not necessary to settle this question.

This event, the author explains, will be preceded by a “rebellion” when “the lawless one is made known” (2:3).³¹⁰ The Lawless One, “opposes and exalts himself above every known god or object of worship, so that he himself sits in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God” (2:4). The Lawless one is accused of claiming undeserved status, as we have seen with other divine and human enemies, such as Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the beasts in Revelation, the “son of the morning” in Isa 14:13-14, and Yamm and Athirat’s sons in the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle*. The Lawless One is currently being restrained (2 Thess 2:6), but will be released at some time.³¹¹ The notion that the enemy will be restrained for some time and then released occurs in Revelation 20 as well. This feature fits an eschatological framework in particular because the final defeat of the enemy is conceived as a future event. The idea of the enemy being restrained for a while provides an explanation for the current delay of the final battle. It also reflects a periodization of

³⁰⁹ The “Day of Yahweh” occurs in several HB prophetic texts as an event of punishment. Zeph 1:8 describes it as a time when princes and kings will be punished, when things will be utterly consumed (1:2-3), and a day of wrath (1:15); Joel 3:4 and Mal 3:23 reference the “great and terrible day of Yahweh” when, according to Joel 3:5-18, Yahweh judges and discerns between the righteous and wicked; Amos 5:18 describes the “the day of Yahweh” as a day of darkness not light.

³¹⁰ Various mss (aleph, B, various minuscules, and Church Fathers) read “person of lawlessness” (*anomia*), but more mss read “person of error” (*hamartia*) (A D, G, K, L, P, and many minuscules and Church Fathers). Bruce M. Metzger speculates that scribes replaced the more rare word *anomia* with the more common word *hamartia* (Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [New York: United Bible Societies, 2002], 635).

³¹¹ For an overview of various interpretations of the restraining force, see Malherbe, *Letters to the Thessalonians*, 432-433.

history, a construction frequently used in apocalyptic works and predictive texts.³¹² 2 Thessalonians 2:8 states that “the Lord Jesus will destroy/consume [the Lawless One] with the breath of his mouth, he will abolish him with the appearance of his presence.”³¹³ The use of the “breath of his mouth” as a weapon is similar to other references to divine warriors using their mouth, breath, and tongue as a weapon, such as *1 Enoch* 62:2 and *4 Ezra* 13:9-11.³¹⁴

The Lawless One is associated with Satan (2 Thess 2:9-10), but not otherwise identified.³¹⁵ This passage portrays *Christos* as a divine warrior who will be victorious over an enemy who is exercising illegitimate power. Their combat is an eschatological event, occurring in association with the “Day of the Lord.” This passage exhibits several narrative details common to the conflict motif in order to characterize the Lord Jesus (*kurios Iēsous*) as the divine warrior and the Lawless One as an enemy who will certainly

³¹² For examples and discussion of the feature of periodization of history in apocalyptic and predictive texts, see Vanderkam, “Prophecies and Apocalyptic,” 2087-2093.

³¹³ Some mss lack “Jesus.” Malherbe speculates that “Jesus” was dropped by later copyists in order to bring the original verse more in line with Isa 11:4 (Malherbe, *Letters to the Thessalonians*, 424). Certainly the rest of the chapter suggests that Jesus is the divine warrior being described. Also, some read “destroy” and others read “consume.” Both verbs indicate termination, but “consume” would also resonate with Yahweh swallowing Death in Isa 25:8, which itself inverts the notion of Death swallowing his victims in order to emphasize Yahweh’s victory over Death.

³¹⁴ As I note above, Collins traces this notion back to Isa 11:4.

³¹⁵ Malherbe evaluates hypotheses about the identity of the Lawless One, including Antiochus IV Epiphanes and Nero. Malherbe criticizes attempts to identify a historical person as the referent for the Lawless One on the grounds that 2 Thess imagines this figure within an eschatological framework (Malherbe, *Letters to the Thessalonians*, 431-432). I agree with Malherbe that this figure is an “eschatological personification of lawlessness.” I argue that the author of 2 Thess 2:1-12 employs the conflict motif to portray this figure as an enemy whom Jesus as the divine warrior will defeat in the future.

be defeated. The purported success of Jesus/*Christos* as divine warrior validates his divine status, asserted throughout 2 Thessalonians, and the author develops the notion of a “Day of the Lord” that centers around Jesus/*Christos*.

The author of 2 Thess 2:1-12 uses biblical traditions of the conflict motif and apocalyptic speculation to develop particularly *Christos*-oriented interpretations of the eschaton and divine warrior.³¹⁶ By drawing upon traditional imagery, the author gives credence to his innovative eschatological speculation. The author’s use the conflict motif in particular suggests that it was effective as an ideological tool and that it was adaptable to the author’s *Christos*-centered interests and useful for his *Christos*-centered myth-making. This is evident in the *Odes of Solomon* and *T. Asher* as well, which also use the conflict motif to characterize *Christos* as the divine warrior.³¹⁷

Odes of Solomon 22:5 states that *Theos* overthrew “the seven-headed dragon” by the hands of *Christos* and that *Theos* has positioned *Christos* to destroy the dragon’s seed.³¹⁸ The author’s claim that *Christos* participated in the past combat between *Theos*

³¹⁶ This is the only text I discuss which does not either identify the enemy with a dragon or the sea/waters and/or mention specific divine enemies, Leviathan, Behemoth, a dragon, the sea/waters, or Death. However, this text shares other narrative details that occur in conjunction with the conflict motif, such as characterizing the enemy as arrogant and the divine figure using his mouth/breath to defeat enemies.

³¹⁷ While 2 Thess and 1 Cor date to the mid-first century CE, before the final form of Revelation, the final versions of *Odes Sol* and *T. Asher* post-date Revelation (see notes on dating these texts below). It is therefore possible that their descriptions of Jesus in combat with the dragon draw upon the conflict narrative in Revelation.

³¹⁸ The *Odes Sol* is a collection of anonymous poems, by tradition attributed to Solomon, and its origins and geographical location are unclear (Michael Lattke, *Odes of Solomon: A Commentary* [trans. Marianne Ehrhardt; ed. Harold W. Attridge; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009], 11-14). Select translations of *Odes Sol* 22, which only survives in Syriac and Coptic, follow Lattke. The Syriac, Coptic, and Greek texts are available in idem., *Oden Salomos: Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht,

and the seven-headed dragon is highly innovative. The claim that *Christos* will defeat the “dragon’s seed” in the future is comparable and consistent with other texts that characterize *Christos* as the eschatological divine warrior. *Odes Sol* 22:5, like 1 Cor 15:20-28 and 2 Thess 2:1-12, exhibits a particular adaptation of the conflict motif that promotes *Christos* as a divine warrior figure, validating his divine status. However, the description of the relationship between *Theos* and *Christos* in *Odes Sol* 22 follows Davidic royal ideology more closely than 1 Cor 15:20-28 and 2 Thess 2:1-12. *Odes Sol* 22 states that *Theos* scattered *Christos*’ adversaries and gave him authority (*Odes Sol* 22:3-4). The notion of *Theos* scattering *Christos*’ adversaries is patterned after the notion of Yahweh battling on the king’s behalf in Psalm 110, Yahweh assisting the king against enemies in Psalm 2, and Yahweh scattering his own enemies in Psalm 68 and Num 10:35. *Theos* is given credit for destroying the dragon’s “poison of evil,” and he has also leveled the way for “those who believe in thee” (*Odes Sol* 22:7).³¹⁹ Victory over the dragon is also associated with an eschatological renewal: “thou hast brought thy world to destruction/corruption, that everything might be dissolved and renewed” (*Odes Sol* 22:11). Thus, *Theos* is still ultimately the warrior who destroys the dragon. However, he does so by *Christos*’ hands. The use of the conflict motif in *Odes Sol* 22:5 is comparable to the use of the conflict motif to promote David in Ps 89:26, but differs from this example in a significant way. In Ps 89:26, Yahweh states that he will place David’s hand

1999). There are no complete mss of the *Odes*; rather they are reconstructed from two Syriac mss from the 10th and 15th c. CE, one Greek mss from the 3rd c. CE, and one 4th c. CE Coptic codex which quotes from the *Odes* (Lattke, *Odes of Solomon*, 3-4).

³¹⁹ The notion of Yahweh/*Theos* leveling a way for believers is an allusion to Isa 40:3, also cited by all four canonical gospels and the *Manual of Discipline*. *Odes Sol* 22:7 associates *Theos* leveling a way for believers with reinvigorating them before the eschatological renewal.

over the sea/rivers, whom Yahweh has already defeated (Ps 89:10-11), and this signifies the endorsement of David's authority. *Odes Sol* 22, however, not only claims that *Theos* gives *Christos* authority, but also claims that *Christos* actually participated in the past combat against the dragon. This claim is never made of David in Psalm 89 or elsewhere. This innovation heightens the status of *Christos* relative to *Theos*, according to the ideology of the text. *Christos* is not only given authority, he is said to have participated in the original defeat of the dragon.

The defeated enemy in this passage is a "seven-headed dragon." We have seen a multi-headed serpent/dragon enemy in Ps 74:13 (a multi-headed dragon, identified as Leviathan) and a seven-headed dragon in Rev 12:3. The dragon in *Odes Sol* also has venom, which suggests a serpentine figure as well. While we have not seen venom associated with the dragon enemy, it is consistent with the serpentine characterization of the enemy in Isa 27:1 and Revelation 12, as well as in Ugaritic traditions of Anat and Baal facing the seven-headed serpent *KTU* 1.3 III 35-47 and *KTU* 1.5 2-3, respectively. The detail that the dragon has specifically seven heads is preserved in the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle*, Revelation 12, and this text, but not in any biblical descriptions of the multi-headed dragon. If commentators are correct that the dragon here is a signifier for Satan, an identification proposed explicitly in Revelation, then it is the case that Satan is being portrayed as or identified with the dragon of conflict motif traditions.³²⁰ Thus, Satan, according to the *Odes Sol* and consistent with other examples of the conflict motif, has been defeated and will again be defeated. As a disfavored and rival divine figure, Satan is thus portrayed as destined for defeat and inferior to both *Theos* and *Christos*. The

³²⁰ Lattke, *Odes of Solomon*, 315.

terminus ante quem for *Odes Sol* is the late-second or early-third century CE, at which point we have evidence for the circulation of a Greek version of the text.³²¹ Within this historical context, the articulation of the conflict motif in *Odes Sol* 22 is consistent with Revelation with regard to portraying *Christos* (if the Lamb in Revelation is *Christos*) as the divine warrior who defeats the dragon. Because the authorship of *Odes Sol* is unknown, we cannot be more specific than to say that the poems fit within a second-century CE milieu of Judean (including proto- or early-Christian) traditions.³²² This applies as well to the text's articulation and use of the conflict motif.

Testament of Asher 7:3 states that when *Christos* comes to the earth he will crush the dragon's head in the water, and thereby save Israel and all the nations:

You will be scattered to the four corners of the earth [...] until the Most High visits the earth, he coming as a human, eating and drinking with humans, and in quiet crushing the head of the dragon in the midst of [the] water.³²³ In this way he will save Israel and all the nations, God playing the part of a man (*T. Asher* 7:3).³²⁴

³²¹ Lattke, *Odes of Solomon*, 6-10.

³²² Lattke, *Odes of Solomon*, 11-14.

³²³ I am translating *di' hudatos* as "in the midst of [the] water" to indicate that the dragon is in the water. "In the midst of" is well within the semantic range for *dia*. Two mss variants read "dragon on the (*epi tou*) water," which also clearly indicates that the dragon is in the water. The alternative "through water" could be read in the sense that the dragon moves through water, following the spatial sense of *dia*. However, I want to avoid the sense "by means of water," which does not fit the context.

³²⁴ The Greek text is available in Marinus de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text* (Leiden: Brill, 1978). *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* survives in 15 Greek mss ranging in date from the 10th-17th c. CE; over 50 Armenian mss that appear to be translated from Greek; and a few late Slavonic mss (Harm W. Hollander and Marinus de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary* [Leiden: Brill, 1985], 10-14).

The vocabulary of *T. Asher* 7:3 suggests that the author drew upon LXX Ps 73:13; both passages use “crush” (*suntribeîn*), “head/s” (*kephalē*), “dragon/s” (*drakōn*), and “water” (*hudōr*).³²⁵ In the Greek of the psalm there are multiple heads and multiple dragons, whereas here there is one head and one dragon. Marc Philonenko speculated that this dragon represented Pompey.³²⁶ If the dragon figure indeed represents a historical person

³²⁵ Angel, *Chaos*, 114.

³²⁶ Marc Philonenko, “Testaments des Douze Patriarches,” in *La Bible: Écrits intertestamentaires* (eds. André Dupont-Sommer and Marc Philonenko; Paris: Gallimard, 1987), 811-944, 919. The identification of the dragon with Pompey is speculative and depends on Philonenko’s dating of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* to the first or second century BCE (Philonenko, *Les interpolations chrétiennes des Testaments des Douze Patriarches et les manuscrits de Qumran* [Paris: Universitaires de France, 1960], 1-12). The text appears to have used the LXX, suggesting it was composed sometime after ca. 250 BCE. Philonenko and Dupont-Sommer have argued, based on the affinities between the *Testaments* and Qumran texts, for a date ca. 100-150 BCE (Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings from Qumran* [trans. Geza Vermes; Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1973], 301-305). The text itself is not preserved at Qumran, but there are fragments of texts that are similar to the testaments containing traditions surrounding several of the sons of Jacob. Rather than being certain evidence for an early composition date of the *Testaments*, this shows that the traditions from which the *Testaments* draw were available at Qumran as well (M. de Jonge, *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament as Part of Christian Literature: The Case of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and the Greek Life of Adam and Eve* [Leiden: Brill, 2003], 107-123). Philonenko and others who prefer an early date for the *Testaments* consider the text to be an originally Judean document into which later Christian authors inserted statements about *Christos*, a hypothesis first proposed by Charles (Robert H. Charles, *The Greek Versions of the Twelve Patriarchs* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1908]). There are twelve passages in the *Testaments* that have been identified, speculatively, as Christian interpolations (Howard C. Kee, “Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” *OTP* 1:775-828). Among these are the phrases “he coming as a human, eating and drinking with humans,” and “God playing the part of a man,” in *T. Asher* 7:3. Without these phrases, *T. Asher* 7:3 would be similar to Isa 27:1, recasting Yahweh’s divine combat against the dragon as an eschatological event. However, de Jonge argues against the notion of Christian interpolations, and considers the whole text to be a Christian composition from the late second or early third century CE, which may or may not have substantially overhauled an earlier Judean document (Harm W. Hollander and M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, 82; Jonge, *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament as Part of Christian Literature*, 98). For discussion of the larger methodological issues involved in identifying various pseudepigraphic texts

(Pompey or someone else), the characterization of a disfavored foreign political figure as the dragon would fit within the biblical tradition of identifying disfavored rulers with the dragon who is destined for defeat, as in Jer 51:31-37, which characterizes Nebuchadnezzar as a dragon.

The text equates *Christos* with *Theos* by claiming that he will defeat the dragon, as *Theos* is said to do in LXX Isa 27:1 and LXX Ps 73:13. Furthermore, *Christos* is identified as the Most High (*hupsistos*) and as *Theos* explicitly; these are substantial theological claims. *T. Asher* 7:3 describes *Christos* as engaged in a future combat that is an eschatological event, a feature shared by 1 Cor 15:20-28; 2 Thess 2:1-12; and *Odes Sol* 22:5. The association of *Christos*' victory with saving Israel is similar to first-century CE Judean texts (discussed below) in which the victory of an eschatological divine warrior benefits some group within the narrative. In those texts, however, the divine warrior defeats earthly kings, whereas here *Christos* defeats the dragon, a superhuman enemy. *Christos*' defeat of the dragon here, then, is comparable to that in *Odes Sol* 22 and the defeat of the dragon in Revelation. *Christos* occupies the role of divine warrior against the dragon. The author appropriated this role for *Christos*, and in doing so bolstered claims about his divine status.

1 Corinthians 15:20-28; 2 Thess 2:1-12; *Odes Sol* 22; and *T. Asher* 7:3 exhibit adaptations of the conflict motif that focus on the status of *Christos* as a divine warrior within an eschatological setting. 1 Corinthians 15:20-28; 2 Thess 2:1-12; and *Odes Sol* 22 draw on Davidic royal ideology such as that in Psalm 110 and Psalm 89, but to varying

as "Jewish" or "Christian," see James R. Davila, *The Provenance of the Pseudepigrapha: Jewish, Christian, or Other?* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

degrees these texts heighten the status claimed for *Christos* beyond that claimed for David in Ps 89:26, and 1 Cor 15:20-28 inverts the roles of Yahweh and his endorsed figure in Psalm 110 by portraying *Christos* as defeating enemies. *Odes Sol* 22 and *T. Asher* 7:3 also draw upon Isa 27:1, specifically the notion of Yahweh defeating the sea-dragon in the eschaton. They exhibit the remarkable innovation of having *Christos* defeat the dragon in the future, and *Odes Sol* 22 even claims that *Christos* participated in Yahweh's past conflict with the dragon. The authors of these texts adapted the conflict motif to suit their particular theological aims, specifically to bolster claims about the divine status and authority of Jesus/*Christos*. As an eschatological divine warrior, he will defeat earthly and divine enemies and subsequently attain his throne. These texts interweave adaptations of Davidic royal ideology, claiming that *Theos* endorses Jesus/*Christos* as a royal figure, and *Christos*-centered adaptations of the conflict motif. Ultimately, these texts claim a higher status for Jesus/*Christos* than was ever claimed for David. He does not just benefit from Yahweh/*Theos*' past victories, he participated in them, and moreover he becomes the eschatological divine warrior who will defeat the sea-dragon. Within the divine hierarchy, *Christos* is elevated to a highly favored position, as shown by his victories over earthly and divine enemies. His status approaches that of Yahweh/*Theos*, in that *Christos* occupies Yahweh/*Theos*' role as divine warrior in the eschatological future, and in one tradition *Christos* shares in Yahweh/*Theos*' past victories against the dragon as well.

Like the texts just discussed, which promote Jesus/*Christos* as a divine warrior, three first-century CE Judean texts, *2 Baruch*, *4 Ezra*, and *1 Enoch*, employ the conflict motif to endorse a secondary figure, characterized as an eschatological divine warrior, in

addition to claiming that Yahweh/*Theos* has universal dominion. In promoting the status of Yahweh/*Theos*, these texts share a specific focus on Leviathan and Behemoth as figures over whom Yahweh/*Theos* has control. Many Hebrew Bible texts refer to Leviathan and/or a sea-dragon whom Yahweh has defeated, Isa 27:1 renders Yahweh's defeat of this figure as an eschatological event, and several first- and second-century CE texts claim that Jesus/*Christos* will defeat such a figure in the future. However, *2 Baruch*, *4 Ezra*, and *1 Enoch*, as well as two rabbinic texts *b.Baba Batra* 74b-75a and *Midrash Alpha Bethoth* א"ב ר"ה ר"ג preserve additional material about the eschatological purpose of Leviathan and Behemoth.

Leviathan and Behemoth in the Eschaton and More Eschatological Battles

There are several texts that discuss the role of Leviathan and Behemoth in the eschaton: *2 Baruch* 29:4, *1 Enoch* 60:7-25, *4 Ezra* 6:48-52, *b.Baba Batra* 74b-75a, and *Midrash Alpha Bethoth* א"ב ר"ה ר"ג. These texts utilize the conflict motif to promote Yahweh/*Theos* by asserting that Leviathan and Behemoth never posed a threat to Yahweh/*Theos*, rather he created them and has preserved them for a specific purpose in the eschaton: an eschatological banquet. These narrative details contribute to these texts' shared claim that Yahweh/*Theos* has universal dominion by implying the following: first, he is not threatened by any other divine beings because he created everything, including Leviathan and Behemoth, who are therefore not divine rivals whom Yahweh/*Theos* must defeat; and second, Yahweh/*Theos* has made preparations for the eschaton from the time of creation and is therefore in control of the narrative present.

The association of Leviathan with a banquet is consistent with Ps 74:14: “You crushed the heads of Leviathan; You gave him to be food for the people of the wilderness.”³²⁷ In Ps 74:14, the defeated and dead Leviathan serves as a meal for some people in the wilderness. However, in *2 Baruch*, *1 Enoch*, *4 Ezra*, *b.Baba Batra*, and *Midrash Alpha Bethoth*, Leviathan and Behemoth are not killed until the eschaton, and the meal in which they are involved is an eschatological banquet. The figures of Leviathan and Behemoth are described most extensively in Job 40-41, where they are presented as intimidating creatures whom only Yahweh can tame. As I discuss in Chapter 3, the author of Job 40-41 describes Leviathan and Behemoth in order to demonstrate the incomparability of Yahweh, in that they are enemies only he can defeat or control. Subsequent references to Leviathan and Behemoth build upon the characterization of these figures in the book of Job, as well as references to Leviathan in Ps 74:14, Ps 104:26, and Isa 27:1.

The concept of an eschatological banquet may be traced to Isa 25:6:

On this mountain, Yahweh of hosts will make for all the peoples a feast of rich foods, a feast of vintage wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of vintage wines strained clear.

Here, the feast is a celebration, characterized by abundance, and enjoyed by “all the peoples.” Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible there is a notion of feasting on defeated enemies by birds (Ezek 39:1-21), animals (Isa 56:9; Jer 12:9), and Yahweh’s sword (Jer 46:10).³²⁸ Based on *2 Baruch*, *1 Enoch*, *4 Ezra*, *b.Baba Batra*, and *Midrash Alpha*

³²⁷ See note 194.

³²⁸ Peter-Ben Smit categorizes eschatological banquets (as referenced in the HB, NT, and non-canonical texts) into three types: “the celebratory banquet,” a victory feast for the divine warrior; the “destructive meal”; and “eschatological wedding celebrations” (Peter-

Bethoth, it appears that the notion of people feasting on the defeated Leviathan in Ps 74:14 was incorporated into the concept of an eschatological banquet that would include Leviathan and Behemoth. The notion of a celebratory banquet after victory coordinates well thematically with the conflict motif, and the presence of a defeated and dead Leviathan is directly representative of it. The final innovation present in the notion of an eschatological banquet involving Leviathan is the temporal shift to a future setting, involving a future combat. The assertion that this future celebration will occur functions as a narrative guarantee of victory in the future combat.

2 *Baruch* 29:4, 1 *Enoch* 60:7-25, 4 *Ezra* 6:48-52, *b.Baba Batra* 74b-75a, and *Midrash Alpha Bethoth* ד"ה ר"ג each emphasize that Yahweh/*Theos* created Leviathan and Behemoth and that he has preserved them for a specific purpose. Through these two details, the authors imply that the deity maintains control over these figures and that they pose no threat to him. Job 40-41 describes Leviathan and Behemoth as being created and tamed by Yahweh, and these later texts develop this notion through exegesis of Gen 1:21. Specifically, the creation of “the great sea-dragons” (*hattannînîm haggēdōlîm*) in Gen 1:21 is elaborated as the creation of Leviathan and Behemoth. By asserting that these

Ben Smit, *Fellowship and Food in the Kingdom: Eschatological Meals and Scenes of Utopian Abundance in the New Testament* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008], 22-28). The traditions with which I am here concerned fall under the category of “destructive meal,” which is certainly related to the category of victory feasts for the divine warrior (the only HB example that is certain being Isa 25:6), but also include elements of combat and killing. In addition to Ezek 39:1-21; Jer 12:9; Isa 56:9; and Jer 46:10, in which defeated/punished corpses are feasted upon, Smit also lists HB instances in which Yahweh serves the carcass to those he wishes to punish: nations (Jer 25:15-34; 49:12; 51:7; Lam 4:21; Ob 16, Zech 12:2); Israel (Isa 51:17-22; Jer 8:14; 9:14; Ezek 23:31-34); and individuals (Hab 2:15-17; Ps 75:9). These examples share the notion of feasting upon carcasses, but differ in that those eating are being punished rather than sharing in utopian abundance.

figures, who were traditionally enemies to be defeated, never posed a threat to Yahweh/*Theos*, the authors of these texts promote his dominion and sovereignty. This legitimating ideological function shows continuity with previous examples of the conflict motif in that the preferred deity is promoted at the expense of his rivals, including the figure of Leviathan. However, these later texts show an intensification of the contrast between Yahweh and his rivals, in that Leviathan and Behemoth are characterized as creatures over whom Yahweh/*Theos* has always exerted control.

We also see that the authors of *2 Baruch* 29:4, *1 Enoch* 60:7-25, *4 Ezra* 6:48-52, *Midrash Alpha Bethoth* ו"ה ד"ג, and *b.Baba Batra* 74b-75a incorporated Leviathan and Behemoth traditions that are not preserved in the Hebrew Bible but that they share in common. For example, they each include the detail that these figures were created on the fifth day of creation. The attestation of such shared Leviathan and Behemoth traditions in these texts suggests that these traditions existed independently of these particular works, and that the authors each incorporated them along with biblical materials.³²⁹ I will first

³²⁹ The fact that these traditions about Leviathan and Behemoth are shared among these texts is sufficient evidence to conclude that there was some body of Leviathan and Behemoth traditions that existed beyond what is preserved in the biblical anthology. In other words, the authors of these texts did not each make up these shared traditions on their own. We do not have sufficient evidence to know whether or not these traditions were ever collected in a written source or if they only circulated orally. *Canticles Rabbah* 1:4 refers to something called “the secrets of Leviathan and Behemoth.” Irving Jacobs speculated that there were fuller collections of Leviathan and Behemoth stories, and that *Canticles Rabbah* 1:4 might be referencing such a collection (Irving Jacobs, “Elements of Near Eastern Mythology in Rabbinic Aggadah,” *JJS* 28 [1977]: 1-11; 4 n.18). It is plausible that there was such a collection at some point. However, the date of *Canticles Rabbah* cannot be determined with accuracy, except to say that it existed by ca. 850 CE, when the text *Pesiqta Rabbati* quotes it extensively, and that it post-dates the Jerusalem Talmud (ca. late-fourth or early-fifth century CE). Therefore, if *Canticles Rabbah* refers to a written collection of Leviathan and Behemoth materials, we do not have sufficient evidence to conclude that such a collection was a source for the texts discussed here (2

discuss 2 *Baruch* 29:4, 1 *Enoch* 60:7-25, and 4 *Ezra* 6:48-52, which share remarkably similar details and which all possibly date to the first century CE, and then I will discuss *b. Baba Batra* 74b-75a and *Midrash Alpha Bethoth* א"ה ד"ג, two later (ca. 500 CE and early medieval, respectively) rabbinic passages that preserve elaborate Leviathan and Behemoth traditions.

2 *Baruch* 29:4, 1 *Enoch* 60:7-25, and 4 *Ezra* 6:48-52 each reference an eschatological banquet involving Leviathan and Behemoth, and emphasize Yahweh's control over these figures from the time of creation. I argue that these texts employ the conflict motif to claim that Yahweh has universal dominion, which is shown, according to these texts, by his creation of the heavens, earth, and all that is in them, particularly including Leviathan and Behemoth, and moreover, by Yahweh's preparations for the eschaton, particularly his preservation of Leviathan and Behemoth for the eschatological banquet. William K. Whitney discusses these three textual traditions as examples of the "combat-banquet tradition," and this seems to be a fitting term.³³⁰ I have found that in addition to the combat-banquet tradition, itself a development of the conflict motif, 2 *Baruch*, 1 *Enoch*, and 4 *Ezra* also exhibit the conflict motif in a manner similar to Daniel 7 and Revelation. That is, these three texts employ the conflict motif to promote a secondary figure (a Messiah, Elect One, or Son of Man figure), whom Yahweh is said to endorse. The secondary figure is portrayed in conflict with powerful earthly kings, and he

Baruch, 4 *Ezra*, and 1 *Enoch*); rather, such a collection could just as well post-date these texts, and even draw from them.

³³⁰ Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 31, *passim*.

will defeat them and attain power granted by the primary deity.³³¹ Based on these narrative details, I argue that *2 Baruch*, *1 Enoch*, and *4 Ezra* preserve and utilize two strands of the conflict motif: the combat-banquet tradition involving Leviathan and Behemoth, and an eschatological battle tradition that promotes a secondary figure as the eschatological divine warrior. Moreover, within the eschatological speculation, I have found that each of these texts also promotes a specific group that is to be saved from punishment and rewarded in the eschaton through the efforts of the primary deity and secondary figure. Thus, the work accomplished through the conflict motif, in these three texts, is far more extensive than previous studies have indicated. The conflict motif serves (1) to promote the universal dominion of the primary creator deity, (2) to support the claim that the secondary figure is endorsed by the primary deity and will reign in the eschaton, and finally, (3) to offer a narrative guarantee of the positive fate of a select group who will benefit from the actions (victory in combat and/or execution of judgment) of the primary deity and secondary figure in the eschaton. I will first discuss the combat-banquet tradition portions of these texts, then how they exhibit the eschatological battle tradition, and finally how they aim to guarantee the positive fate of some select group in the eschaton.³³²

³³¹ In *1 Enoch*, the primary deity is called the “Head of Days,” *r’ēša mawâ’ēl* in Ethiopic, rendering the sense of the Aramaic “Ancient of Days” in Dan 7:9. *2 Baruch* and *4 Ezra* use “Lord,” “God,” and “Most High.” In the Syriac of *2 Baruch*, that is *mr’*, *’lh’*, and *mrym’*, respectively. In the Latin of *4 Ezra*, that is *Dominus*, *Deus*, and *Altissimum*. In my discussion of these texts, I also use the designations *Yahweh* and *Theos* to refer to the primary Judean god.

³³² These select groups are termed “all who remain” in *2 Baruch*; “elect ones” in *1 Enoch*; and “my people” or “Israel” in *4 Ezra*.

2 *Baruch* 29:4 states that Leviathan and Behemoth will be eaten in an eschatological banquet:

And Behemoth will be revealed from his place, and Leviathan will arise from the sea, those two great dragons which I created on the fifth day of creation, and will have kept until that time. And then they will be food for all who remain (2 *Baruch* 29:4).³³³

The passage states that Yahweh created these figures on the fifth day and that he has preserved them since then. While they are “great dragons” (Syriac, *tnyn’ rwrw*), the passage asserts that Yahweh is superior to them, in that he created them, maintained them, and decided their fate. The passage identifies the “great dragons” of the Syriac Peshitta of Gen 1:21 with Leviathan and Behemoth, who are not referenced in Gen 1:21, implying that Leviathan and Behemoth have been under Yahweh’s control since their conception.

The reference to Leviathan and Behemoth in 2 *Baruch* 29:4 occurs within a list of things that will occur in the future, including a reversal of misfortune, the return of heavenly manna, an abundance of vegetation (2 *Baruch* 29:5-8), and the revealing of the Messiah: “And it will be that when all is accomplished that was to come to pass in those parts, that the Messiah will then begin to be revealed (2 *Baruch* 29:3).”³³⁴ The passage

³³³ Translation of the Syriac is from Daniel M. Gurtner, *Second Baruch: A Critical Edition of the Syriac Text* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009). The short Greek (P. Oxy. 403) and Latin fragments (Cyprian, *Test.* 3.29) do not preserve this passage. The only complete mss of the text is the Syriac text 7a1. I consulted the Syriac original for select words, and I have chosen to translate *tnyn’* as “dragons” rather than “monsters” as does Gurtner, because it is cognate with the Hebrew *tannînîm*, which I translate elsewhere as dragons. I discuss the date and setting of the text below.

³³⁴ This verse (2 *Baruch* 29:3) about the Messiah immediately precedes the verse about Leviathan and Behemoth also being revealed in the eschatological moment or time being described. 2 *Baruch* 29:5 then, continues the eschatological speculation with a series of utopian images of abundance and rejoicing.

does not state who is expected to kill Leviathan and Behemoth, and perhaps the primary deity maintains this role, as in *1 Enoch*, *4 Ezra*, *b.Baba Batra*, and *Midrash Alpha Bethoth*. Regardless, the passage as a whole (2 *Baruch* 29:3-30:1) asserts the importance of the figure of the Messiah, and within this passage the statements in verse 4 about Leviathan and Behemoth serve to emphasize the creator deity's dominion. The promotion of the deity's dominion and status as creator, in turn, bolsters the validity of his endorsement of the messianic figure within the eschatological context.

1 Enoch 60 promotes the dominion of the "Head of Days" in several ways: his enthronement, emphasis on the deity's universal control, and his taming of the sea, Leviathan, and Behemoth. Each of these features is a constituent element of the conflict motif, and each contributes to the legitimating ideology of the text. In *1 Enoch* 60, the angel Michael explains to Noah what will happen when "the day" of punishment and judgment comes, including the role of Leviathan and Behemoth who will feast upon those being punished.³³⁵ The chapter begins with Noah seeing the "Head of Days" (Ethiopic *r'ēsa mawā'ēl*) sitting on the "throne of his glory," surrounded by angels and the righteous (*1 Enoch* 60:1-2). The sight of the enthroned "Head of Days" is so astounding that Noah trembles and faints (*1 Enoch* 60:3-4). An angel rouses Noah from his stupor (*1 Enoch* 60:4), and Michael then explains what will happen "when the day, and the power, and the punishment, and the judgment come, which the Lord of Spirits has prepared for those who worship not the righteous law" (*1 Enoch* 60:24). This day will

³³⁵ The passage states, "where my grandfather was taken up, the seventh from Adam" (*1 Enoch* 60:8). According to the genealogy in Gen 5, Enoch was born in the seventh generation from Adam and is the great-grandfather of Noah. Assuming *1 Enoch* is following this genealogical tradition, the speaker here is Noah.

include “a covenant for the elect, but an inquisition for sinners” (*1 Enoch* 60:24). The chapter continues with a discussion of the initial “divisions” and placement of various figures and phenomena, including Leviathan, Behemoth, winds, the moon, stars, thunder, lightning, the sea, dew, and rain. Throughout, the passage emphasizes that these figures and phenomena are carefully and fully controlled by various spirits. The sea in particular is controlled with reins and a bridle:

And the spirit of the sea is masculine and strong, and according to the might of his strength he draws it back with a rein, and in like manner it is driven forward and disperses amid all the mountains of the earth (*1 Enoch* 60:16-17).³³⁶

The control of the sea is consistent with various psalms in which Yahweh controls the sea (for example Ps 65:7), though the use of reins and a bridle is an innovative detail. The notion of using reins and a bridle to control the sea is similar to the taming of Leviathan and Behemoth described in Job 40:24-26, where Yahweh snares and hooks these figures, though Job does not include a taming of the sea. *1 Enoch* 60 presumes such a taming of Leviathan and Behemoth as well as the sea, and these figures are completely within the control of the creator deity. They are separated from one another such that Leviathan dwells in the water and Behemoth on the land. They are preserved for the purpose of feasting upon those being punished in the “great Day of the Lord”:

³³⁶ Translation of the Ethiopic is from Matthew Black, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch: A New English Edition with Commentary and Textual Notes* (Leiden; Brill: 1985). The text is preserved in its entirety only in Ethiopic. The verses with which I am concerned occur within the “The Parables of Enoch,” or “The Similitudes of Enoch” (*1 Enoch* 37:1-71:17). This portion of the text is delineated by introductory material, including the title “the vision which he saw the second time – the vision of wisdom which Enoch, son of Jared saw” (37:1), as well as an epilogue (70:1-4). For further discussion of the five sections of *1 Enoch*, as well as secondary literature on these divisions, see Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 45-46.

And on that day two monsters will be³³⁷ separated from one another, a female monster named Leviathan, to dwell in the abyss of the ocean over the fountains of the waters. But the male is named Behemoth, who covers with his belly an empty wilderness named Duidain ... And I besought the other angel that he should show me the might of those monsters, how they were separated in one day and cast, the one into the abysses of the sea, and the other into the dry land of the wilderness ... And the angel of peace who was with me said to me: “These two monsters are to be ready for the great Day of the Lord to be feasted, so that the punishment of the Lord of spirits may fall upon them and not come forth in vain” (*1 Enoch* 60:7-9, 24).

1 Enoch 60 explicitly describes the “Head of Days” enthroned and fully controlling the sea, Leviathan, and Behemoth, along with the moon, stars, and various weather phenomena. While no combat is described, the passage presumes that the sea, Leviathan, and Behemoth have been tamed and pose no threat to the “Head of Days” or to his dominion. Furthermore, “the Lord of spirits” will use Leviathan and Behemoth on “the Day of the Lord” to punish people by allowing Leviathan and Behemoth to feast on them. This text is distinct in portraying Leviathan and Behemoth feasting on people in the eschaton, rather than people feasting on Leviathan and Behemoth as in the other examples of the combat-banquet tradition.³³⁸ However, the notion that the “Head of Days” has preserved Leviathan and Behemoth for a purpose and that he will utilize them in some way is consistent with *2 Baruch* 29:4, *4 Ezra* 6, *b.Baba Batra*, and *Midrash*

³³⁷ Ms BM491 reads a past tense “were,” which is sometimes preferred, but M. Black and Michael Knibb both prefer the future tense and question the accuracy of BM491 (M. Black, *1 Enoch*, 56; Michael Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1978], 143).

³³⁸ Many have followed Charles in emending *1 Enoch* 60:24 to read that Leviathan and Behemoth are the feast rather than that they are fed (Robert H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1912], 119). This emendation is not necessary, but rather serves to bring *1 Enoch* 60:24 in line with *4 Ezra* 6:52 and *2 Baruch* 29:4. However, the reading that they are to be fed/feasted, a passive form (*yessēsayu*) is firmly attested (M. Black, *1 Enoch*, 230).

Alpha Bethoth, and in all of these traditions, this notion implies that the deity has total dominion from the time of creation to the eschaton.

4 *Ezra* 6:38-54 presents a retelling of the six-day creation story in Gen 1:1-2:4a.³³⁹

Verses 48-52 describe the production of “living creatures” in the water, including Leviathan and Behemoth:

But on the fifth day, you commanded the seventh part, where the water had been gathered, to generate living creatures (*animalia*), birds, and fishes; and so it was done. The mute and lifeless water, as it was commanded, produced living creatures (*animalia*), so that therefore the nations would recount your marvels. Then you preserved two living creatures (*duas animas*); the one you called Behemoth and the name of the other Leviathan. And you separated one from the other, for the seventh part where the water had been gathered was not able to take them both. Then you gave Behemoth one of the parts that had been dried up on the third day, where he should live, where there are a thousand mountains. However, you gave Leviathan the seventh part, the watery part. And you have guarded them so that they should be made into a feast for whomever you wish, whenever you wish (4 *Ezra* 6:47-52).³⁴⁰

4 *Ezra* 6:47 is clearly patterned after Gen 1:21; both describe the fifth day of creation.

The details that follow, contained in 4 *Ezra* 6:48-52, however, are not present in Gen 1:21, and the categorization of creatures in 4 *Ezra* 6:47-52 differs from that in Gen 1:21. The Genesis version of the fifth day of creation includes “living creatures” (*nepeš ḥayyāh*) in the water, fowl (*’ôp*), and the “great sea-dragons” (*hattannînîm haggēdōlîm*). The author

³³⁹ W. K. Whitney and M. E. Stone each discuss how 4 *Ezra*’s version of the six day creation story differs from that in Gen 1:1-2:4a (Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 32-38; M. E. Stone, 4 *Ezra* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990], 179-182).

³⁴⁰ Four Latin codexes of 4 *Ezra* from the 9th-11th centuries CE survive as well as various other Latin mss; there are versions in Syriac, Ethiopic, Armenian, and Arabic; and fragments in Coptic (6th-8th ct. CE), Georgian (11th ct. CE), and Greek (4th ct. CE). Scholars have argued that the original composition was in Aramaic (L. Gry, C. C. Torrey, and J. Bloch) or Hebrew (G. H. Box, A. Kaminka, F. Zimmerman, and J. Licht). For these references see B. M. Metzger, “The Fourth Book of Ezra,” *OTP* 1:520 n.12-13.

of *4 Ezra* 6:47-52, however, includes “living creatures,” “birds,” and “fishes,” but does not provide an explicit equivalent to the category “great sea-dragons” of Gen 1:21.

Whitney and Stone describe the Leviathan and Behemoth tradition of *4 Ezra* as an expansion of the “great sea-dragons” of Gen 1:21.³⁴¹ It seems reasonable to infer that the notion of the “great sea-dragons” in the Genesis 1:1-2:4a creation account served as an opportunity to insert Leviathan and Behemoth. However, Whitney and Stone overlook the difference in how *4 Ezra* 6:47 categorizes those created on the fifth day. Specifically, *4 Ezra* 6:47 does not categorize Leviathan and Behemoth as “great sea-dragons,” but rather includes them within the category “living creatures” (*animalia*). There is no way to be certain, but it is possible that the author of *4 Ezra* 6:47-52 purposely avoided the category “great sea-dragons,” in favor of the less ambiguous category “living creatures,” in order to emphasize that Leviathan and Behemoth were completely tamed from their inception, and therefore posed no threat to the creator god. This would be consistent with the rest of the passage, which assumes that Yahweh maintains control over Leviathan and Behemoth. Leviathan and Behemoth are “preserved” purposefully, according to a plan; thus, they pose no threat. Rather, he keeps them alive to be eaten at his whim by whomever he chooses. In addition to commenting on the status of Leviathan and Behemoth, this passage includes an interesting comment on the water. The description of the water as “mute and lifeless” reads counter to any personification of the water as an agent, and the water produces creatures in obedience to the deity’s command. As in *I*

³⁴¹ Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 34; Stone, *4 Ezra*, 183. I agree with Whitney’s conclusion that the Leviathan and Behemoth tradition preserved here originally existed independently from the creation narrative into which the author inserted it. The independence of this tradition is evidenced in *1 Enoch* 60 and *2 Baruch* 29, which both preserve the combat-banquet tradition and reference creation but do not narrate creation.

Enoch 60, the creator deity of *4 Ezra* has complete control over the sea/waters as well as Leviathan and Behemoth.

In sum, *2 Baruch*, *1 Enoch*, and *4 Ezra* assert Leviathan and Behemoth were created by Yahweh and preserved by him for a feast in the Eschaton, either as food or as devourers. Through these assertions the texts characterize Leviathan and Behemoth, as well as the sea/waters in *1 Enoch* and *4 Ezra*, as entities that pose no threat to Yahweh. Rather, he has complete control over them. These claims serve to validate the deity's purported universal dominion. The logic of the legitimating ideology exhibited in these texts, I argue, is fully grounded in the signification of Leviathan and the sea/waters within occurrences of the conflict motif such as those preserved in the Hebrew Bible, in which Leviathan and the sea/waters have been defeated and tamed by Yahweh.

In addition to exhibiting the combat-banquet tradition, *2 Baruch*, *1 Enoch*, and *4 Ezra* also utilize the conflict motif within an eschatological framework to promote a secondary figure. This secondary figure is said to be endorsed by the primary deity, and he is awarded power by the primary deity. Furthermore, these texts claim that the secondary figure will kill powerful enemy rulers, thus defeating disfavored, rival authority figures and validating his enthronement. The figures promoted in *2 Baruch*, *1 Enoch*, and *4 Ezra* are the "Messiah"; "Son of Man" and "Elect One"; and "my Son" respectively.

Among the texts discussed above, those that focus on *Christos* (1 Cor 15:20-28; 2 Thess 2:1-12; *Odes Sol* 22:5; and *T. Asher* 7.3) attribute the defeat and death of enemies to *Christos*, portrayed as a divine warrior figure. In Revelation 12-22, many figures are portrayed as divine warriors: the Ancient of Days, Michael, the Rider, the Lamb, and an

angel. While the Lamb is traditionally understood as referring to Jesus, the figure designated “Jesus,” *Christos*, and “Jesus Christ” is never portrayed as a warrior figure in Revelation, though he clearly shares the dominion won through the various combats in the text (Rev 11:15; 20:4-6).³⁴² Likewise, in Daniel 7-12, the “one like a son of man” receives dominion without having participated in combat (Dan 7:13-14). This pattern appears to be a development of royal ideological uses of the conflict motif, such as in Psalm 89 where David is granted authority and given dominion over the sea/rivers without having actually engaged in conflict with them. Thus, among texts that promote both the dominion of a primary deity and a secondary figure, I have found two modes in which the conflict motif may be utilized: through the primary deity’s past combat and through the secondary figure’s future combat. In some texts the endorsed figure is granted dominion that the primary deity has attained through a past or future combat. For example, Yahweh as a victorious divine warrior and king has the prerogative to endorse David (Psalm 89), and the Ancient of Days/*Theos* has the prerogative to endorse the “one like a son of man” (Dan 7) and *Christos* (Rev 11:15; 20:4-6). Whereas, in some other texts the endorsed figure is said to participate in the past or future combat.³⁴³ *2 Baruch*, *1 Enoch*, and *4 Ezra* all feature a future conflict in which the secondary figure punishes and kills an enemy king or kings.

³⁴² For the uses and connotations of “lamb” in NT literature, see Jeremias, “*amnos, arēn, arnion*,” *TDNT*, 1:338-341.

³⁴³ Regardless of whether the primary deity or secondary figure is the divine warrior, the combat may be in the past or future, so it is not the case that all traditions involving an eschatological (future) battle assign the warrior role to a secondary figure. Also, both modes may be utilized in a single text: they are not mutually exclusive.

2 *Baruch* 39 describes the destruction of various kingdoms preceding the reign of the “Messiah.” The phrasing is passive, however, so it is unclear whether or not the “Messiah” has a direct role in the destruction of the series of kingdoms. In 2 *Baruch* 40, however, it is clear that the “Messiah” will convict and kill “the last leader” before his messianic reign begins. This follows the pattern of a victorious warrior attaining his throne after defeating rival powers, and the conflict is a future eschatological battle.

In 1 *Enoch* the “Head of Days” endorses a “Son of Man” figure, also called the “Elect One.” This figure will dethrone and humiliate earthly kings and powerful landowners (1 *Enoch* 46:4-6; 48:8-10), and he will sit on the throne of the “Head of Days” (1 *Enoch* 51:3). This resembles Psalm 2, in which there is antagonism between earthly kings and the figure endorsed by the deity (1 *Enoch* 46:4-6). The lengthy and drawn-out nature of the conflict between the powerful/wealthy people and the Elect One also closely resembles the tradition in Revelation of divine figures acting on behalf of those oppressed by the powerful/wealthy (Rev 6:15-17; 19:17-21). The Son of Man passages in 1 *Enoch* 37-71 employ the conflict motif to promote the figure of the Son of Man/Elect One, whose authority is first based on the dominion of the “Head of Days.” The Son of Man/Elect One then exercises his authority against wealthy landowners and kings who oppress the “elect,” and he is subsequently enthroned.³⁴⁴

³⁴⁴ Identification of the Son of Man is not certain. Enoch is once called a “son of man” in the text (1 *Enoch* 60:10), and based on this, James C. VanderKam, Leonhard Rost, and Knibb consider the Son of Man/Elect One to be Enoch (VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001], 110; Leonhard Rost, *Einleitung in die alttestamentlichen Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen einschliesslich der grossen Qumran-Handschriften* [Heidelberg: Quelle u. Meyer, 1971], 104; Michael Knibb, “The Ethiopic Book of Enoch,” in *Outside the Old Testament* [ed. Marinus de Jonge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985], 26-55, 43). For my argument, it is not

4 *Ezra* 11-13 narrates two visions that promote a figure called the “anointed” (*unctus*) (4 *Ezra* 12:32) and “my son” (*filius meus*) (4 *Ezra* 13:32, 37, 52).³⁴⁵ He is represented in the visions as a lion (4 *Ezra* 11-12) and a mighty man (4 *Ezra* 13). In both visions this figure rebukes reigning authority figures who are characterized as oppressive and proud. In the “eagle vision” of 4 *Ezra* 11, these oppressive governing figures are portrayed as the feathers and wings of an eagle whom the lion rebukes, at which time the eagle burns completely. The interpretation of the “eagle vision” described in 4 *Ezra* 12 identifies the feathers and wings as a series of kings with extensive dominion who are “impious” and oppressive. The lion is identified as the anointed, whom the “Most High” has kept, and who will rebuke, correct, and judge the kings (4 *Ezra* 12:31-33). Similarly, in 4 *Ezra* 13, the mighty man appears and destroys a multitude. He has a burning voice, and his appearance causes everything to tremble (4 *Ezra* 13:3-4). When a multitude gathers to battle against the mighty man, he destroys them with the fire, flame, and tempest that comes from his mouth, rather than with a sword (4 *Ezra* 13:8-11).³⁴⁶ The

important whether the Son of Man is Enoch, an unnamed figure, or an imaginary future figure.

³⁴⁵ Throughout, the text calls this figure “my son.” In the Latin text of 4 *Ezra* 7:28, he is called “my son Jesus” and in 7:29 he is called “my son *Christus*”; in the Georgian of 7:29, he is called “my son the anointed.” However, the names Jesus and *Christus* are not used elsewhere in the text, and other versions of 4 *Ezra* do not read “Jesus” or *Christus* in these verses. Stone identifies these as deliberate Christian alterations (M. Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 208).

³⁴⁶ Psalm 97:3-5 and Mic 1:4 describe entities melting from Yahweh’s presence, and many passages attest to actions of Yahweh being accomplished by his words. Isa 11:4 describes Yahweh killing with the “rod of his mouth” and the “sword of his tongue.” In the Wisdom of Solomon 12:9, Yahweh is able to destroy enemies with a single word. In 4 *Ezra* 13, the mighty man destroys enemies with flames from his mouth, which are interpreted as words of rebuke. Thus, the vision and interpretation exhibit a blending of

interpretation states that the mighty man figure has been kept for a while (*4 Ezra* 13:26), and he will rebuke and destroy the “impious” (*4 Ezra* 13:37-38). This mighty man figure is portrayed as the victorious divine warrior, and the oppressive kings are portrayed as his enemies who are destined for defeat.

The passages just described within *2 Baruch*, *1 Enoch*, and *4 Ezra*, each promote a secondary divine figure who receives endorsement from the primary deity. The primary deity is portrayed as the creator who has made specific preparations for the eschaton, at which time various oppressive and “wicked” rulers will be rebuked and destroyed. It is the secondary divine figure who accomplishes the final destruction of the earthly rulers, and in *2 Baruch* and *1 Enoch*, this figure then reigns. These texts contain a significant commentary on their contemporary political setting, portraying disfavored governing bodies as oppressive, wicked, and destined for defeat. We have seen throughout this study that the conflict motif was particularly useful for making political statements, by portraying disfavored polities negatively and by asserting the certain victory of favored polities and favored divine figures.

In addition to asserting the universal dominion of the creator deity and promoting the endorsement of a secondary figure who engages in an eschatological conflict, *2 Baruch*, *1 Enoch*, and *4 Ezra* also utilize the conflict motif to bolster the claims of some group: “all who remain,” the “elect ones,” and “my people” “Israel,” respectively. The texts purport to guarantee the positive fate of these groups in the eschaton by claiming that they will be rescued from judgment/punishment and that they will benefit from the

these notions from characterizations of Yahweh. As noted above, *Ahiqar*, Rev 19, and 2 Thess 2:8 also describe breath, mouths, and tongues as weapons.

victory of the “Messiah,” “Elect One,” and “my son,” respectively, over those who oppress them. *2 Baruch* 29:4 endorses some select set of people called “all who remain,” and they enjoy the eschatological banquet with Leviathan and Behemoth on the menu. From the larger context of *2 Baruch* 27-30, we also learn that “all who remain” have survived a series of twelve periods of woes and that afterwards they feast on heavenly manna. It is likely, but not directly stated, that the “all who remain” are the same as those Yahweh says he will protect from the twelve woes on account of them being “in this land” (*2 Baruch* 29:2). Furthermore, these people will benefit from the actions of the “Messiah,” who will convict and kill the “last ruler” and protect these people (*2 Baruch* 40:2). Regardless of whom the author is imagining, some selection of people are affirmed in these chapters in that they are going to survive the coming misfortunes and then enjoy messianic prosperity. We can only speculate about the actual or imagined audience of *2 Baruch*, but since the text survived we may assume there was some audience. It seems reasonable to speculate that a late-first-century CE audience of *2 Baruch* would have identified with, or hope to be included in, this group of survivors who will enjoy the reversal of fortunes that *2 Baruch* describes.³⁴⁷ Moreover, since the revelations to the

³⁴⁷ George Nickelsburg, Pierre Bogaert, Daniel Gurtner, Ian Scott, and Albertus Klijn agree that *2 Baruch* dates to after 70 CE, based on *2 Baruch* 32:2-4, which they reasonably interpret as a reference to the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE: “For after a short time the building of Zion will be shaken so that it may be built again. But that building will not remain, but will be uprooted again after a time, and will remain desolate until a time. And afterwards it must be renewed in glory and perfected forever.” These scholars vary on a more precise dating: Bogaert argues 96 CE (Pierre Bogaert, *Apocalypse de Baruch: Introduction, traduction du syriaque et commentaire*, [2 vols.; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1969], 1:294-295); Nickelsburg concludes the late first century (George Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005], 283); and Klijn argues for the first or second decade of the second century CE (Albertus Klijn, “2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch,” *OTP*, 617). For my purposes, the broader range accepted by Gurtner and Scott is sufficient: late-first

character Baruch, contained in 2 *Baruch*, purport to have occurred about 600 years earlier, a first-century CE author and audience might imagine that they were experiencing some of the difficult times (such as the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE) described in the text.³⁴⁸ If so, they would be validated by eschatological speculation that includes prosperity for them in particular and by the notion that the creator deity and the “Messiah” would act on their behalf.

In *1 Enoch*, the Elect One plays a prominent role in the reversal of fortunes for the “elect.” The destruction of the kings and powerful people is tied directly to the reversal of fortunes for the “elect,” in that they will no longer be “hindered” and will have relief from “oppression” (*1 Enoch* 53:3-7). *1 Enoch* 60, which emphasizes the creator deity’s control over the sea, weather phenomena, and astral bodies in order to assert his universal dominion (*1 Enoch* 60:11-22), is also concerned with the “elect.” The “elect” will not be fed to Leviathan and Behemoth, and furthermore, the “worship” of the “elect” is validated over that of “sinners” and those who “worship not the righteous law” (*1 Enoch* 60:24). The text does not identify the “elect,” but specifies that they “will be living in the day of tribulation, when all the wicked and godless are to be removed” (*1 Enoch* 1:2). Throughout, the text states that Yahweh will protect the “elect and righteous,” help them, and make them prosperous, to the exclusion of the “sinners” (*1 Enoch* 1:8; 5:7; 25:5-7;

to early-second century CE (Daniel Gurtner and Ian Scott, “2 *Baruch*,” Edition 2.0, *OCP*).

³⁴⁸ The text purports to be the work of Jeremiah’s scribe Baruch from the time of the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE. This pseudepigraphic framework gives the work a guise of antiquity and authority, and the purported historical setting at the time of the destruction of the First Temple offers, thematically, a sense of shared crisis in the wake of the destruction of the Second Temple.

38:2; 41:2; 45:5; 50:1-2; 58:3-4; 62:8-15). We cannot be certain exactly who the author might have identified as the “elect,” but it seems reasonable to assume that an audience, whether at the time of the author or later, would self-identify with the “elect” rather than the “sinners” who are punished. If the text is accurately dated to the late-first century CE,³⁴⁹ we may speculate that the emphasis on and assertion of the deity’s ultimate dominion (*1 Enoch* 60:1-2), including making preparations for the “Day of the Lord” from the time of creation, would have been particularly useful in response to the political and social turmoil surrounding the Jewish revolts from 66-72 CE, including the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. In other words, such social and cultic upheaval might bring into question the Judean deity’s dominion, and one way to respond

³⁴⁹ There is a growing consensus that “The Similitudes of Enoch” (*1 Enoch* 37:1-71:17), which contains the passage discussed here (*1 Enoch* 60), dates to the first century CE. Greenfield and Stone date the final composition of this unit to the first century CE (Jonas C. Greenfield and M. Stone, “The Enochic Pentateuch and the Date of the Similitudes,” *HTR* 70 [1977]: 60). They are followed by Nickelsburg and Whitney (Nickelsburg, “Review of J. T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4*,” *CBQ* 40 [1978]: 411-419, 417-418; Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 46 n.51). Knibb argues for a more precise date, close to 100 CE (Knibb, “The Date of the Parables of Enoch: A Critical Review,” *NTS* 25 [1979]: 344-57), while Christopher Mearns dates it to 40-50 CE (Christopher Mearns, “Dating the Similitudes of Enoch” *NTS* 25 [1979]: 360-369). Milik argued for a Greek Christian provenance for the “Similitudes,” dating this section (37-71) to the third century CE, but his argument has been rejected by the scholars just cited. The “Similitudes” is not present among the portions of *1 Enoch* found at Qumran, and Milik used this datum to support his late dating. However, since we cannot know what materials were destroyed or were simply not found among the Qumran collections, the apparent absence of the “Similitudes” at Qumran is insufficient as proof of a later date (Józef T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1976], 91-98). I have speculated about how the legitimating ideology in this text might have worked in a late-first century CE context. However, regardless of the actual original historical context, an audience at any point thereafter could have self-identified with the “elect” and interpreted the text as validating themselves in comparison with whomever they might identify as the “sinners.” The text uses terms that are general or vague enough to be adaptable in different contexts. My argument that the text promotes the dominion of the “Head of Days” and subsequently the legitimacy of the “elect” would hold for an earlier or later dating as well.

to such a crisis would be to claim that the deity already has a plan to reverse the current state of affairs by punishing “sinners” and making the “elect” prosperous.

4 *Ezra* is concerned with the fate of “my people” (*populus/plebs meus*), who are also called “Israel” (*Israhel*). “Israel” is characterized as being distinct from other peoples specifically because they have obeyed the deity’s commands (4 *Ezra* 3:36). This claim clearly privileges the self-understanding of “my people” over other (real or constructed) groups that the author disfavors. Throughout the text the term “Israel” is used to refer to the people “Israel” within biblical stories that the text references as well as to Ezra’s narrative audience, the contemporary group being addressed in the text. There is only one verse which admits the narrative-historical difference between these two “Israels”: the deity tells Ezra, “Declare to my people that I will give them the kingdom of Jerusalem, which I would have delivered to Israel” (4 *Ezra* 2:10). This verse suggests that Ezra’s narrative audience, his contemporary “my people” are inheriting the privileges and status of the “Israel” of biblical tradition, and certainly the rest of the text equates these two narrative entities.

“My people” are also promoted through the text’s two uses of the conflict motif: the combat-banquet tradition and the eschatological battle tradition. As in 2 *Baruch*, 4 *Ezra* 6:49-52 states that Leviathan and Behemoth will be eaten by whomever the deity chooses, suggesting that “my people” will enjoy the eschatological banquet. Moreover, in his conclusion to his summary of creation, Ezra states that the whole project of creation was for this people’s benefit, and he challenges the deity to justify the suffering of his people at the hands of those who now have power over them and “devour them” (4 *Ezra*

6:55-59).³⁵⁰ This rhetorical challenge to the deity, specifically citing works of creation and defeated enemies such as Leviathan, fits within an ongoing tradition of “plaintive petition” speeches, such as we have seen in Job and various psalms in which the lament speaker cites the deity’s past great works, typically creation and defeating enemies, in

³⁵⁰ As to the historical context of *4 Ezra* and the identity of the oppressing powers, the text was likely composed around 100 CE. The opening line claims that Ezra received his visions in Babylon, “in the thirtieth year after the destruction of our city” (*4 Ezra* 3:1). This line likely refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, rather than its destruction in 586 BCE (Jacob M. Myers, *I and II Esdras* [Garden City: Doubleday, 1974], 129-131). The narrative setting of *4 Ezra* places Ezra in Babylon around 556 BCE, whereas a chronology based on the biblical accounts in Ezra-Nehemiah place Ezra’s activities a century or more later, during the reign of either Artaxerxes I (465-424BCE) or Artaxerxes II (404-358BCE) (Lester Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period, Vol. I* [London: T & T Clark, 2004], 291, 297, 324-329; idem., *Ezra-Nehemiah* [New York: Routledge Press, 1998], 115). Thus, the internal dating of *4 Ezra* appears to be based on events in the first century CE, rather than traditions it references from the sixth to fourth centuries BCE. The figure of Ezra and the setting of Babylonian exile were obviously useful for commenting on the themes of temple destruction and the suffering of “Israel,” as conceived in this text. Similar to the narrative setting of *2 Baruch* during the Babylonian exile, the narrative setting of *4 Ezra* achieves a thematic sympathy with a post-70 CE context. More specifically, M. Stone dates *4 Ezra* to the latter part of the reign of Domitian (81-96 CE), and David A. DeSilva dates it to the brief reign of Nerva (96-98 CE), based on their interpretations of the eagle vision in *4 Ezra* 11-12. The eagle representing Rome has three heads, which scholars identify as Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian. The eagle is indicted by the messiah who rebukes the heads. Stone concludes that *4 Ezra* was written towards the end of Domitian’s reign when his policies were most harsh towards Judeans (M. Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 9-10). DeSilva disagrees, however, on account of the “two puny wings” that rule after the third head. He argues: “Domitian was succeeded by Nerva, an old senator whose reign was ‘puny’ (96-98 C.E.). Here the ‘prophecy’ fails, however, since the second puny wing, Trajan, turns out to be the most successful emperor since Augustus himself, reigning twenty years and expanding the empire’s boundaries to their furthest reach. It is therefore quite possible that the author wrote during Nerva’s reign or even at the beginning of Trajan’s, which would bring us up to 100 C.E., the ‘thirtieth year’ after Jerusalem’s destruction (*4 Ezra* 3:1). If this is true, then it would be quite significant that the author presents the indictment of Rome by God’s Messiah as an event already accomplished: the verdict had been rendered, and the sentence will soon be carried out” (David A. DeSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Context, and Significance* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002], 331-332). Regardless of the exact year, “my people” are assured a positive outcome despite their present unfavorable circumstances, and are thus legitimated and validated in the narrative.

order to invoke the deity's response in the present unfortunate situation. In the deity's response, he affirms that creation was for the benefit of "my people" and reassures Ezra that he will correct the current unfortunate situation through the actions of "my son" and his own execution of judgment (*4 Ezra* 7:1-35). These actions will further benefit "my people" in that they will enjoy the temporary reign of "my son" as well as the post-judgment world (*4 Ezra* 7:28, 32-34). More specifically, in the description of "my son" judging and rebuking the powerful kings, "my son" will then "liberate" them and "make them joyful" (*4 Ezra* 12:33-34). Throughout the text, "my people" are guaranteed a positive fate despite their current suffering, and they are guaranteed that those who oppress them will be rebuked and judged by the deity and "my son." The deity is challenged to ameliorate their current suffering specifically by reference to the act of creation, including the preparation of Leviathan and Behemoth for an eschatological banquet, and by appealing to the deity's purported universal dominion (*4 Ezra* 6). He responds by assuring Ezra of his dominion as well as his preference and preparation for "my people" in the eschaton, including the actions of "my son." Thus, the deity's dominion, the endorsed and victorious status of "my son," the positive guarantee to "my people," and the negative fate of their oppressors are all articulated through the conflict motif.

In sum, *2 Baruch*, *1 Enoch*, and *4 Ezra* each promote a primary deity by reference to his acts of creation, including the creation of Leviathan and Behemoth, traditionally enemies who must be defeated or figures who must be tamed. The texts assert that these figures pose no threat to the deity, and moreover that he has preserved them for a specific purpose in the eschaton. The deity's preparations for the eschaton represent an additional

claim to the deity's universal dominion, specifically that he is in control of the present unfavorable socio-political conditions of the narrators. Within this combat-banquet tradition, the three texts develop biblical traditions about Leviathan, Behemoth, creation, and divine combat, as well as preserve narrative traditions that are not contained within the biblical anthology. Thus, they attest to the development and circulation of extra-biblical conflict motif traditions. These texts also use the conflict motif to promote a secondary figure by portraying the primary deity endorsing him and by portraying him as an eschatological divine warrior. Finally, these texts each promote a particular group by claiming to guarantee its positive fate in the eschaton through the victory of the secondary figure and universal dominion of the primary deity. These groups are privileged in the narratives over other groups that are characterized as consisting of powerful, wealthy, and/or royal people who oppress the favored group and who are "wicked" or disobedient to the primary deity. The validation of the privileged group and criticism of others involves the normative claim that the behavior of the privileged group is "righteous" and "obedient" as opposed to the "wicked" and "unrighteous" acts of others. This normative claim is supported by the assertion that the deity will act on behalf of the privileged group and punish others. Within these narratives, this particular and interested point of view is presented as a given.

2 Baruch, *1 Enoch*, and *4 Ezra* share a substantial amount of biblical and extra-biblical tradition as well as contemporary setting and function, and I have argued that their ideological claims depend on the texts' employment of the conflict motif. I have also found that they each characterize the primary deity, secondary figure, and privileged group, and other narrative details in slightly different ways, developing the traditional

materials to fit their specific narratives and ideologies. We gain additional insights into the development of relatively later (post-biblical) conflict motif traditions by comparing the traditions within *2 Baruch*, *1 Enoch*, and *4 Ezra* to instances of the conflict motif within rabbinic texts that preserve remarkably similar narrative details. I first discuss two select descriptions of Leviathan and Behemoth, which like *2 Baruch*, *1 Enoch*, and *4 Ezra* detail their creation and preservation for an eschatological banquet as well as a future slaying of Leviathan. Then I discuss rabbinic narratives of the “Holy One’s” defeat of the Prince of the Sea. In these rabbinic traditions, I argue, we see an assertion of the deity’s universal dominion that is similar to the legitimating claims made about Yahweh/*Theos* in the texts previously discussed. However, we also see a direct negation of the use of the conflict motif to legitimate secondary divine figures, and this stands in contrast to every other text previously discussed in this chapter save Isa 27:1.

B.Baba Batra 74b-75a, *Midrash Alpha Bethoth* ר"ה ר"ג, *Midrash Tanhuma Huqqath* 1, and *Midrash Tanhuma Hayyei Sarai* 3 assert the distinct role of the “Holy One” as the divine warrior. These rabbinic combat narratives run counter to the types of claims about secondary divine figures exhibited in first- and early-second-century CE Judean articulations of the conflict motif. The tension between these traditions brings into greater relief the ideological claims being made within each. At the same time, the shared use of the conflict motif for making divergent ideological claims highlights a common exegetical interest in biblical texts, as well as the utility of the conflict motif for making claims about divine authority.

B.Baba Batra 74b-75a describes the creation, preservation, and slaying of two Leviathans and two Behemoths:

“And God created the great sea-dragons” (Gen 1:21)... R. Johanan said: This is Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, as it is written: “On that day the Lord will punish with his sharp, [great, and strong] sword [Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent] (Isa 27:1). Rab Judah said that Rab said: All that the Holy One, blessed be he, created in his world, male and female he created them. So too, Leviathan the fleeing serpent and Leviathan the tortuous serpent, male and female he created them; and if they had coupled with one another they would have destroyed the entire world. What did the Holy One, blessed be he, do? He castrated the male and killed the female, salting (preserving) her for the righteous for the coming future; as it is written: “And he will slay the dragon that is in the sea” (Isa 27:1). So too, Behemoth on a thousand hills, male and female he created them, and if they had coupled with one another they would have destroyed the entire world. What did the Holy One, blessed be he, do? He castrated the male and cooled the female, and he preserved her for the righteous for the coming future; as it is written: “Look, his strength is in his loins” (Job 40:16); this is the male; “and his strength is in the muscles of his belly” (Job 40:16); this is the female ... (*b.Baba Batra* 74b)³⁵¹

The plurality “great sea-dragons” of Gen 1:21 are identified as male and female Leviathans, reading the parallel lines in Isa 27:1 as referring to separate creatures rather than two synonymous descriptions of one Leviathan. R. Johanan reasons that the “Holy One” created a male and female Behemoth as well and that he castrated the males and preserved the females “for the righteous in the world to come.” *B.Baba Batra* 75a states that this preservation is specifically for a future banquet:

Rabbah said in the name of R. Johanan: “In the future, the Holy One, blessed be he, will make a feast for the righteous from the flesh of Leviathan; as it is said: ‘Companions will make a feast of him’ (Job 40:30)” (*b.Baba Batra* 75a).

³⁵¹ *B.Baba Batra* is a tractate of *Nezikin*, which deals with civil matters, mostly land ownership. This section discusses regulations about measures, and the gemara expounds on measures, ships, and the sea. It includes a series of stories about impressive things people have seen at sea: “I saw an alligator...”; “a fish so big it destroyed a city”; and various sightings of Leviathan.

Like the first-century CE Judean examples of the combat-banquet tradition just discussed, *b.Baba Batra* 74b-75a characterizes Leviathan and Behemoth as being created by the “Holy One,” such that they are not rival divine enemies, and preserves the tradition that the creator deity has kept them from the time of creation for an eschatological banquet. However, the talmudic tradition preserves the notion that they posed a threat that the “Holy One” had to address. This is a threat to destroy the world, not a threat directly to the deity, but nonetheless he exerts his power to diffuse the threat, mutilating the males and killing the females.

B.Baba Batra 74b-75a also preserves the tradition of a future conflict in which the “Holy One” must defeat Leviathan, and develops this tradition in a highly significant manner:

When R. Dimi came, he said in the name of R. Jonathan: “In the future, Gabriel will prepare a hunt of Leviathan; as it is said: Can you drag Leviathan with a fish hook? Or with a cord press down his tongue? (Job 40:25). Unless the Holy One, blessed be he, help him, it is impossible for him; for it is said: He who made him, he can draw his sword near him (Job 40:19)” (*b.Baba Batra* 74b-75a).

The same narrative occurs in *Midrash Alpha Bethoth* ו"ה ד"ג, with some further elaboration. *Midrash Alpha Bethoth* ו"ה ד"ג preserves the tradition of Leviathan being preserved for an eschatological banquet, and then continues with the remarkable narration of an eschatological hunt for Leviathan. This text also begins with references to both creation and Isa 27:1:

This is Leviathan, he who has been prepared since the six days of creation to provide a feast for the righteous in the world to come, as it is said, “On that day the Lord with his sharp [and great and strong] sword will punish [Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and He will

slay the dragon that is in the sea (Isa 27:1)]” (*Midrash Alpha Bethoth* ר"ג ר"ה.³⁵²

The passage continues with a description of an eschatological hunt for Leviathan in which the angel Gabriel attempts to subdue Leviathan. However, as in *b.Baba Batra* 74b-75a, Gabriel is not able to subdue Leviathan, and the “Holy One” must intervene: “Leviathan’s strength swells over Gabriel, and swallows him, until the Holy One, blessed be he, rises over him as his aid.”³⁵³ The “Holy One” then brings Leviathan from the “great sea” before “the righteous” and slaughters him with “his own hand” (*Midrash Alpha Bethoth* ר"ג ר"ה ר"ה).³⁵⁴

³⁵² The Hebrew text is available in Abraham J. Wertheimer, *Battei Midrashoth*, Vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kuk, 1952-1955), 437-38. Jacobs speculates that although this passage is preserved in a work of uncertain date, its language and style suggest that it may be based on early sources (Jacobs, “Elements,” 8-9).

³⁵³ Jacobs emphasized the resonance of some of these narrative details with the *EE* and *Baal Cycle*, specifically the attempted swallowing of the warrior by an enemy (Tiamat and Mot) and the notion of the victorious warrior requiring divine support with his weaponry (Jacobs, “Elements,” 9). He argues that these details “clearly echo” the *EE*, which I think is an overstatement. He compares Gabriel with Marduk, and interprets the talmudic version as indicating that Yahweh merely helps Gabriel with Gabriel’s sword. Whereas, the midrashic version “conforms to the biblical tradition” in which Yahweh kills Leviathan. However, his comparison of Gabriel’s status within the pantheon and Marduk’s status within the *EE* pantheon is faulty. Marduk is certainly not only the “hero of the pantheon” as Gabriel might be. Rather, the *EE* narrates Marduk’s rise to ultimate dominion over all the other deities, a position much more comparable to Yahweh’s status than Gabriel’s. Rather, I interpret *b.Baba Batra* 74b-75a and the midrashic narrative as using Gabriel as a foil for Yahweh. Furthermore, I propose that the first- and early-second-century CE texts discussed above offer a better and more interesting comparison than the *EE*. It is an ideological goal of those texts to promote the validity of a figure who is secondary to the primary deity; whereas, it is an ideological goal of the rabbinic narratives to assert the sole dominion of the “Holy One” as shown through his prerogative to subdue Leviathan.

³⁵⁴ The association of Leviathan and Behemoth with an eschatological banquet also survives in 13th-17th century European Jewish art that depicts these figures along with a bird, Ziz, as part of a messianic banquet (Joseph Guttman, “Leviathan, Behemoth, and Ziz: Jewish Messianic Symbols in Art,” *HUCA* 39 [1968]: 219-230; Marc Michael

These narratives are highly significant for the current study because, I argue, they make substantial claims about the status of the “Holy One,” i.e., the Judean god Yahweh/*Theos*, particularly by employing the conflict motif. Moreover, they directly negate the type of ideological statements we have seen in *2 Baruch*, *1 Enoch*, and *4 Ezra*, as well as in Revelation, 1 Cor 15:20-28, 2 Thess 2:1-12, *Odes Sol.* 22.5, *T. Asher* 7:3, in which the conflict motif is used to endorse a secondary figure by portraying him as the victorious eschatological warrior. *B.Baba Batra* 74b-75a and *Midrash Alpha Bethoth* א"ה assert that no other divine being can subdue Leviathan, first by portraying Gabriel as failing in his attempt to do so, second by emphasizing that the “Holy One” slaughters Leviathan “with his own hand, ” and finally by citing Job 40:19 to explicitly state that only the creator of Leviathan can approach him in battle.

Rabbinic narratives of the “Holy One” defeating the Prince of the Sea are thematically related to the rabbinic references to Leviathan and Behemoth just discussed. In Chapter 3, I analyzed many biblical passages that characterize Leviathan and the sea/waters as enemies whom Yahweh defeats and subsequently controls. *B.Baba Batra* 74b, *Midrash Tanhuma Huqqath* 1, and *Midrash Tanhuma Hayyei Sarai* 3 each narrate the “Holy One” defeating the Prince of the Sea. Just as the passages from *b.Baba Batra* 74b-75a and *Midrash Alpha Bethoth* preserve and develop traditions about Leviathan and Behemoth as entities whom the “Holy One” must control and whom he slaughters, *b.Baba Batra* 74b and *Midrash Tanhuma* preserve and develop traditions about the “Holy One” attaining control over and slaying the sea, here explicitly personified and also

Epstein, “Harnessing the Dragon: A Mythos Transformed in Medieval Jewish Literature and Art,” in *Myth and Method* [ed. Laurie L. Patton and Wendy Doniger; Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996], 352-389).

represented by the Prince of the Sea. These narratives assert Yahweh's universal dominion through the conflict motif. Moreover, they do so in a tone that is even more vibrant than biblical instances of the conflict motif that they cite, in that the characterization of the sea is highly personified and the slaying of the Prince of the Sea is described explicitly as a battle scene. Like the rabbinic references to the "Holy One" slaughtering Leviathan and Behemoth, these narratives are making ideological statements about the "Holy One" particularly through the theme of combat.

The "Holy One" vs. the Prince of the Sea

There are several references to the Prince of the Sea in rabbinic texts. The most relevant for the current study are: *b.Hullin* 41b; *b.Baba Batra* 74b; *Midrash Tanḥuma*, *Ḥayyei Sarai* 3; and *Midrash Tanḥuma*, *Huqqath* 1.³⁵⁵ These passages preserve a tradition in which the sea is closely associated with a divine figure: the Prince of the Sea. The designation "Prince of the Sea" (*śar šel yām* in Hebrew and *śārā' dēyāmā'* in Aramaic) is strikingly similar to the Ugaritic epithet of the sea deity whom Baal defeats: Prince Yamm (*zabūlu yammu*).³⁵⁶ *B.Hullin* 41b proscribes slaughtering to the Prince of the Sea:

³⁵⁵ An additional reference occurs at *j.Sanh* 7.19, 25d. This is further attestation of the use of the epithet but does not provide additional characterization.

³⁵⁶ Other figures termed *śar šel* ..., "Prince of (some region)" in rabbinic literature include Gabriel "prince of fire" and Jurqemi "prince of hail" (*Pes.* 118a); Gabriel and Michael, who are called princes of the "upper regions" (*ma'ālāh*) (*Gen. Rab.* s.78); the prince/angel of the Egyptians whom Yahweh drowns first at the Reed Sea event (*Exod. Rab.* s. 22); and the "prince of the world ('ōlām)" (*b. Yeb.* 16b, *b. Hull.* 60a, *b. Sanh.* 94a, *Exod. Rab.* 17:4). This indicates a rabbinic convention of applying such epithets to divine figures. The Prince of the Sea is identified with the "sea" of various biblical passages, and at least figuratively the Prince of the Sea has the capacity to be physically coextensive with the actual sea. *B.Baba Batra* 74b and *Midrash Tanḥuma Huqqath* 1 do, however, propose identifying the Prince of the Sea with Rahab of Job 26:12, traditionally

“Do not slaughter into the seas... Why not into the seas? Lest someone say it is for the Prince of the Sea.” This brief reference explains that one should not slaughter into the sea because this act might be mistaken as a sacrifice to a deity other than the “Holy One,” specifically the Prince of the Sea. The text implies that slaughtering to this divine being is not desirable; it is considered an illegitimate cultic act. Behind this cautionary statement lies the notion that the Prince of the Sea might be (wrongly) understood as a deity to whom it is suitable to sacrifice. The text reflects a preference for the “Holy One” over the Prince of the Sea. The rabbinic narratives of the “Holy One” attaining control over and slaying the Prince of the Sea provide a fuller picture of the relationship between these two figures.

Extensive narratives regarding the Prince of the Sea occur in *b.Baba Batra* 74b, *Midrash Tanḥuma Huqqath* 1, and *Midrash Tanḥuma Hayyei Sarai* 3. These passages recount the “Holy One” defeating the Prince of the Sea and acting violently towards the sea/waters/ocean during creation. All three passages cite Job 26:12; *Midrash Tanḥuma Huqqath* 1 also cites Job 9:8, Job 38:8 and 10, and Ps 33:7; and *Midrash Tanḥuma Hayyei Sarai* 3 focuses on Psalm 104 and Gen 1:9. I will first discuss *b.Baba Batra* 74b and then how the midrashic versions contain fuller accounts of the narrative:

R. Judah said that Rab further said: “When the Holy One, blessed be he, desired to create the world, he said to the Prince of the Sea, ‘Open your mouth and swallow all the waters in the world!’ He responded, ‘Lord of the universe, the continuous flow of my own is enough.’ Immediately he trampled on him and slew him, as it is said: ‘By his strength he disturbed

a sea-dragon figure. Among examples of the conflict topos, including biblical, Ugaritic, and Mesopotamian, there is fluidity between the personified sea and various sea-dragons. The rabbinic narratives are the only instances in which these figures are explicitly identified with one another.

the sea, and by his understanding he shattered Rahab (Job 26:12)””
(*b.Baba Batra* 74b).

The setting of the narrative is the time of creation, and the “Holy One” is organizing the waters. He commands the Prince of the Sea to swallow the waters, to contain them, but the Prince of the Sea objects. The “Holy One” then tramples the Prince of the Sea and slays him.³⁵⁷ The notion of the “Holy One” slaying the Prince of the Sea during creation is remarkable. Many biblical passages juxtapose acts of creation with Yahweh killing sea-dragon figures, and creation accounts involve Yahweh containing and controlling the sea/waters. However, here the “Holy One” slays a divine being who corresponds to the entire sea. Specifically, the act of Yahweh killing Rahab, typically a sea-dragon figure, as cited from Job 26:12, is incorporated into the description of the “Holy One” apportioning the waters during creation. The closest biblical descriptions of creation are that in Job 9:8, in which Yahweh treads on the sea, and Job 38:8-11, in which Yahweh’s apportioning of the sea/waters is described as a conflict. Neither of these passages in Job, however, involve Yahweh slaying another divine being.

The midrashic versions of this narrative present fuller accounts. *Midrash Tanhuma Huqqath* 1 incorporates several additional details.³⁵⁸ It begins with an exegesis

³⁵⁷ *B.Baba Batra* 74b, *Midrash Tanhuma Huqqath* 1, and *Midrash Tanhuma Hayyei Sarai* 3 all use forms of the verb *b’t* “to trample, strike, kick” for Yahweh trampling the Prince of the Sea, and they all use forms of *hrg*, “to kill, execute, slay” for Yahweh slaying him. The root *b’t* only occurs twice in the MT, neither in verses relevant to the conflict motif nor in any material describing actions of Yahweh. The root *hrg* is common in the MT, and it is used with Yahweh as the subject. Among passages relevant to the conflict motif, Isa 27:1 uses *hrg* for Yahweh’s killing of the dragon in the sea.

³⁵⁸ I have consulted the Hebrew text available in Shlomo Buber, ed. *Midrash Tanhuma* IV (Jerusalem: Ortsel, 1964), 97-98. There are two editions of *Midrash Tanhuma*, the Standard edition and the Buber edition, based on two textual recensions, and these are further related to at least five other recensions of *Midrash Tanhuma*. These midrashic

of Ps 33:7, relating the notion of Yahweh gathering the sea “as in a bottle (*nôd*)”³⁵⁹ to the “Holy One’s” command that the Prince of the Sea swallow all the waters of creation. It adds that the Prince of the Sea wept before the “Holy One” killed him. It incorporates Job 9:8 and 38:8 regarding Yahweh treading on the sea and containing the sea. Finally, this midrash includes an additional verb for the “Holy One” trampling on the Prince of the Sea. Both *b.Baba Batra* 74b and this account have “he trampled on him and slew him,” using the root *b’ṭ* for trampling. However, *Midrash Tanḥuma Huqqath* 1 also states: “He tread them down and trod on them, and thus the sea received [the waters].” Here, the verbs for treading are from the roots *kbs* and *drk*. While the root *drk* is used in Job 9:8 for Yahweh treading on the sea, *kbs* is not used in any biblical instances of the conflict motif (nor is *kbs̄*). However, Irving Jacobs makes the interesting point that this verb is cognate to the Akkadian *kabāsu*, used in *Enuma Elish* IV, 129 for Marduk trampling Tiamat. We can only speculate about the significance of this word choice. It is clear from the other verbs used for treading/walking on the sea, that the notion of the victorious warrior treading on his enemy was part of the constellation of available images associated with the conflict motif. It appears that the specific sense of *kbs*, pressing down by treading, as

collections may date, at the earliest, to the ninth century CE, though the texts purport to cite authorities from the fourth century CE. *Huqqath* 1 begins the midrash to Numbers 18:2; here, the standard edition and Buber edition do not significantly differ (John. T. Townsend, *Midrash Tanḥuma* [Hoboken: KTAV, 1989], xi-xii; Hermann Strack and Gunter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* [trans. Markus Bockmuehl; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996], 303-305).

³⁵⁹ The MT of Ps 33:7 reads “as in a heap (*nēd*).” However, here and in several references to Exod 15:8, where the waters stand “as a heap (*nēd*),” *nēd* is read as *nôd*, a leather bottle or skin, which does not let water in or out (“*nôd*,” *Jast.*, 884).

one would with grapes, utterly squishing, was useful for providing a more vivid description of how Yahweh tread down the waters so that they could fit into the sea.

This tradition is also preserved in *Midrash Tanhuma Hayyei Sarai* 3,³⁶⁰ which discusses Psalm 104 at length while expounding upon Gen 24:1. The discussion of Psalm 104 elaborates on aspects of creation through a comparison of the “Holy One’s” construction of the heavens and earth with a king’s construction of his palace. The elaboration of creation through the metaphor of palace construction is significant considering the narrative topos of the victorious warrior deity attaining a palace after he defeats his enemies. Beyond this thematic innovation, *Midrash Tanhuma Hayyei Sarai* 3 adds several noteworthy narrative details. This account is the most lengthy of the three I discuss, and it elaborates on the “Holy One’s” conflict with the Prince of the Sea by adding a characterization of all the waters and “ocean” (*’ôqyānôš*), who respond to the “Holy One’s” violence against the Prince of the Sea and waters. In this account the “Holy One” tramples on the “ocean” and slays the Prince of the Sea, whereas *b.Baba Batra* 74b and *Midrash Tanhuma Huqqath* 1 have the “Holy One” trample and slay the Prince of the Sea only. In response to the slaying of the Prince of the Sea the seas are said to weep (*bôkîn*) even to the present day.³⁶¹ In response to the cries of the suffering waters, all

³⁶⁰ The standard and Buber editions of *Midrash Tanhuma* to Genesis and Exodus differ significantly. The standard edition of *Midrash Tanhuma Hayyei Sarai* 3 preserves the tradition of the “Holy One” slaying the Prince of the Sea. I consulted the Hebrew text printed in the edition *Midrash Tanhuma* (Jerusalem: Makor, 1971). A full translation is available in Samuel A. Berman, *Midrash Tanhuma-Yelammedenu* (Hoboken: KTAV, 1996).

³⁶¹ The notion of a continual suffering of the sea and Leviathan occurs in a late antique or early medieval bowl that records an incantation against “evil” enemies: “I will lay a spell upon you, the spell of the sea and the spell of Leviathan the dragon” (James A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* [Philadelphia: University of

other waters frantically flee in every direction. Finally, the “Holy One,” striking (*mistôr*) the fleeing waters, orders them to gather to their appropriate place. This vivid narrative characterizes the ocean and waters as a host of entities against whom Yahweh acts violently after he has killed the Prince of the Sea.

B. Baba Batra 74b, *Midrash Tanhuma Huqqath 1*, and *Midrash Tanhuma Hayyei Sarai 3* provide whole narrative versions, not just epitomes, of the “Holy One’s” conflict with a divine being who corresponds to the sea. Jacobs, in his 1977 study, which continues to be a starting point for investigating rabbinic combat traditions, highlights similarities between the rabbinic narratives in *b. Baba Batra 74b* and *Midrash Tanhuma Huqqath 1* (he does not discuss *Hayyei Sarai 3*) and select details of *Enuma Elish* and the *Baal Cycle*. He concludes that the “rabbinic version of the combat myth” indicates that the “early rabbinic exegetes” knew the “early myth presupposed by the biblical text,” both pertaining to Yahweh’s combat with the sea/waters and with Leviathan. I agree that our understanding of rabbinic combat traditions must begin with a comparison of the relevant rabbinic passages and earlier sources. The thematic and specific similarities indicate continuity with other articulations of the conflict topos, as well as continuity between the rabbinic texts and the biblical passages around which these exegetical texts construct their narratives. At the same time, differences and innovative features indicate that authors adapted the motif to their specific contexts and narrative aims. I also appreciate Jacobs’ propositions regarding the “mythological traditions of Palestine,” in

Pennsylvania Museum, 1913], 121, ll. 3-4). This incantation is consistent with literary passages that associate the sea and Leviathan with one another, and that consider these figures to represent enemies. It also attests to the survival of extra-biblical traditions surrounding these figures throughout late antiquity.

that he does not posit a direct influence of Ugaritic or Babylonian combat narratives on these later sources, which would not make sense chronologically. Rather, as I have argued, we have evidence in the biblical epitomes of Yahweh's conflicts for distinctly Judean mythological traditions, as well as evidence from first- and early-second-century CE Judean texts indicating that the conflict motif continued to be a useful and dynamic rhetorical tool for promoting favored deities and individuals as well as delegitimizing disfavored divine and human figures. The narratives in *b.Baba Batra* 74b and *Midrash Tanḥuma* show not simply a knowledge of "early myth" as Jacobs concludes, but rather the continued utility of the conflict motif into late antiquity. In other words, I wish to emphasize not only the preservation of earlier traditions but the contemporary development of the conflict motif as a malleable tool of ideology production.

B.Baba Batra 74b-75a, *Midrash Alpha Bethoth*, and *Midrash Tanḥuma* preserve whole narratives that focus on Leviathan, Behemoth, and the Prince of the Sea as entities over whom the "Holy One" must attain control and whom the "Holy One" kills. These narratives assert the "Holy One's" universal dominion through the conflict motif, and they emphasize his sole role as the divine warrior. These texts cite biblical examples of the conflict motif, but also develop distinct articulations of the "Holy One's" conflict with Leviathan, Behemoth, and the Prince of the Sea, which involve ideological statements about the "Holy One." The significance of the characterization of the "Holy One" as the sole slayer of Leviathan, Behemoth, and the Prince of the Sea is highlighted through comparison with first- and early-second-century CE Judean texts that employ the conflict motif to endorse a secondary figure by portraying him as the divine warrior in addition to or instead of the Judean god *Theos*. The relevant passages in *b.Baba Batra*

74b-75a, *Midrash Alpha Bethoth*, and *Midrash Tanhuma* assert the position of the Judean god, here called the “Holy One,” as divine warrior and as incomparable among divine beings. I propose that we may identify an ideological dialectic at work behind these differing portrayals of the “Holy One”/*Theos*’ relationship to secondary divine figures. Rabbinic combat traditions may be responding to the types of claims made about secondary divine figures that are furthered in first- and early-second-century CE Judean texts, including those concerned with Jesus/*Christos* and propagated by late antique *Christos*-centered ideology. Jesus/*Christos* is portrayed as the divine warrior who will defeat the dragon, Leviathan, and sea-beasts in the eschaton. However, according to rabbinic combat traditions even Gabriel is unable to defeat Leviathan. Previous treatments of these passages, whether in studies of the conflict motif or otherwise, have not brought this potential dynamic to light. However, the ideological work accomplished within the rabbinic traditions as well as the possible dialectic with competing ideologies is key to our understanding of rabbinic combat traditions as well as first- and early-second-century CE Judean instances of the conflict motif, especially those focusing on Jesus/*Christos*. Furthermore, these texts illustrate that the conflict motif was used for ideological purposes throughout late antiquity.

The Legitimacy of Individuals: Claiming or Having Power over the Sea

Thus far in this chapter, I have examined examples of the conflict motif that promote the legitimacy of certain divine beings, such as Yahweh, the Ancient of Days, the Messiah, Son of Man, Elect One, “my son,” and a divinized *Christos*. In this section, I discuss examples of the conflict motif which serve either to promote or to attack the

legitimacy of particular humans. These passages show continuity with earlier examples of the motif being used to promote certain human kings (discussed in Chapter 3): Yahdun-Lim, Zimri-Lim, David, and “the king” in *Ahiqar*. These kings are portrayed as sharing in the dominion of the victorious warrior deity, by possessing the deity’s weapons, characteristics, and/or position of authority over his defeated foes. Such characterizations of these royal figures, according to the ideology of the texts, show that the deity endorses them and that their royal authority is legitimate. The three textual traditions on which I now focus pertain to the legitimacy of three figures: Antiochus IV Epiphanes, Jesus, and Gamaliel.

Each of these traditions makes a claim about the legitimacy of an individual particularly with reference to authority over the sea. As discussed in Chapter 3, control over the sea is a substantial power that, in Hebrew Bible texts, is the prerogative of only Yahweh (Psalms 29; 65:8; 89:6-18; 93; 107:29; Job 26; Isa 51:15; Jer 31:34; and Nahum 1:1-11) and those whom he endorses (David in Ps 89:26). These passages describe or reference the relationship between Yahweh and the sea/waters as it relates to Yahweh’s status among divine beings and his kingship. It is clear that Yahweh has power over the sea/waters, and this power is given as an example of his might and incomparability. Considering the connotations of Yahweh’s authority over the sea within biblical traditions, the ascription of power over the sea is a highly significant assertion for a human figure, because it entails a claim to divine power and divine endorsement. The three traditions I discuss in this section each make a different claim about the particular human involved, but they all use the motif of Yahweh’s authority over the sea to comment on the legitimacy and authority of Jesus, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and

Gamaliel, respectively. The gospel accounts of Jesus walking on the sea and calming the sea bolster Jesus' status and portray him as possessing divine power. Interestingly, among the six passages within this textual tradition, only one (Matt 14:22-33) even mentions *Theos*; that is, these passages are primarily focused on endorsing Jesus. This stands in sharp contrast with the story of Gamaliel invoking Yahweh to calm a storm, in that Gamaliel attributes all power and honor to the "Ruler of the Universe" (*b.Baba Meši'a* 59b). 2 Maccabees uses the conflict motif twice to attack the legitimacy of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The author accuses him of claiming to have power over the sea, which the text offers as a feature of his arrogance and illegitimate claims to power. The examples in 2 Maccabees and the gospel accounts show continuity with the use of the conflict motif in royal ideology, despite the loss of autonomous political authority within Judea. The motif is used to attack the legitimacy of a foreign royal individual and to claim authority for Jesus who had no actual political authority. By comparing these three textual traditions, we may see more clearly the shared use of the motif of Yahweh's authority over the sea for the purposes of legitimating or delegitimizing a specific individual, as well as how each tradition uses the motif differently and innovatively to make a particular claim about the person with whom it is concerned.

The accounts of Jesus calming the sea occur in Mark 4:35-41; Matt 8:23-27; and Luke 8:22-25. In these stories, Jesus and the disciples are in a boat, and when a dangerous storm comes Jesus remains asleep. The disciples wake Jesus and he speaks to the sea, which calms in response. The disciples are awestruck and wonder about the implications of Jesus' ability to command the sea. The account in Mark reads as follows:

On that day, in the evening, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." So leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as

he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being filled. But he was in the stern, sleeping on the cushion; and they woke him and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Be calm! Be silent!” Then the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Do you not yet have confidence?” And they were very terrified and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (Mark 4:35-41).

Each account specifies that the storm was of such an intensity that the boat was in danger and the disciples were afraid.³⁶² Jesus’ action towards the wind/sea/waves is described as follows: “He... rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Be calm! Be silent! (*phimaō*)’ (Mark 4:39)”; “He... rebuked the winds and the sea” (Matt 8:26); “He... rebuked the wind and the raging waves” (Luke 8:24). In each account Jesus rebukes (*epetimēsen*), and the objects of rebuke are the wind and sea/waves, though in Mark he rebukes the wind and speaks a command to the sea. The wind and sea respond as follows: “Then the wind ceased, and there was a great calm” (Mark 4:39); “and there was a great calm” (Matt 8:26); “they ceased, and there was a calm” (Luke 8:24).³⁶³ This interaction between Jesus and the wind/sea/waves shows that Jesus has power over the wind/sea/waves. Such power is comparable to Yahweh’s ability to rebuke and still the sea in the various biblical

³⁶² Mark and Matthew both describe the storm as “great,” including waves that were breaking over and covering the boat, and Luke says that the windstorm caused the boat to fill with water. Mark uses *lailaps megalē amenou* (literally, a great storm of wind), and similarly, Luke uses *lailaps amenou*, while Matthew uses *seismas megas* (a great storm).

³⁶³ The specific vocabulary for “calm” (*galēnē*) and “ceased” (forms of *pauō* and *ekpauō*) do not resemble any of the LXX passages in which Yahweh stills the sea (LXX Ps 64:8; 88:10; and 106:29). For LXX Ps 88:10 and 64:8, this may simply be because the LXX verse does not include a description of the sea/waters (as calm or as having ceased) after Yahweh’s command. Also, LXX Ps 64:8 has Yahweh “disturbing” the sea rather than silencing it. LXX Ps 106:29 does describe the change of the storm to a gentle breeze (*auran*) and states that the waves become still (using *sigāō*).

passages mentioned above, which emphasize that such authority is Yahweh's sole prerogative. In many Hebrew Bible passages, Yahweh rebukes various foes; most pertinent here are Job 26:11, Ps 18:16 (LXX 17:16), and Ps 104:7 (LXX 103:7), in which Yahweh's rebuke (*epitimēseōs*) makes the waters flee (LXX Ps 103:7), exposes the channels of the sea (LXX Ps 17:16), and astounds the heavens (Job 26:11). In three psalms Yahweh exerts his authority over the sea by stilling the waves/sea (Pss 65:8; 89:10; and 107:29). The gospel accounts draw on the biblical notion of Yahweh commanding the sea to portray Jesus as having divine authority. This purpose is made explicit in the disciples' response to the wind/sea calming: "And they were very terrified and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'" (Mark 4:41); "They marveled, saying, 'What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?'" (Matt 8:27); "They were terrified and marveled, and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?'" (Luke 8:25). The disciples' rhetorical question suggests that it is a superhuman ability to successfully command the wind/sea/water, and this suggestion corresponds completely with the notion in the Hebrew Bible that this authority belongs to the divine.³⁶⁴ Thus, these gospel stories utilize the biblical imagery and ideology in service of promoting Jesus as superhuman figure who wields divine power.³⁶⁵

³⁶⁴ At the same time, the notion that Jesus possesses this authority is in tension with the biblical notion that this authority is a prerogative of Yahweh alone. There are several ways to account for this tension. The central issue is: what are the implications of Jesus' authority over the sea? The possibilities include, among others: (1) Jesus is incomparable among humans, just as Yahweh is incomparable among divine figures. That is, there is a parallel between Jesus the human and Yahweh the deity. (2) *Theos* endorses Jesus by sharing his authority over the sea with Jesus, just as Yahweh endorsed David by stating that he would place David's hand over the sea/rivers (Ps 89:26). This would be consistent with the gospel notion, emphasized especially in Mark, that Jesus is the Davidic Messiah.

David is never portrayed as actually wielding power over the sea, however, so the portrayal of Jesus actualizing this authority is innovative. (3) Jesus is comparable to Yahweh; he possesses an authority that belongs to Yahweh and is therefore on par with Yahweh. Of course, we can only speculate about what the gospel authors intended or exactly what they thought the notion of authority over the sea implied. However, within the context of the gospels, the first two options seem reasonable because they are consistent with and/or complementary to other characterizations of Jesus and his relationship to *Theos*. From a broader comparative perspective, if we read these passages as independent stories, apart from how they are incorporated into the gospels, I speculate that the implications of Jesus wielding authority over the sea could be greater. In their current context within the gospels, however, the notion that Jesus is on par with Yahweh does not fit.

³⁶⁵ Commentaries generally note a connection between these gospel stories and the relevant HB passages, but they do not fully explore the nuances of the claims being made about Jesus. R. T. France describes Matthew's story as showing "Jesus' control over the natural world." He cites HB passages showing the "theme of God's control over the wind and waves," and concludes that the Matthean passage "reinforces the message that Jesus can do what normal human beings cannot do," specifically, "he wields the Creator's power" (Richard T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007], 344-377). I agree completely with these brief summary statements about the function of the passage, but I find it necessary to elaborate further. C. S. Keener, also commenting on Matthew, concludes that the gospel accounts of Jesus calming the sea are distinct from Judean and Greco-Roman parallels in that they either center around characters who lived long ago or when featuring contemporary figures, attribute the ability to calm the sea to a deity directly (Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 279-280). This conclusion is consistent with my argument that the gospel accounts are claiming that Jesus possesses divine authority over the sea himself. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, commenting on Luke, recognizes this, though his wording seems hesitant: "Jesus (is) being depicted in a manner not unlike Yahweh of the OT. Commentators have often thought that lurking behind this early Christian presentation of him was Yahweh's mastery over the sea and waters in such passages as Pss 18:16; 29:3-4; 65:7; 89:9; 104:6-7; and especially 107:23-32. If this is true, then this miracle also has a symbolic value for the role of Jesus' power in human lives. As Yahweh established order over chaos and rescued his people from watery disasters, so now Jesus is presented as having a similar role in their destiny" (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I, 1-9* [AB 28; Garden City: Doubleday, 1981], 728.) While Fitzmyer accurately identifies the relevant HB passages, his brief comment about the implications for the status of Jesus are overly cautious. Furthermore, he shades into speculation about "symbolic" meanings of the account, as many commentators seem to do. Such abstract readings do not seem to be grounded in the text, but rather in impressionistic notions of the "meaning" of gospel stories. C. S. Mann's older commentary on Mark 4:35-41 illustrates this tendency. He states that "Attempts to find parallels to the narrative, biblical and otherwise, are not convincing... The narrative makes two assertions, one about Jesus and the other about faith. According to the first, the story declares the

The gospel accounts of Jesus walking on water accomplish the same purpose: to show that Jesus has superhuman abilities, again involving water. Mark 6:45-52, Matthew 14:22-33, and John 6:16-21 each relate an episode of Jesus walking on water. Walking on water is not a typical human ability. The disciples in the boat think he is a ghost (*phantasma* in Mark 6:49 and Matt 14:26), and they are terrified (Mark 6:50; Matt 14:26;

sovereignty of Jesus over the manifestation of Satan as epitomized in the chaos of a storm (and also at another level over the sea as signifying the place of darkness and death). Secondly, the narrative is a demand for faith—not faith in Jesus as a wonderworker, but faith in God as the creator and sustainer of nature” (Christopher S. Mann, *Mark: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, [Garden City: Doubleday, 1986], 274.) First, he completely ignores the relevant HB passages. Second, while he describes the assertion about Jesus accurately with regard to sovereignty, there is no Satan in this passage; this is pure projection. France also argues against the “demonic interpretation” of the passage (France, *Matthew*, 377 n.23). Third, Mann’s parenthetical comment about the sea “as signifying the place of darkness and death” is a completely impressionistic interpretation, which further ignores the HB notions of the relationship between Yahweh and the sea. Finally, he describes a second assertion of the passage as pertaining to “faith in God,” yet *Theos* is not mentioned in the passage at all. Rather, the text focuses solely on the status of Jesus and portrays Jesus as possessing power over the sea. A. Y. Collins, in her more recent commentary to Mark, places the story of Jesus calming the sea in a very broad literary context including the *Odyssey*, various psalms, the story of Jonah, stories of deities being roused from slumber, and stories of sailors in distress calling out for various gods’ help (A. Y. Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007], 257-263). She notes the HB references to “God’s power over the sea,” though she does not use these references to argue for her interpretation of the gospel story (*Mark*, 260 n.24). Rather, she focuses on a comparison of Jesus with Jonah, concluding: “The narrative thus portrays Jesus behaving not like a devout human person but like God, who caused the sea to cease from its ragings in the Jonah story. Thus, Jesus is portrayed not so much as a human being who has trust in God’s power to save, but as a divine being. The amazement of the disciples is intelligible in light of the cultural context and parallel texts: they have God manifest in the boat with them!” (A. Y. Collins, *Mark*, 260). While my analysis of Mark 4:35-41 and the parallels in Matthew and Luke is more narrowly focused than A. Y. Collins’ broad literary analysis, our conclusions about the function of the gospel stories’ claim about the status of Jesus are similar. We both identify authority over the sea, within the relevant literary traditions, as a power that belongs to *Theos*. She considers the notion of Jesus wielding this authority to constitute the claim that Jesus is “God manifest,” or that the power of *Theos* is manifest through Jesus. Whereas I contend that these stories portray Jesus possessing authority over the sea himself and that they assert that he is not only incomparable among human figures but also claim that he is a superhuman figure with (some level of or some particular) divine power.

John 6:19). Matthew includes the detail that Peter is unable to walk on the water because he is afraid of the strong wind (Matt 14:28-30). Each account specifies that the water was particularly rough at the time: “the wind was opposing” them (Mark 6:48; Matt 14:24), “tormenting them” (Mark 6:48); the boat was “tormented by waves” (Matt 14:24); and “the lake became rough because a strong wind was blowing” (John 6:18). The wind “ceased” when Jesus entered the boat (Mark 6:51a; Matt 14:32).³⁶⁶ Like the episode when Jesus is portrayed calming the sea, this episode portrays Jesus as having superhuman ability to walk on the water and to withstand rough wind and waters. This narrative conclusion is stated explicitly in Matt 14:33: after the wind calms, the disciples conclude that Jesus is the “Son of God” (Matt 14:33), attributing to him a special relationship to the divine, possibly some level of divinity.³⁶⁷ Otherwise, among the six accounts of Jesus commanding or walking on the water, there is no mention of *Theos*; these stories are focused on promoting Jesus exclusively. The book of Job twice references Yahweh walking on water, in the context of various acts of creation and examples of Yahweh’s purported incomparable might and knowledge. Job 9:8b describes Yahweh as “he who treads on the back/waves of the sea,” and the Septuagint describes him as the one “who

³⁶⁶ The Greek “ceased” in Mark 6:51a and Matt 14:32 is *ekopasen*, the same form in Mark 4:39, when Jesus commands the sea.

³⁶⁷ The use of the title “Son of God” for Jesus here and elsewhere draws upon but extends beyond Davidic royal adoption traditions (based on 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7; and Ps 89:26). The term was used in Greek literature and royal ideology to indicate both divine endorsement and sometimes divinity or partial divinity. For the uses of this term in Greek and Judean literature, see Wilhelm Bonn Schneemelcher, “*huiós*,” *TDNT*, 8:334-397. On the ideology of patrilineal descent and the use of patrilineal descent as a mechanism for the construction of identities, see Caroline Johnson Hodge, “Patrilineal Descent and the Construction of Identities,” *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 19-42.

walks on the sea as if on firm ground (*hōs ep' edaphous*),” and in Job 38:16, Yahweh asks, “Have you entered the sources of the sea, or walked in the range (LXX, “track”) of the deep?” Though the Hebrew text uses two different verbs for treading and walking in Job 9:8 and 38:16, the Septuagint uses forms of one verb *peripateō*, and this is the verb used in the gospel accounts of Jesus walking on the water.³⁶⁸ In addition to these two verses, Ps 77:20 (LXX 76:20) may be relevant: “Your way was in the sea, your path in the great waters, yet your footsteps were not known.” The following verse 21 makes it clear that the psalm is referring to the exodus story because it mentions Moses and Aaron. As discussed above, this psalm exhibits the combined motifs of exodus and combat with the sea. Job 9:8, 38:16, and Ps 77:20 each reference Yahweh walking in the sea, and the Septuagint version of Job 9:8 specifies that Yahweh walks on the sea as if on firm ground. The notion of Yahweh walking in/on the sea is thematically related to his authority over the sea in these biblical passages. The gospel episodes of Jesus walking on the water certainly assume that this is a superhuman ability, and it is possible that they build upon the biblical notion of Yahweh walking in/on the sea/waters.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁸ The Hebrew text of Job 9:8 uses a *qal* masculine singular participle, *dōrek*, which the LXX translates with the masculine singular participle *peripatōn*. The Hebrew of Job 38:16 uses the second person masculine singular *hitpa'el* perfect of *hlk*: *hithallāktā*, which the LXX translates with the second person aorist active indicative *periepatēsas*. The *hitpael* of *hlk* carries an iterative or habitual meaning, which is accurately preserved with *peripateō*.

³⁶⁹ Commentaries to Mark 6:45-52 and the parallels in Matthew and John generally analyze these accounts as an alloform of the story of Jesus calming the sea, as I have. As with that story, scholars tend to cite the relevant HB passages, which describe Yahweh walking/treading on the sea, but they do not have the space to discuss fully the implications thereof. See Mann, *Mark*, 306; France, *Matthew*, 565-572; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8-20* (Minneapolis, Fortress, 2001), 2:321-22; and Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 673-674. For a focused study of the pericope see Patrick J. Madden, *Jesus Walking on the Sea* (New York: De Gruyter,

In sum, biblical passages that describe Yahweh's authority over the sea indicate that this authority makes Yahweh incomparable among divine beings. Yahweh's authority over the sea, according to the ideology of the texts, demonstrates that there is no one like Yahweh. In light of this, the portrayal of Jesus as having authority over the sea/waves constitutes a highly significant claim within the gospels: not only is Jesus incomparable among humans, he is a superhuman figure who wields divine authority.

The significance, connotations, and efficacy the motif of Yahweh commanding the sea and walking on the sea, which the gospels use to promote Jesus, becomes even more apparent when we analyze how 2 Maccabees uses this motif to attack the legitimacy of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.³⁷⁰ 2 Maccabees offers an inversion of the typical use of the motif to legitimate individuals. Antiochus IV Epiphanes is portrayed as wielding illegitimate power when he is accused of imagining that he possesses authority over the sea:

So Antiochus carried off eighteen hundred talents from the temple, quickly to Antioch, thinking in his arrogance that he could sail on the land and walk on the sea, because his mind was elated (2 Macc 5:21).

Thus he who only a little while before had thought in his superhuman pretentiousness that he could command the waves of the sea, and had

1997). Madden ultimately argues that the pericope was originally a post-resurrection story that has been displaced. Regardless, he offers a useful catalogue of potential parallels among non-Christian literature, though he concludes that there are "no real parallels" among them.

³⁷⁰ Though 2 Maccabees predates the gospels, it is more useful to discuss how the motif is used in 2 Macc after discussing the gospel use. The legitimating function of the motif as used in the gospels and the illegitimizing function of the motif in 2 Maccabees depend on the same constellation of biblical notions of Yahweh's authority over sea. However, 2 Maccabees inverts the legitimating function in order to criticize Antiochus IV Epiphanes. This inversion and the delegitimizing function can be seen more clearly after discussing the gospels examples.

imagined that he could weigh the high mountains in a balance, was brought down to earth and carried in a litter, clearly displaying the power of God to everyone (2 Macc 9:8).

Both passages describe Antiochus as having false pretenses about his importance and abilities. He is described as acting out of “arrogance” (*hyperēphānias*) and “superhuman false pretension” (*hyper anthrōpon alazoneian*). He is portrayed as mistakenly thinking that he has particular powers that he does not actually have. This delusional and arrogant thinking, which the text attributes to Antiochus, is not only unflattering but also implies that Antiochus’ actions are illegitimate, since according to the text these actions are motivated by his delusional thinking.

The specific powers 2 Maccabees cites are: sailing on land and walking on the sea (2 Macc 5:8) and commanding the sea and weighing the mountains (2 Macc 9:8). In 2 Macc 9:8, his imagined superhuman abilities are contrasted with his current status in the narrative: he is deceased. The carrying of his dead body in a litter is modified with the phrase: “clearly displaying the power of God to everyone” (*phaneran tou theou pasin tēn dunamin endeiknumenos*). How is it that Antiochus’ death indicates *Theos*’ powers to everyone (*tou theou pasin tēn dunamin endeiknumenos*)? This narrative claim requires explanation. First, his death makes apparent the gap between his purported self-understanding (he thinks he has superhuman powers) and reality (he does not have these powers). Second, the specific powers Antiochus purportedly thought he had are actually *Theos*’ powers; this is the claim that these passages are making. It is certainly the case that the powers described are attributed to Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible and to the Judean god, *Theos*, in the LXX. As discussed above, command over the sea/waves/waters is the prerogative of Yahweh and this power is typically cited as a marker of incomparable

status and universal authority for Yahweh. Thus, the commentary on Antiochus' status and powers in 2 Maccabees 5:21 and 9:8, using the notions of commanding the sea and walking on the sea, is not random. Rather, the author utilizes the motif of authority over the sea to attack Antiochus' legitimacy by portraying him as falsely imagining that he possesses such power. The same applies to the notion of weighing the mountains, which in Isa 40:12 is an ability of Yahweh alone: "Who has [...] weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?" The accusation that Antiochus thought he could weigh the mountains is equivalent to saying that he thought he had divine powers, and specifically divine powers associated with the Judean god, which show the Judean god to be incomparable and to have universal dominion. The text argues that Antiochus did not in fact have these powers and that his claim to these powers was delusional. In this manner, the text attacks the legitimacy of Antiochus' royal dominion.

These two passages from 2 Maccabees exhibit an inversion of the legitimizing ideology of the conflict motif. In the present chapter, as well as in Chapters 2 and 3, I discuss several examples of the use of the conflict motif to attack the legitimacy of disfavored divine and human characters. However, 2 Maccabees attacks the authority and legitimacy of Antiochus in a distinct way. Typically, disfavored divine beings, such as Satan, are portrayed as exercising illegitimate power when they are portrayed with the characteristics of previously known defeated divine enemies, such as the dragon or serpent associated with the sea. Human enemies are typically delegitimated through comparison with defeated divine enemies. For example, as I discuss in Chapter 3, in Ezek 29:3 and 32:2, the Egyptian Pharaoh is characterized as a dragon, and in Jer 51:34, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon is described as a dragon. According to the ideology

developed in biblical examples of the conflict motif, if these figures are comparable to the dragon, then Yahweh can and will defeat them, just as he has defeated the dragon/sea. However, unlike these other foreign royal figures, Antiochus IV Epiphanes is not identified with a defeated enemy. Rather he is portrayed as claiming to have powers that belong to Yahweh in association with his victory over his enemies, including the dragon/serpent and the sea/waters. This is a creative innovation that not only accomplishes the goal of delegitimizing Antiochus' political dominion, but also serves to characterize him as maintaining grandiose delusions and to present him as a foil for Yahweh/*Theos*. This critique is especially fitting for the narrative context of 2 Maccabees, which focuses on Antiochus' social, political, and cultic attacks on Jerusalem, Judeans, and the Temple.³⁷¹ Within this context it would be appropriate for a Judean author to reassert the dominion and incomparability of the Judean god after the Jerusalem cult had been disrupted, as well as to attack the authority of the political agent blamed for this disruption.

³⁷¹ 2 Maccabees offers a narrative of events in Jerusalem from ca. 175 BCE, when the high priest Jason instituted social and cultic innovations in the city (making Jerusalem a *polis* and building a gymnasium), to ca. 161 BCE, when the Maccabees successfully defeated the Seleucid general Nicanor. Judea had come under Seleucid rule ca. 200 BCE, and Antiochus IV Epiphanes became the Seleucid king in 175 BCE; he reigned until his death in 163 BCE. According to Judean sources, which present a biased account that is hostile to Antiochus, Antiochus deposed the high priest Onias III in favor of Jason, who paid for this endorsement. Menelaus, however, also sought Antiochus' endorsement, and Antiochus deposed Jason. Controversy ensued when Menelaus and his brother Lysimachus took temple vessels to pay for political favors; Judeans objected, Jason attempted to depose Menelaus, and Antiochus intervened in support of Menelaus. In 169 BCE, Antiochus entered the temple and in 167 BCE, he pillaged Jerusalem and outlawed Judean cultic practices, including: sacrifices, Sabbath, and circumcision. Furthermore, he established the Syrian Baal-Shamen in the Jerusalem temple. The Hasmonean family began a revolt that was eventually successful in taking back the temple and region (Gera, *Judaea and Mediterranean Politics*, 223-240; Goldstein, *II Maccabees*, 113-123; and Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 3-15).

A final example that contributes to our understanding of the trope of calming the sea is the following story about Gamaliel:

Also, when R. Gamaliel was coming by boat, a crushing wind rose against it, [it was about] to drown him. He thought: It appears to me that this is only because of R. Eliezar b. Hyrcanus. He stood up and said: “Ruler of the Universe, it is apparent and known before you that it was not for my honor that I did this and not for the honor of my father’s house, but for your honor, so that dissensions should not increase in Israel.” The sea settled from its storm (*b.Baba Meši’a* 59b).

This story provides an excellent contrast to both the gospel stories about Jesus calming the sea and the use of the motif in 2 Maccabees, with regard to what sort of claim each tradition makes about the human character involved. However, all three traditions, I argue, are focused on issues of legitimacy and make claims about legitimacy particularly through the trope of calming the sea, as it has developed from biblical instances of the conflict motif.

The narrative setting of this brief story about Gamaliel in the boat is the longer narrative about Eliezar b. Hyrcanus.³⁷² According to the story in *b.Baba Meši’a* 59a-59b,

³⁷² This story is contained in a portion of gemara in the tractate *b.Baba Meši’a*, the second portion of the division of *Neziqin* (Damages). Within a discussion of civil law, this tractate focuses on the maintenance of equity in property relationships. The relevant gemara occurs in the fourth chapter, which deals with relationships between buyers and sellers, after a mishnah (4:10) about how the rules of fraud claims also apply to spoken words. This leads to a discussion of wrongs committed by acts of speech. The story about Eliezar, also containing the brief story about Gamaliel, ends with a few statements that pertain to the topic of the mishnah, wrongs committed by words. Neusner speculates that these relevant concluding components account for the inclusion of the whole story of Eliezar within the treatment of this mishnah (Jacob Neusner, *The Talmud of Babylonia, An American Translation, XXIB: Tractate Bava Mesia, Chapters 3-4* [Brown Judaic Studies 214; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990], 157). I would add that Gamaliel’s concern for “factions/dissensions” (*maḥālôqôt*) in his apology to Yahweh, as well as the debates over the origins of acceptable halakic opinions throughout the story about Eliezar, are thematically related to the concern for communicating equitably with “proselytes” in the mishnah and its following discussion. For discussion of the larger narrative about Eliezar

Eliezar disagreed with the majority opinion on various halakot. He successfully performed several miracles in order to prove the validity of his opinions, including calling down the heavenly voice, which affirmed Eliezar's stance. However, R. Joshua argued that "It is not in heaven," (*lō' baššāmayîm hî'*) which is interpreted by R. Jeremiah as referring to the Torah. R. Jeremiah concludes that matters of halakah cannot be decided by the heavenly voice, because the Torah is no longer in heaven, and therefore, matters of halakah are to be decided by the majority. The story continues that Eliezar was excommunicated for dissenting from the majority. Following this, there was great calamity: a third of various crops failed, and everything Eliezar looked at burned up. At this point in the narrative, the story of Gamaliel in the boat occurs.

Gamaliel reasons that the dangerous and threatening storm was caused by Yahweh on account of Eliezar being excommunicated. In his reasoning, he reflects the assumption and claim that Yahweh controls the sea. This claim is best represented by Isa 51:15 and Jer 31:34, which describe Yahweh as the one "who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar"; Ps 65:8, which describes Yahweh as the one "who stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves"; and Ps 107:29, which states that "he made the storm a calm, so that its waves were still." I propose that the statement attributed to Gamaliel in this narrative, and thus the tradition contained in *b.Baba Meši'a* 59b, preserves the biblical claim that Yahweh controls the sea and, moreover, utilizes this trope to tease out the aftermath of Eliezar's excommunication, including Yahweh's response and Gamaliel's apology. According to Gamaliel's reasoning, Yahweh responds to Eliezar's

in *b.Baba Meši'a* 59a-59b, see Jeffrey Rubenstein, *Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 35-63.

expulsion by causing the life-threatening storm. Gamaliel then defends Eliezar's excommunication by saying that it was done for Yahweh's honor (*kābôd*), not for his own or his ancestry's honor. Then the sea calms. The implication is that Yahweh is satisfied with Gamaliel's apology and that Yahweh calms the sea. The narrative preserves the biblical tradition that Yahweh controls (makes rise and makes calm) the sea.³⁷³

Gamaliel's apology about the honor of Yahweh certainly increases Gamaliel's positive characterization, by portraying him as disinterested in his own authority and personal honor. However, in sharp contrast with the gospel stories about Jesus, which serve to bolster Jesus' authority by attributing to him power over the sea, this passage maintains those powers for Yahweh and bolsters Gamaliel by having him deflect honor to Yahweh. Likewise, in contrast with 2 Macc 9:8, Gamaliel does not claim or attempt to exercise power, but ascribes all honor and authority to Yahweh. This increases Gamaliel's positive characterization, but through the qualities of deference and disinterestedness.

The tropes of calming the sea (as preserved in Matt 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25; 2 Macc 9:8; and *b.Baba Meši'a* 59b) and of walking on the sea (as preserved in Matt 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-52; John 6:16-21; and 2 Macc 5:21) are used in the texts just discussed to make particular claims about the authority and legitimacy of Jesus, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and Gamaliel, respectively. The notions of calming the sea and walking on the sea are both variations of controlling the sea. To control the sea is a

³⁷³ Similarly, y.Berakot 9:1, 63a reserves the ability to control the sea for the "Holy One." In this story, a Jewish boy successfully invokes the Judean god to calm a storm after his shipmates have unsuccessfully invoked their "idols" to do so. As in the various biblical examples of this motif, the ability to control the sea shows Yahweh to be incomparable among divine beings. Furthermore, the story emphasizes that human kings do not have sovereignty over the sea; rather, citing Ps 146:5-6, the text claims that this is the Judean god's prerogative as the creator of the heaven, earth, and seas.

superhuman ability according to these texts as well as the biblical traditions from which they draw. In biblical passages, this ability is reserved for Yahweh and shows him to be incomparable. Yahweh's prerogative to command the sea is a particular component of the conflict motif as it is developed in Hebrew Bible texts. 2 Maccabees, the gospels, and *b.Baba Meši'a* each use the trope of commanding the sea to characterize the authority and legitimacy of a certain individual, and each does so in a distinct and innovative manner. The gospel stories claim that Jesus can command the sea in order to portray him as having superhuman powers, 2 Macc 5:21 and 9:8 attack the legitimacy of Antiochus IV Epiphanes by accusing him of imagining that he can command the sea, and *b.Baba Meši'a* 59b both increases the positive characterization of Gamaliel by having him defer honor to Yahweh and reserves the ability to command the sea for Yahweh. Through comparison of these distinct textual traditions, we may see their creative uses of the biblical conflict motif more clearly. Each tradition differs in its portrayal of the respective individual's authority, while sharing a concern for legitimacy that is articulated specifically through the trope of commanding the sea.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have analyzed instances of the conflict motif that occur from ca. 500 BCE to ca.1000 CE. Isa 27:1; Daniel 7; 2 *Baruch*; 1 *Enoch*; 4 *Ezra*; Revelation; 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Thessalonians 2; *Odes of Solomon*; *Testament of Asher*; *b.Baba Batra*; and *Midrash Alpha Bethoth* each exhibit an eschatological rendering of the conflict motif. These texts describe a combat that occurs in the future that is part of an end of times scenario or an overhaul of the existing world order. The temporal shift that characterizes

such eschatological speculation offers a new setting for divine combat, and, moreover, it extends the connections proposed by mythological narratives between past and present to include the future. As a result, authors were able to adapt the motif to serve a broader range of ideological purposes. In addition to using the motif to promote favored divine beings and to delegitimize disfavored ones, authors adapted it to promote various secondary figures by characterizing them as future divine warriors endorsed by a primary deity. Furthermore, authors used the motif to bolster particular groups by claiming that divine figures would act on their behalf in the eschaton and that they would benefit from the divine warrior's future victory over their oppressors.

All of the texts discussed in this chapter draw upon preceding biblical combat traditions while engaging in innovative myth-making. The authors of Isaiah 27:1 and Daniel 7 reconfigure earlier biblical notions of divine combat within eschatological speculation. Subsequent authors who employed the conflict motif engaged in extensive biblical exegesis, citing earlier biblical texts, especially Isa 27:1, in which Yahweh is the eschatological divine warrior. *2 Baruch*, *1 Enoch*, and *4 Ezra* use the conflict motif to assert Yahweh's universal dominion, including preparation for the eschaton, to promote secondary figures as eschatological divine warriors, to offer narrative guarantees to specific favored groups, and to attack disfavored earthly authorities. Texts focusing on the figure of Jesus/*Christos* portray him as a past and/or future divine warrior who is endorsed by Yahweh and who shares the heavenly throne. The authors who produced these texts employ imagery from biblical instances of the conflict motif, Davidic royal ideology, prophetic political commentary, and descriptions of creation. Likewise, within passages from *b.Baba Batra*, *Midrash Alpha Bethoth*, and *Midrash Tanhuma*, biblical

verses are constantly cited and serve as a scaffolding upon which biblical themes of creation and combat are elaborated. These rabbinic combat traditions assert the role of the “Holy One” as the sole slayer of the Prince of the Sea, Leviathan, and Behemoth, and deny the possibility that any other divine figure could defeat them. I have proposed that we may identify an ideological dialectic behind these traditions, in which the status of preferred divine figures is asserted specifically through the theme of divine combat. The process of exegesis is generative within these traditions, and authors developed and elaborated on biblical themes and imagery, adapting the conflict motif to their particular socio-political situation and to suit their specific ideological aims.

In the second section of this chapter, I analyzed traditions that utilize the conflict motif to promote or attack the legitimacy of specific individuals. These traditions build upon biblical royal ideology. However, they show a remarkable innovation, in that authors creatively adapted the conflict motif to make statements about the political and/or divine authority of individuals, despite the loss of autonomous political authority within Judea. The gospel stories of Jesus calming the sea and walking on the sea employ the notion of Yahweh calming and treading upon the sea/waters to claim that Jesus is a superhuman figure with divine authority. 2 Maccabees accuses Antiochus IV Epiphanes of imagining that he possesses power over the sea, in an effort to portray this disfavored political figure as delusional. Furthermore, his death is interpreted within the narrative as proof of the power of *Theos*. While many texts use the conflict motif to attack disfavored divine and human figures, the manner in which 2 Maccabees does so is distinct. Rather than identifying the disfavored figure with a defeated enemy, he is characterized as mistakenly considering himself to have powers that are the prerogative of the victorious

divine warrior. Like 2 Maccabees and the rabbinic combat traditions I discuss in the first section of this chapter, *b.Baba Meši'a* 59b asserts Yahweh's divine prerogatives, here specifically his authority over the sea. The ideological work accomplished in this text exhibits an inversion of ideological claims of the gospel stories about Jesus wielding authority over the sea. While the story certainly characterizes Gamaliel positively, it is through his disinterest in his own honor. Gamaliel does not calm the sea himself, but invokes the "Ruler of the Universe" to do so. The narrative asserts that the deity alone has power over the sea/waters. I consider this story to be engaged in the same sort of ideological dialectic that is possibly reflected in rabbinic combat traditions. In both cases, we have literary traditions that incorporate biblical themes to promote Jesus/*Christos* as a royal figure and a divine figure, while rabbinic passages utilize the same biblical themes to assert that the "Holy One" is distinct in his abilities and authority over divine enemies.

The texts treated in this chapter exhibit a long-lasting continuity in the use of the conflict motif, and I have argued that authors continually employed the motif for ideological purposes, to promote and attack various divine and human figures. Together with the texts discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, we see that authors over a span of almost three millennia and over a wide geographical and political landscape employed the conflict motif. I have shown that these various authors adapted the motif to suit their contemporary needs by changing whom (what deity, individual, or group) they associated with the victorious divine warrior as well as whom they identified as enemies destined for defeat. Throughout, those associated with the victorious divine warrior are legitimated while the authority or status of those identified as enemies is attacked.

CONCLUSION

The theme of combat among deities is widespread in ancient West Asian literature. This study has focused on traditions in which a warrior deity defeats an enemy, most often the sea or sea-based superhuman figures, and attains kingship. Throughout, I have argued that the victory of the divine warrior is used to justify his dominion, that is, the divine warrior attains power that is “proven” to be legitimate through his success in combat. Within narratives and epitomes of the warrior deity’s rise to power, the implications of victory for the god’s authority (victory indicates legitimate and rightfully attained power) are asserted and naturalized. Any god portrayed in the role of the victorious warrior deity is thus shown to possess legitimate power—this is the primary ideological work accomplished through the conflict topos. I have argued that extant whole narrative articulations of the conflict topos promote the deities Ninurta, Marduk, Aššur, and Baal, respectively, and that the conflict motif was employed to promote Adad of Aleppo, Yahweh, secondary divine figures such as the Elect One, and a divinized Jesus/*Christos*. Authors claim that these deities have legitimate divine authority by referencing or elaborating their victory over foes, prowess in battle, and/or superiority over the sea or sea-based figures.

The authority of the victorious warrior deities is described as kingship, a human political institution. Combat myths, as well as instances of the conflict motif that focus on

the royal status of the victorious warrior, naturalize divine kingship by presenting it as the given form of legitimate power among the gods. Thus, examples of the conflict topos represent culture as if it were nature, both with regard to which deity rises to power and with regard to the form of his power: kingship.

In turn, narratives characterize the deities defeated by the victorious warrior as illegitimate usurpers of power. Thus, the conflict topos was employed both to promote favored divine figures and to attack disfavored ones. From the perspective of the texts, potential rival authority figures present a threat to the existing divine hierarchy, such that the alternative divine power structure is rejected by being portrayed as illegitimate, misplaced, or wrongly attained. The victorious warrior deity rises to power among the existing divine hierarchy when he defeats the rival, who is “proven” illegitimate through his defeat. In this manner, the delegitimizing ideology of the conflict topos is employed in the negative characterizations of Anzu, Tiamat, Yamm, Mot, Lotan, as well as the sea in various biblical texts, Leviathan, Rahab, along with various biblical composite beasts, and finally, Satan.

All extant whole narrative articulations of the conflict topos and every instance of the conflict motif involve a statement about the divine authority of the victorious warrior deity, and I describe this expression as the primary application of the legitimating ideology of the conflict topos. Secondary applications of this legitimating ideology, then, are instances in which the warrior deity’s victory is claimed or assumed to have import for humans. The warrior deity’s victory is referenced in order to promote the human institutions of kingship and temple, particular locations, select groups, and particular

individuals. Likewise, specific polities and individuals are attacked when they are compared to or identified with the defeated enemies of the divine warrior.

The institution of temple and some specific temple sites are promoted in combat myths and through the conflict motif. *Anzu* asserts that Ninurta's cult will enter Ekur, Enlil's temple in Nippur. By claiming that the deity will be present at this particular cult location, the narrative underscores a relationship between Nippur and Ninurta.

Aššurnasirpal II's monumental art at Kalhu, depicting Ninurta in battle against a composite figure (possibly Anzu), links Ninurta's temple to his prowess in battle. I speculate that this association with Ninurta's victories would have served to promote the temple, as well as Aššurnasirpal II's new capital city. In the Babylonian and Assyrian versions of *Enuma Elish*, the cities Babylon and Aššur, respectively, become locations of frequent divine activity. The temples of Marduk and Aššur within these cities are promoted through the claims that their establishment was a divine decree, part of a series of cosmological events, and a monument to the warrior deity's newly won dominion. Sennacherib's inscription, describing the scene of battle between Aššur and Tiamat that was depicted on the doors of Aššur's *akītu* house, indicates that festival activity in Aššur was linked to the god's victory. We may speculate that the *Baal Cycle* would have promoted Baal-related cultic activity in Ugarit as well, by celebrating Baal's rise to power and prominence within the pantheon. In the Hebrew Bible, Ps 78:65-69 states that Yahweh established his temple after defeating his enemies and suggests that the temple is a monument to Yahweh's choice of Judah and Jerusalem. The building narrative for Solomon's temple to Yahweh also fits the ancient West Asian pattern of the victorious temple builder, and the "molten sea" in the temple courtyard may have symbolized

Yahweh's dominion over the sea. Yahweh's temple in Jerusalem was not only a monument to his divine authority but also to Solomon's political authority. The palace-temple complex, and possibly also inscriptions on the pillars "Jachin" and "Boaz" on the temple porch, would have served visually to reinforce the link between Yahweh's dominion and the king's authority, which is asserted explicitly in Ps 2:6-9; Psalm 18; Psalm 21; Psalm 72; Psalm 78; Ps 89:2-38; Psalm 110; Ps 132:11-18; Deut 17:14-15; and 2 Sam 7:8-9. In sum, narratives, inscriptions, and monumental art suggest that combat traditions were employed to bolster the significance and status of particular temples and cities by visually or rhetorically linking them to the victories of particular warrior deities. More generally, the institution of temple—like kingship—is presented as requisite: Marduk, Aššur, Baal, and Yahweh all receive temples after they defeat their enemies.

We have widespread evidence for the use of combat traditions within royal ideology. The victories of Ninurta, Marduk, Aššur, Adad of Aleppo, and Yahweh are referenced to promote the office of the king and specific kings. Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions indicate that kings were described with epithets and characteristics of Ninurta (*RIM* A.0.101.41; A.0.101.40; A.0.102.14; A.0.104.1; A.0.77.4; A.0.102.5; A.0.101.1). The identification of the king with the deity in combat appears to be a Neo-Assyrian innovation. More common are constructions in which the victorious deity endorses the human king. The deity's dominion, won through combat, is asserted along with the claim that the deity endorses the political authority of the king. Just as the divine king attained his own throne through combat, he will secure the earthly king's throne by defending him against enemies and/or enabling him to defeat enemies. Within Neo-Assyrian royal

ideology, scribes blend Ninurta, Marduk, and Aššur-centered combat traditions in a manner that elevates Aššur above Ninurta and Marduk as well as the older generation of deities, and they portray Aššur as the “king of the gods” who endorses the human king. Royal inscriptions describing Sennacherib’s monumental art promote his kingship through references to Aššur’s defeat of Tiamat and attainment of the Tablet of Destinies (K 1356 and K 6177+8869). The account of Sennacherib’s battle of Halule employs vocabulary from the Assyrian version of *Enuma Elish* that suggests parallels between Sennacherib and Aššur while negatively characterizing the king and inhabitants of Babylon (Chic. Pr. V). Most significant is the claim that Sennacherib possesses Aššur’s bow. The king’s possession of the god’s weapon suggests that Aššur endorses Sennacherib and implies that the king will be victorious. Hymns asserting a relationship between the deity Aššur and Aššurbanipal state that Aššur granted sovereignty to the king directly (SAA 3, 1; SAA 3, 11), and that Aššurbanipal possesses Ninurta’s weapons (SAA 3, 11). Aššurbanipal’s acrostic hymn to Marduk (SAA 3, 2) demonstrates that the rhetorical priority of royal ideology was promoting the king, regardless of which warrior deity is invoked. In Mari Letter A. 1968, Nur-Sin of Aleppo claims that Adad of Aleppo has given his weapons to Zimri-Lim of Mari. Furthermore, he asserts that the military success and secure dominion of Zimri-Lim, as well as that of past rulers of Mari, is contingent upon Adad’s favor. The king’s possession of Adad’s weapon indicates that the deity endorses the king. In this case, as well as in the Neo-Assyrian parallels, it is fitting that the physical symbol of the god’s endorsement of the king is the weapon with which he defeated Sea, because the warrior deity attains kingship through victory in combat. Psalm 89:2-38 and Psalm 78 employ the conflict motif to promote David and the Davidic

dynasty. In Psalm 78, the culmination of Yahweh's acts as divine warrior is his choice of David as ruler. In Ps 89:2-38, the conflict motif is employed to assert Yahweh's endorsement of David and his dynasty. After reviewing Yahweh's authority over the sea/waves and his defeat of Rahab and enemies, the psalm states that Yahweh will defeat David's enemies, acting as the divine warrior on David's behalf. Moreover, Yahweh will place David's hand over the sea/rivers, indicating that Yahweh endorses David's rule. This is comparable to the Neo-Assyrian and Mari texts in which the warrior deity gives his weapon(s) to the king. The god's weapons are not only relevant to the context of the king's battle, they have greater significance because they are the weapons the deity used to defeat enemies (for Aššur and Adad, the sea-god in particular) while securing his own divine kingship. Likewise, Yahweh's authority over the sea/waves is associated with his defeat of superhuman figures and with his divine royal dominion. The notion that Yahweh will place David's hand over the sea/rivers constitutes a meaningful endorsement specifically because it references a divine prerogative (authority over the sea) that is bound up in Yahweh's divine kingship and defeat of enemies.

More generally, we have several examples in which the office of the king is promoted through the conflict motif. Neo-Assyrian explanatory texts propose parallels between the king's actions in various rituals and the combat and rise to power of Ninurta and Marduk, while objects manipulated in ritual are compared to Ninurta and Marduk's defeated enemies (SAA 3, 37; SAA 3, 39; SAA 3, 40). Seleucid period copies of ritual texts pertaining to the Babylonian New Year's festival indicate that the king was identified with Marduk in various ritual actions that rehearsed Marduk's enthronement and defeat of Tiamat (*RAcc.*, 127-154). Select proverbial statements about royal authority

within the Elephantine text *Ahiqar* compare the king's commands to a weapon that breaks the dragon's ribs, which may suggest that the king himself was imagined to have faced superhuman enemies. Extant Ugaritic materials do not attest to the political use of the *Baal Cycle* within royal ideology, however, we may speculate that the scribe's association with the king suggests that the narrative was at least agreeable to the king. Considering the widespread use of combat traditions within ancient West Asian royal ideology, it is plausible that the text furthered the interests of the king.

Within the ancient West Asian milieu, the conflict topos was a dynamic rhetorical tool that was employed for ideological purposes. The theme of divine combat served as a foundation for discourse about which deities are favored and disfavored among and within ancient West Asian cultures. We have narratives that elaborate how Ninurta, Marduk, Aššur, and Baal rose to power through conflict and victory. There are also references to Adad of Aleppo and Yahweh attaining power through victory by defeating the sea, the major opponent of Marduk and Aššur. In the narratives of their rise to power, Marduk, Aššur, and Baal receive temples subsequent to their victories. Likewise, several biblical passages suggest that Yahweh's temple was a monument to his victories and divine kingship. The prescription and construction of the gods' temples in the divine realm validates the human institution of temple. The divine authority of Ninurta, Marduk, Aššur, Baal, and Yahweh is described as kingship, implicitly promoting the human political institution of kingship. The victories of Ninurta, Marduk, Aššur, Adad of Aleppo, and Yahweh are cited to promote specific kings as well as the office of the king. This is consistent with the naturalization of the institution of kingship in the divine realm,

but constitutes a secondary application of the conflict motif: the victories and royal status of the divine warrior are claimed to have import for humans, specifically kings.

Focusing on the biblical anthology, Yahweh's past victories against superhuman figures (sea, dragon(s), Rahab, and Leviathan) exhibit six possible rhetorical functions: to assert Yahweh's dominion; to claim that his dominion is universal; to endorse royal authority; to promote select groups of people; to portray human enemies as destined for defeat; and to invoke Yahweh to intervene against contemporary enemies. Victory and dominion are causally related; the warrior deity attains, secures, and defends his throne through victory. Divine kingship and acts of creation are thematically related within biblical traditions; the political idea of kingship is used to assert Yahweh's authority, and acts of creation are cited in order to characterize his dominion as universal. The interweaving of the conflict motif and themes of creation within biblical traditions, as well as Yahweh's status relative to other divine beings is most comparable to Neo-Assyrian traditions in which Aššur supercedes the older generation of gods and takes on their roles in creation, becoming the creator and father of the other gods (SAA 12, 86, 7; SAA 3, 34, 54). In addition to combining the conflict motif with themes of creation, we also see that biblical myth-makers interwove the conflict motif and the exodus motif. The exodus story served as a paradigm for Yahweh intervening on behalf of "Israel" (however conceived in various texts). The interweaving of the conflict and exodus motifs involves a shift in the temporal location for Yahweh's combat, establishing the narrative possibility that Yahweh, as divine warrior, will intervene in human time. Based on this notion, biblical authors adapted the conflict motif in order to make statements about their current socio-political contexts. Current enemies, such as Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon,

Pharaoh, and Egypt, are portrayed as destined for defeat when authors compare them to or identify them with Yahweh's past defeated enemies (Isa 30:7; Ps 87:4; Ezek 29:2-6; Ezek 39:2-15; Jer 51:34-37; and Habakkuk 3). Authors recall Yahweh's past victories in order to provoke him to act on behalf of the people in the present (Isa 51:9-15; Psalm 89; and Psalm 74). Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions also suggest comparisons between the king's enemies and the warrior god's defeated enemies. However, the invoking of the deity's past victories as a summons for the deity to act in the present appears to be a biblical innovation.

Within biblical apocalyptic traditions, we see a further shift in the temporal location of Yahweh's combat. Beyond reconfiguring divine combat as a present or immediate event, Isa 27:1 and Daniel 7 both exhibit a recasting of Yahweh's combat as a future, eschatological event. Many authors who employ the conflict motif within eschatological speculation quote and/or interpret Isa 27:1 specifically, and several authors incorporate imagery that appears to have been adapted from Daniel 7. Daniel 7 exhibits an additional feature that was highly significant within subsequent conflict motif traditions: the endorsement of a secondary divine figure. The notion that the primary deity endorses a secondary divine figure is patterned after Davidic royal ideology. In general and with respect to the adaptation of combat traditions, Davidic royal ideology is consistent with other royal ideologies within the ancient West Asian milieu. However, after the demise of the Davidic dynasty and Judah's autonomous rule, the spatial and temporal location of Yahweh's chosen ruler for Judah became ambiguous. Within eschatological speculation, authors adapt rhetoric that had served to promote present

human kings as they characterize a heavenly figure who would receive royal dominion in the future.

Apocalyptic traditions that describe an eschatological overhaul of the present world order exhibit many thematic ties with stories that narrate the establishment of divine and world order (*Anzu*, *Enuma Elish*, and the *Baal Cycle*) and with biblical passages that refer to Yahweh founding cosmic and geophysical order. Within eschatological speculation, authors often reinterpret themes of creation, both physical creation and the structuring of divine order. The narratives of *Anzu*, the Babylonian and Assyrian versions of *Enuma Elish*, and the *Baal Cycle* focus on a particular god attaining kingship. The rise of a new deity to power constitutes a new divine hierarchy and a new world order. In these texts, the new divine king secures his authority through combat with enemies who represent alternative divine power structures. Likewise, in apocalyptic eschatology, the divine warrior ushers in a new world order by defeating enemies who represent alternative (divine or earthly) power structures. Speaking very generally, apocalyptic texts display an inversion of the sort of political ideology characteristic of ancient West Asian combat traditions. Rather than endorsing the claims of a ruling authority, pertaining to a divine hierarchy or to an earthly political structure, apocalyptic texts generally criticize current political authorities. It is noteworthy that across the ancient Mediterranean world apocalyptic literature flourished after the conquests of Alexander the Great, when polities in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Judea lost political autonomy.³⁷⁴

³⁷⁴ Vanderkam, "Prophecy and Apocalyptic," 2090-2091.

Four features that are distinct to biblical combat traditions are especially prominent in subsequent literary traditions in which biblical exegesis is generative: the combination of themes of creation and combat in order to portray Yahweh's dominion as universal; the rendering of divine combat as an eschatological event; the notion that Yahweh can intervene in the present/future on behalf of the people; and the development of royal ideology for promoting a secondary divine figure. There is also continuity in the primary application of the legitimating ideology of the conflict motif. Authors continue to use the theme of combat as they promote favored deities (Yahweh and Jesus/*Christos*) and characterize negatively disfavored divine figures (Satan, the dragon, beasts, and the Lawless One). Likewise, disfavored polities (Rome and "earthly powers") are accused of wielding illegitimate power and portrayed as destined for defeat in the eschaton. Authors adapt the conflict motif in creative ways, responding to changing social and political circumstances.

Many texts produced within the Judean milieu of the first and early second centuries CE (*2 Baruch*, *1 Enoch*, *4 Ezra*, Revelation, 1 Corinthians 15, 2 Thessalonians 2, *Odes of Solomon*, and *Testament of Asher*) exhibit an eschatological rendering of the conflict motif. While drawing on traditional images and motifs, the authors of these texts engaged in innovative myth-making. They employed the conflict motif to promote various secondary divine figures (such as the Elect One, Messiah, Son of Man, my Son, and *Christos*) by characterizing them as future divine warriors endorsed by a primary deity. Several of these texts also assert that divine figures act on behalf of particular groups (such as "Israel," the "inhabitants of Zion," and "the redeemed") who will be vindicated when the divine warrior punishes their oppressors in the eschaton. Rabbinic

combat traditions preserved in *b.Baba Batra* and *Midrash Alpha Bethoth* also exhibit an eschatological rendering of the conflict motif, the combination of themes of creation and combat, as well as citation of Isa 27:1 and elaborate characterization of Leviathan and Behemoth. *b.Baba Batra* and *Midrash Tanhuma* narrate a conflict in which the “Holy One” slays the Prince of the Sea as he apportions the waters during creation. However, these rabbinic passages emphasize the “Holy One’s” sole role as divine warrior—even other divine figures cannot defeat the superhuman enemy Leviathan. I have proposed that we may identify an interesting ideological dialectic at work behind these differing portrayals of Yahweh/*Theos*’ relationship to secondary divine figures. Rabbinic combat traditions may be responding to the types of claims made about secondary divine figures (i.e., Yahweh/*Theos* explicitly endorses them) that are furthered in first- and early-second-century CE Judean texts (including those concerned with Jesus/*Christos*) and propagated by late antique *Christos*-centered ideology.

The producers of ancient West Asian royal ideology promoted kings through a variety of claims about their relationship to the divine, such as divine parentage, divine adoption, possession of divine qualities, being the “image” (*šalmu*) of the deity, divination, anointing, intercession, having gods’ possessions, and “sacred marriage.” For example, in Ps 89:2-38, five complementary elements assert Yahweh’s endorsement of David: covenant language, the act of anointing, exalting David’s “horn,” the conflict motif, and divine sonship. Ancient West Asian kings were portrayed as having special proximity to the divine, through a distinct relationship with, quality of, mode of access to, or identification with deities. In the same way that royal scribes promoted kings through a variety of distinct but complementary strategies, the authors of texts concerned with the

figure of Jesus/*Christos* characterized him positively through a variety of distinct claims about his relationship to the divine. While such claims may occur simultaneously, the implied proximity of Jesus/*Christos* to the divine and the nature of his relationship to *Theos* in particular ranges from special human to divine co-regent (Rev 22:1). He is characterized as a teacher and *prophētēs*, that is, a human with special knowledge or access to divine messages. Authors adapted Davidic royal ideology, presenting Jesus/*Christos* as a royal figure endorsed by Yahweh, though Jesus had no actual political authority. Likewise, he was assigned divine sonship, in a manner similar to ancient West Asian and Greco-Roman royal figures. Through stories portraying Jesus as a miracle-worker, authors characterized Jesus as having some divine power. Narratives that incorporate miracle-working, divine sonship, royal ideology, and/or access to special knowledge suggest a special relationship between Jesus/*Christos* and Yahweh/*Theos*. However, there are also bolder claims about the divinity of Jesus/*Christos*. The stories of Jesus commanding and walking on the sea draw upon the biblical motif of Yahweh's authority over the sea to depict Jesus as a superhuman figure who possesses divine authority. In order to elucidate the significance of the motif of Yahweh's authority over the sea, I compare the gospel stories of Jesus wielding power over the sea with 2 Macc 5:21; 9:8 and *b.Baba Meši 'a* 59b. 2 Maccabees 5:21 and 9:8 portray Antiochus IV Epiphanes as delusional for imagining that he possesses power over the sea. *B.Baba Meši 'a* 59b employs the motif to characterize Gamaliel positively, while implying that authority over the sea is a prerogative of Yahweh. Likewise, in the Hebrew Bible, Yahweh's authority over the sea is bound up in his incomparability and universal dominion. Considering the significance of authority over the sea in 2 Macc 5:21; 9:8,

b. Baba Meši'a 59b, and throughout the biblical anthology, the notion that Jesus successfully wields power over the sea constitutes a substantial assertion of Jesus' authority. The divinized *Christos* was promoted in a manner similar to secondary divine figures (such as the Elect One, Messiah, or Son of Man) whose authority is contingent upon that of the primary deity. However, Jesus/*Christos* is elevated further than other secondary divine figures. Not only is he portrayed as the divine warrior himself, he also shares other roles, epithets, and even a heavenly throne with Yahweh/*Theos* (*T. Asher* 7:3; *Odes Sol* 22:5; 1 Cor 15:24-28; 2 Thess 2:1-12; Rev 22:1, 13). Overall, the relationship of Jesus/*Christos* and *Theos* is most comparable to the relationship of Ugaritic Baal and El. *Christos* and Baal each attain authority and prominence, but an older deity (*Theos* and El, respectively) retains power and status as well.

The texts I have discussed exhibit a constellation of divine characters, their relationships and actions, and various narrative details, demonstrating that the conflict topos was known and adapted within literature from Mari, Aleppo, Ugarit, Babylon, Assyria, Israel, Judah, and Elephantine; in the first- and early-second-century CE Judean milieu (including traditions focused on Jesus/*Christos*); and in select rabbinic texts. Each of the texts I have discussed displays a distinct articulation of the conflict topos. It is through comparison that we can better see how these texts share certain specific narrative details and build upon a consistent narrative pattern. At the same time, this process of comparison allows us to appreciate how each articulation of the conflict topos is distinct and to reconstruct how legitimating ideology may have operated within each context and literary tradition.

Throughout my comparative analysis, I have developed the notion that myth encodes in narrative form taxonomy, the hierarchy of characters or roles. A mythic topos exhibits a taxonomy that is adaptable, yet consistent enough to be recognizable. In the case of the conflict topos, the taxonomy of primary characters, the relationship between the combating deities within each narrative, is consistent, and serves to elevate the victorious deity, as well as to manage any rivals by portraying them as defeated and, therefore, as losing power. Within whole narrative articulations of the conflict topos, there is a remarkable display of variation in the taxonomy of secondary characters (including the relationship between the victor and existing divine hierarchy, the relationship between the defeated rival(s) and existing divine hierarchy, and the relationships among all the other deities within the pantheon). This variation indicates that there was a range of ways that change among hegemonic power structures could be conceived—whether this is a divine power structure, as in these narratives, or a human power structure. Among secondary applications of the legitimating ideology of the conflict topos, those endorsed by or identified with the victorious deity are validated, while those compared to or identified with the defeated deity are portrayed as having illegitimate power and/or as being destined for defeat. In sum, the notion of myth as taxonomy in narrative form facilitates comparison and aids in the identification of continuity and innovation.

Regarding the various applications of the conflict motif, the notion of myth as ideology production has been apt throughout my study. McCutcheon's statement, "myths present *one particular* and therefore contestable viewpoint as if it were an agreement,"³⁷⁵

³⁷⁵ McCutcheon, "Myth," 204.

is well illustrated by the variety of particular divine hierarchies promoted among extant combat traditions. My own analysis of the conflict topos upholds Lincoln's general summation: "the [mythic] narrative packages a specific, contingent system of discrimination in a particularly attractive and memorable form. What is more, it naturalizes and legitimates it."³⁷⁶ I have shown that the theme of combat was adapted within a variety of cultural and historical contexts, indicating that authors utilized the conflict topos as a dynamic rhetorical tool and that they found it to be (or rather, they made it) effective for a variety of legitimating and delegitimizing purposes. Narratives of divine combat and instances of the conflict motif naturalize socially and politically contingent phenomena, such as the institutions of kingship and temple, specific divine hierarchies, and the authority of particular individuals, by linking them to narrative events that purport to be universal and foundational.

³⁷⁶ Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth*, 147.

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