

'Rider of the Clouds' and 'Gatherer of the Clouds'

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In a study on divine intervention in war, now in preparation, I am investigating various descriptions and epithets of the "divine warrior" in Homeric and Hesiodic literature. My observations lead me to the conclusion that these epithets were shaped under the impact of near eastern mythological tradition. Some of the major motifs adduced are:

- 1) The shaking of the Olympos under the feet of Zeus,¹ as well as the epithets of Poseidon, *enosichthōn* and *ennosigaios* 'earth shaker',² divine attributes, common in the Bible and in the literature of the ancient Near East.
- 2) Meteors, lightning and thunder as the divine weapon.³
- 3) The cloud as the envelope of the deity and his carriers.⁴
- 4) The divine radiance encompassing gods and heroes.⁵

Most of these motifs are found—as shown in my study—in the divine imagery of

1 *To d'hypo possi megas pelemizet' Olympos* (Ilias 8:443), *possi d'hyp' . . . megas pelemizet' Olympos* (Hesiod, Theog. 842), and see also Ilias 13:18f: the high mountains and the woodland trembling beneath the feet of Poseidon. Compare the trembling of Mount Sinai in Exod. 19:18; Ps. 18:8f. etc. and cf. the corresponding Mesopotamian descriptions cited by S. E. Loewenstamm in *Oz le-David*, Jubilee volume of D. Ben Gurion (Jerusalem, 1964), 514f.; and by J. Jeremias, *Theophanie: Die Geschichte einer atl. Gattung* (Neukirchen, 1965). In the Ugaritic literature only traces of this attribute can be found: *bmt 'a[rš] tṭn* "the height of the earth trembled" (CTA 4, VII: 34-35). This example is quite instructive because of the Hebrew cognate *nuṭ* in an identical context in Ps. 99:1.

2 For this epithet compare *munerriṭ erṣeti / ḫuršāni / kibrāte* in Akkadian, and *mrgyz 'rš* (Job 9:6; cf. Ps. 104:32, etc.) in Hebrew.

3 Cf. Ilias 4:75; Hymn to Apollo 440f.; Ilias 8:75, 133, 170, 405, 416, cf. Judg. 5:20; Josh. 10:11; 1 Sam. 7:10; 2 Sam. 22:14f. and the Egyptian, Hittite and Mesopotamian parallels cited in that study.

4 Ilias 8:50, 5:776, 16:790 and cf. the epithet of Zeus, *kelai-nephēs* 'shrouded in dark clouds', which is paralleled in 2 Sam. 22:12 = Ps. 18:12; Ps. 97:2; 1 Kgs. 8:12. For the tabernacle covered by the cloud during its encampment (e.g., Num. 9:15f.), cf. Ilias 5:776, 8:50.

5 Cf. Hymn to Apollo 440f., Ilias 5:1-8; 18:205f; 22:131-35. On the Mesopotamian background of this concept, cf. the recent study by E. Cassin, *La splendeur divine*, *Civilisation et Sociétés* 8 (Paris, 1968), and on the biblical parallel (*k^ebôd ybwb*), cf. my article in *Tarbiz* 37 (1968), 116f, 131-32, and the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, sub "Presence, divine."

Egyptian, Hittite, Canaanite, Mesopotamian and biblical sources, and were apparently adopted by the Greek poets.

The present article, however, is concerned with two characteristic divine attributes: god as "rider of the clouds" on the one hand, and as "the gatherer of the clouds" on the other.

The equation of *nep̄helēgeretēs* 'the gatherer of the clouds', the epithet of Zeus, with the epithet of Baal *rkb 'rpt* 'the rider of the clouds' (cf. *rkb b'rbt* in Ps. 68:5) has been justifiably refuted by S. E. Loewenstamm.⁶ The two epithets are not identical and seem to represent two different ideas. But this should not preclude further investigation. In view of the affinities between East and West in terms of divine epithets (especially those involved with weather phenomena), one should ask whether the concept "rider of the clouds," so common in the Near East, might not be found in ancient Greek mythology; and whether "the gatherer of the clouds," so characteristic of the Greek myths, may not have originated in the East. Indeed, as we shall demonstrate below, the roots of both images are to be found in the Near East and seem to have influenced Homeric and Hesiodic divine imagery.

God the Rider

Zeus riding swift flying horses harnessed to a cart or chariot, is attested in Ilias 8:41⁷ (compare also line 438), and an identical picture occurs in *Apollodorus Mythographus* (I, 6, 3).⁸ God riding a chariot (with horses) is found in Hab. 3:8,⁹ but this image goes back in fact to Mesopotamia of the third millennium B. C. E. Thus we find on a seal of the Akkadian Period (about 2360-2180 B.C.E.)¹⁰ the depiction of the weather god mounted in a four-wheeled chariot drawn by a lion-griffin,¹¹ on which stands a goddess

6 *UF* 3, (1971), 98f.

7 *hyp'ochesphi titysketo . . . hippō, ōkypeta*. (Cf. the same phraseology in connection with Poseidon (Ilias 13:23-24). The description in Ilias (13:27f.) is loaded with near eastern mythical motifs. The gambolling (*atallō*) of the sea monsters from the abyss and the sea parting before Poseidon remind us of the sea monsters—Tiamat and Leviathan on the one hand, and the parting of the sea on the other. (For God gambolling with Leviathan, cf. Ps. 104:26; note that *atallō* means 'to gambol' as well as 'to rear', both appearing in connection with the Wisdom figure before Creation in Prov. 8:31.) On the interconnections between the story of the division of the Red Sea and the mythological war of God with the sea monster, see S. E. L. Loewenstamm, *The Tradition of the Exodus in its Development* (Jerusalem, 1965), 101f. [in Hebrew, with an English summary].

8 Cf. S. E. Loewenstamm, "Philo of Byblos," *Peraqim*, Yearbook of the Schocken Institute for Jewish Research of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1972-73), 317 [offprint in Hebrew].

9 Cf. 15, "you made your horses trample the sea" (see Albright, "The Psalm of Habakkuk," *Studies in OT Prophecy*, Presented to Professor Theodore H. Robinson [Edinburgh, 1957], ad loc.), which is close to the description of Poseidon cited in n. 7, and see also Ps. 77:20.

10 Cf. *ANEP*, 221, no. 689, and the explanation there on p. 332.

11 N. H. Tur Sinai suggested that the stems of *'rwn* and *kpri*, which are associated with the chariot of the God of Israel, are *'ryb* and *kpyr* 'lion', and that the *krwb* is a kind of lion-griffin, as may be deduced from Ezek. 1:10; see *Halašon we-Hasefer* (Jerusalem, 1955), 3:29-38 [in Hebrew].

holding bundles of rain or lightning.¹²

In the hymn *nin-me-šár-ra* of Enĥeduanna,¹³ Inanna raining fire is mounted on a beast (or lion?) and in another hymn of the same cycle (*nin-ša-gur₄-ra*) she is riding seven grand lions.¹⁴ The Sumerian Hymns to Iškur (semitic Adad) and Martu (the eponymous deity of the Western Semites) depict these gods as harnessing winds and riding them. Thus we read in the hymn to Iškur: "Father Iškur, lord who rides the storm. . . who rides the great lion. . . Iškur, fill the winds before you, harness the winds before you. Let the seven winds be harnessed for you like a team. . . Let your vizier 'Lightning' go before you."¹⁵ Martu mounts the seven winds and rains fire.¹⁶ In the hymn to Enlil we read that Enlil "sets up his dais on the mountain mist, he rotates it in heaven like a rainbow, he makes it roam about like a floating cloud."¹⁷ Thus we see that according to the Sumerian cosmic view, God—especially the weather god—is riding on a beast as well as on winds and clouds. The earlier Sumerian tradition reveals to us the *mythopoeic* imagination associated with this cosmic view. Iškur / Adad, Enbilulu and Ninurta / Ningirsu are formally tied to *dIm-dugud* (*mušen*), which is the thunder cloud personified. *Im-dugud* was imagined as a vulture with the head of a lion floating in the sky with outstretched wings.¹⁸ The thunder was conceived as the roar that issues from the lion's mouth.¹⁹ This kind of imagery is reflected in the hymn, *nin-me-šár-ra* of Enĥeduanna.²⁰ There it is said about Inanna, who is depicted there as riding on a lion:²¹ "when you roar at the earth like thunder, no vegetation can stand up to you,"²² which is to be compared with the hymnodic exordium of Amos (1:2): "When the Lord roars (*yš'g*) from Zion and thunders (lit. 'gives his voice')²³ from Jerusalem, the shepherds' pastures are scorched and the top of Carmel (=the best vegetation) is dried up."

The elements of chariot, lion, bird, cloud, and wind which occur in the Sumerian image

12 For a discussion, cf. E. Douglas van Buren, *Symbols of the Gods in Mesopotamian Art*, *An. Or.* 23 (1945), 68.

13 Cf. W. W. Hallo and J. J. A. van Dijk, *The Exaltation of Inanna*, *YNER* 3 (1968), 16:13-14.

14 *ur-gal-gal-imin-bi ba-e-u₅* (*Belleten* 16 [1952], plate LXIII, III:12); cf. J. van Dijk, *Acta Orientalia*, 28 (1964), 15, n. 28, and cf. also *Belleten* 16, 1:22: *dInanna pirig-gi-il-gi-il-la dur-re*.

15 Text in CT 15, plates 15-16, translation according to S. N. Kramer, *ANET*³, 578.

16 E. Chiera, *SRT* 8:17: *im-imin-na ĥé(?) -mu-ni-in-[zi] izi mu-[un - šég]*, according to the reading of S. N. Kramer (written communication). For the transliteration and translation of the hymn to Martu, cf. A. Falkenstein, *Sumerische Götterlieder* (hereafter cited as *SGL*) (1959), 1:120f.

17 *im-ĥur-sag-gá bára-ge si-a-na (d)tir-an-na-gim an-e ši-in-gi₄ dungu-điri-ga-gim ní-bi-a mu-un-du* (A. Falkenstein, *SGL*, 16:96-98, translation according to S. N. Kramer, *ANET*³, 575).

18 Cf. T. Jacobsen, *Toward the Image of Tammuz and Other Essays on Mesopotamian History and Culture* (Harvard University Press, 1970), 339, n. 27, from *The Myth of Inanna and Bilulu*, first published in *JNES* 12 (1953), 160-87.

19 Jacobsen, *ibid.*

20 Cf. n. 13, above.

21 Cf. n. 14, above.

22 Hallo and van Dijk, *The Exaltation of Inanna*, 14:10, cf. *BWL*, 192:16, 18 for an identical image.

23 Cf. *EA* 147:13: *ša iddin rigmašu ina šamê kīma Adad* who "gives forth his voice in heaven like Adad," and about Baal in *CTA* 4, V: 70-71: *w<y>tn . qlb . b' rpt šrb. l'arš. brqm*. "gives forth his voice in the clouds, lets loose lightnings to earth."

of God the rider are also attested in the later Mesopotamian, as well as in the Syro-Palestinian tradition. Thus we find the God of Israel "riding on the cherub" (2 Sam. 22:11 = Ps. 18:11); soaring on the *wings* of the wind (ibid, and Ps. 104:3); "riding on the cloud" (Isa. 19:1; Ps. 68:5; 104:3); and, as we already indicated, riding a chariot with horses (Hab. 3:8). It seems that a certain overlapping exists between the various riding media of the weather-god. This overlapping may be confirmed by a comparison of the Mesopotamian sources. Thus we read about Marduk in the Creation Epic: "he mounted the storm-chariot, the irresistible and terrifying, he harnessed to it a team of four,"²⁴ and in the Assyrian recension of Atrahasis: "Adad rode on the four winds, (his) asses. . . the chariot of the gods."²⁵ The latter clearly shows that the team of four mentioned in the Creation Epic is none other than the four winds. An identical imagery is found in the Hurrian and the Ugaritic myths. In the Kumarbi myth of Hurrian origin we read²⁶ about the Storm-god fighting by means of rains (*ḫeuš*), winds (IM.MEŠ-uš), clouds (*alpa-ḫi.A*), and carts (GIS.MAR.GID = Akk. *šumbu*), all of which are elements occurring in biblical theophany (cf., e.g., 2 Sam. 22:10f. = Ps. 18:10f.).

A similar description of the weather god is found in a Ugaritic text concerning Baal, who is said to "take with him his clouds, his winds, his *mdl* and his rains."²⁷ Since *mdl* parallels *šmd* (CTA 19:52-53), and since both occur in the context of harnessing,²⁸ it stands to reason that Baal takes with him his chariot, as has been suggested by Gaster,²⁹ or rather he takes his "yoked team," as is attested in the Mesopotamian mythology.

The imagery of "God the rider" comes to full expression in the emblem of the God Aššur from the period of Tukulti-Ninurta II (890-884 B.C.E.) Here we find the god with spread wings and a drawn bow, among rain clouds, over a chariot scene of which only the head of the charioteer and the upper part of a horse's head remain.³⁰ A text of Sennacherib refers to the making of an image as follows: "(I made) an image (*šalmu*) of Aššur. . . holding a bow and riding in a chariot. . . the god of Amurru as charioteer holding the reins."³¹

24 En. IV:50-51: *narkabta ūma lā mahri galitta irkab, išmissīma erbet našmadi.*

25 Cf. W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Atrahasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Oxford, 1969), 122-24, rev. 5, 12.

26 Cf. H. Güterbock, "The Song of Ullikummi," *JCS* 6 (1952), 14-16, col. III: 10¹-13¹, col. IV: 10¹-11¹.

27 *Qb 'rptk. rḫk. mdlk mṛtk.* (CTA 5, V:6-8)

28 Cf. J. Greenfield, "Ugaritic mdl and its cognates," *Biblica* 45 (1964), 527f. The connection with Hebrew *lmd* proposed by Greenfield may be strengthened by juxtaposing *glb mlmdb* in the context of being yoked for work (Hos. 10:10f., cf. Jer. 31-17) with *glb šr l' mškb b' l* In Deut. 21:3.

29 *Thespis* (Harper Torchbooks, 1961), 210, cf. also A. A. Wieder, "Ugaritic-Hebrew Lexicographical Notes," *JBL* 84 (1965), 164.

30 *ANEP*, no. 536.

31 *Šalam Aššur. . . qaštu kī ša našû ina narkabti ša rakbu. . . Amurru ša ana mukīl appāti ittišu rakbu* (OIP 2, 140:6-8). *Mukīl appāti* seems to be verbally identical with *gento d' himastblēn* in the descriptions of Zeus (Ilias 8:43) and Poseidon (Ilias 13:25), cited above, n. 7. As the Akkadian *appatu*, so the Greek *himastblē* indicates the thong or leather strip mostly of the rein and not necessarily the whip, as this is usually translated; cf., e.g., Ilias 23:582, where one drives by means of *himastblē*. For the ambiguity involved in this term, cf. English *lash* with *leash*. It is interesting to note that in Ilias 8:440 it is Poseidon who unties Zeus' horses, which seems to indicate that Poseidon was his charioteer, as Amurru was Aššur's.

All this might explain the Homeric-Hesiodic epithet of Zeus, *hypsizygos* (Ilias 4:166; 7:69; 11:544), which means, literally, 'high above the yoke', and seems to refer to the horses hitched to the divine chariot. Two other divine attributes *hypsithronos* 'high-throned'³² and *hypsinephēs*³³ 'high in the clouds', belong to the same imagery. One may compare these attributes with the biblical divine epithets, *rkb b'rbwt* (Ps. 68:5; cf. *rkb 'rpt*), *rkb šmym* (Deut. 33:26; cf. Ps. 68:34) and *yšb bkrwbym* (1 Sam. 4:4 etc.) The last epithet refers to God's throne in the tabernacle or in the sanctuary, and thus constitutes a clear parallel to *hypsithronos*.

In the light of all this it is clear that the concept of the riding weather-god was deeply rooted in the Syro-Mesopotamian milieu and seems to have influenced the Greek tradition.

The Gatherer of the Clouds

But what about *nepbelēgeretēs* 'the gatherer of the clouds'? This divine attribute also belongs to the near eastern imagery of the weather god, though it involves a function different from the one discussed before. While "the rider of the clouds" is mostly associated with war activity "the gatherer of the clouds" belongs to the cosmic sphere. Thus, in the Babylonian Creation Epic, Marduk is described as "gathering clouds, raising the wind, causing rain and making the fog smoke."³⁴ The Akkadian verb for 'gather' *kašāru* also connotes 'to compress' or 'to make compact',³⁵ which gives more sense to the image in question, namely, that out of the water-drops Marduk knits clouds.³⁶ This is indeed explicitly expressed in the Sumerian myth *Enki and World Order*: "He called the rain, the waters of heaven, compressed them as floating clouds."³⁷ The Sumerian verb translated 'compressed' is *ús*, which equals Akkadian *kabāsu* 'to make compact'.³⁸

The same concept is met with in a cosmogonical context in Job: *šrr mym b'byw wl' nbq' 'nm tḥtyw* "he ties (that is, knits) water in his clouds and the cloud does not cleave under

32 Pindarus, *Nem.* 4:65; *Istbm.* 6:16.

33 Idem, *Olymp.* 5:17; Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 26:147.

34 En El. V: 49-51: *iḫšurma <ana> u[rpāti]. . . tebī šāri [šū]znunu. . . šuqtur imbari.* For *Kašāru urpāti*, cf. CAD, sub *kašāru* 3a, 260-61.

35 See CAD, sub *kašāru* 3, and cf. in late Hebrew: *niqšrw šmym b'bym* "and the heavens were tied by clouds" (TB *Taanith* 20 a) '*nm qšwr bbr* "a cloud is spread (lit. tied) on the mountain" (Bereshith Rabbah, edition Theodor-Albeck) 56, 2 (p. 595). Cf. Syriac *qtr ḥšwk* 'form (lit. tie) darkness' and Akkadian *da'ummatu kašāru* 'gather (tie) darkness', see CAD, sub *da'ummatu*. In view of this, one has to understand Isa. 5:30, *wbnb ḥšk šr*: "and behold darkness is being formed (lit. tied)." For the various meanings of *kašāru*, see N. Waldman, "Akkadian *kašāru* and Semantic Equivalents," *JNES* 28 (1969), 253.

36 For an illustration of this, see the clouds with the drops inside on the picture (referred to above) in ANEP, no. 536.

37 *Im-a-a-an-na-ka gù ba-an-de*, IM. DIRIG-dirig-ga-gin. bí-in-ús. For the text, cf. C. A. Benito, *Enki and World Order*, (Ann Arbor, Mich., [University Microfilm], 1969), lines 308-9; translation according to S. N. Kramer in a forthcoming paper (S. N. Kramer and M. Weinfeld, "Sumerian Psalmody and the Book of Psalms.")

38 CAD, sub *kabāsu* 2 e)

them" (Job 26:8),³⁹ or in Prov. 30:4, *my šrr mym bšmlb* "who has tied water in a robe?"⁴⁰ The latter verse is paralleled by *my 'sp rwḥ bhpnw* "who gathered wind in his fists," in which 'gather' means as its parallel *šrr* 'to bind, thicken', an expression attested in Syriac: *qṭr 'l'* 'a storm gathered (lit. tied)'. Forming clouds out of water-drops is also indicated in Ps. 33:7, "he gathers (*kns*) the sea water as a water-wall (or bottle)."⁴¹

This divine attribute is applied also to gathering or thickening of snow and ice. The storm-god Adad is called *kāšir šurīpi* 'who gathers ice',⁴² which is semantically identical with *glṯ 'sr* said of Baal in Ugaritic.⁴³ Literally, the phrase is to be translated 'bind snow', but the meaning is rather that of condensing. The same idiom is encountered in Syriac *qṭr glyd* 'binding / gathering ice', a concept expressed also in Job 37:9-10 and Jer. 18:14, where ice and snow are the object of the verb *zwr / zrr*, which is cognate with *šrr* and connotes 'bind', 'draw tight' or 'compress'.⁴⁴

Though we are inclined to interpret the "gathering" in most of the cases as "solidifying," one cannot ignore the basic connotation of the discussed verbs: *kašāru*, *kns*, 'sp, etc., which mean 'to gather'. Furthermore, in biblical tradition we read about storehouses ('*wšrwṯ*) and chambers (*ḥdrym*) of rain, winds, snow and ice, which point to the real accumulation and gathering of these entities.⁴⁵

Kāšir urpāti / šurīpi in Akkadian, *šrr b'byrn* in Hebrew, and 'sr *glṯ* in Ugaritic are therefore identical with *nephelēgeretēs* in the Greek myth.

The "Rider of the clouds" and the "Gatherer of the clouds" are, then, both divine epithets rooted in the imagery of the weather God in the near eastern tradition, which seems to have influenced the Greek mythology.

39 Compare the Ugaritic text of Baal, *yptḥ.ḥln.lbḥtm 'urbt.bqrb.bklm.wyptḥ.bdqt 'rpt* "a window will be opened in the house, a hole in the midst of the palace, a rift will be opened in the clouds" (CTA 4, vii: 12-19). For the interpretation of this text, cf., most recently, J. C. de Moor, *The Seasonal Pattern in the Myth of Ba'lu*, AOAT 16 (1971), 159-63. According to N. H. Tur-Sinai, *Halāšon we-Hasefer* (1955), 3:195-204, the *rqy* 'firmament' was considered as the vessel or garment holding the upper waters, the rain descending through its holes. Tur-Sinai's suggestion is now strengthened by the Ugaritic text which might in turn support the reading *bdqym* instead of *brqym* in Jer. 10:13, 51:16, Ps. 135:7.

40 For the cloud as vessel or garment, see Job 38:37-38, and Tur Sinai in the article cited in the previous note; cf. also Gaster, *Thespis*, 210.

41 It is not quite clear whether *nēd* is to be read with MT or *nō'd* with the ancient versions.

42 KUB 4, 26:5, a variant of Ebeling, *Handerhebung* 96, no. 20:19. For *šurīpu kašāru*, cf. B. Landsberger, ZA 42 (1934), 158, n. 1.

43 CTA 8:14, and cf. CTA 4, V:69 and RS 24.245:7 (*Ugaritica* V, 557). *glṯ* means 'snow' (Ginsberg, ANET, 131, 133), but may also imply 'storm tempest' (cf. Lipinski, UF 3 [1971], 87); *glṯ 'sr* therefore can be also paralleled with *qṭr 'l'* mentioned above.

44 Cf. N. H. Tur-Sinai (H. Torczyner), *The Book of Job* (Jerusalem, 1957), ad 37:9, and G. R. Driver, "Problems of the Hebrew Text of Proverbs," *Biblica* 32 (1951), 173, to *mzwrḥ* in Prov. 1:17, the subject there being the net drawn tight.

45 Cf. Job 37:9, 38:22, Deut. 28:12, Jer. 10:13, 51:16; Ps. 135:7; 1 QH 1:12; 1 QM 10:12.