Abstract

Mythology was designed to help man cope with human predicament, to help people find their places in the world and their true orientation. A myth is true when it is effective, when it provides new insight into the deeper meaning of life. It is argued that the author of Daniel 7 was familiar with the Ancient Near Eastern myths about the combat against chaos and used themes from these myths to enhance the rhetorical effect of his eschatological work.

A INTRODUCTION

Consensus exists among geoscientists that the earliest evidence of what might be called culture – the use of decorative symbolism and of ochre paint – comes from deposits in Blombos cave in the Western Cape in South Africa, which are about seventy thousand years old. By about forty thousand years ago, these cultural practices had become more commonplace and sophisticated, as seen from evidence in Africa as well as Europe. Now it includes elaborate paintings on cave walls, the use of decorative jewellery and even musical instruments. Many of the cave paintings created by these people are shamanistic, which implies that it had a spiritualistic association. It indicates that human thought extended well beyond the simple needs of daily living. The human mind had begun to probe spiritual questions, like the origins of the earth and human existence. From this thinking developed mythology, where people tried to explain the regular rising and setting of the sun and moon, the passing of the seasons with frequent disasters of flooding and drought, and death. No written record of the earliest mythological thinking has survived, but all cultures possess some form of creation mythology, usually intimately intertwined with religious beliefs (Van Dyk 2000:94; McCarthy & Rubidge 2005:10).

These early myths formed the world of association for generations of people in a way that researchers cannot recover due to a lack of knowledge of the full extent of mythological thinking of ancient man. Probably these people defined their world in terms of these myths and many words and phrases had a connotative meaning in terms of existent myths.
B WHAT IS A MYTH?

Human beings have been and always are mythmakers. In the oldest graves discovered, that of Neanderthal man, weapons, tools and the bones of sacrificed animals have been found, suggesting some kind of belief in a future world that was similar to their own. These beliefs co-existed with stories men told each other of life enjoyed by dead companions. In this way man reflected about death in a way that was unique on earth. When Neanderthal men and women became conscious of their mortality they created a form of a counter-narrative that enabled them to explain something of the mystery of death and even to come to some form of terms with it. They imagined that the visible, material world was not the only reality. Human beings from very early on were distinguished from the rest of earthly life in their ability to have ideas that went beyond their everyday experience (Armstrong 2005:1-2).

Man is a meaning-seeking creature, falling easily into despair if it is not possible to relate his life to a larger setting. The stories they invented gave them a sense that life had meaning and value even against all the depressing and chaotic evidence to the contrary.

Another characteristic of man is imagination, the ability to have ideas and experiences that cannot be explained rationally. The products of imagination do not have an objective existence (Gaarder 1996:141). Out of the imagination comes religion and mythology.

From Neanderthal graves it is possible to state that myth is nearly always rooted in the experience of death and the fear of extinction. Animal bones found in the graves indicate that burial was accompanied by sacrifice. Mythology is usually inseparable from ritual. Liturgical drama brought myths to life, and they are incomprehensible in a secular setting. Neanderthal men were reminded of their own mortality at the graveside. The most powerful myths are about extremity, forcing man to go beyond life’s experience. Myth is about the unknown. Myth is also never a story told for its own sake. It is told to demonstrate to man how s/he should behave. Mythology empowers man to right action, whether it is in this world or the next. And mythology also tells of another plane that exists alongside our world. A belief in the world of the gods, an invisible but powerful reality, is a basic theme of mythology (Armstrong 2005:3-4). This theme enables men to interpret their world in terms of the philosophical supposition that everything that happens in this world has its counterpart in the divine realm, which is richer, stronger and more enduring than our own (Eliade 1994:23). Every earthly reality is only a pale shadow of its archetype, the original pattern, of which it is simply an imperfect copy. One well-known example is the way Israel looked at the tent in the wilderness and the temple in Jerusalem as a copy of the home of Yahweh in the heavens (Zenger 1998:233).
Only by participating in the divine life can men fulfil their potential. The shape and form of this divine reality is explicated by myths, a reality that people sensed intuitively. In these stories the behaviour of the gods is described, not to entertain but to enable men and women to imitate these powerful beings. The goal was to participate in and experience divinity themselves.

The gods were rarely regarded as supernatural beings with discrete personalities by ancient men. The gods were also not described in terms of a metaphysical existence for its own sake. The goal of mythological endeavours was not about abstract theological speculation but about human existence. In the worldview of ancient man everything that can be seen or heard below has its counterpart in the divine realm, and people, animals, nature and the gods were inextricably bound up together, subject to the same laws, and composed of the same divine substance (Armstrong 2005:5). No ontological gulf existed between the world of the gods and the world of women and men. The gods existed in a storm, the sea or a river, or powerful human emotions like love and hate, rage or sexual passion. These emotions let men partake in divine existence as it lifts them onto a different plane of existence to see the world with new eyes.

Mythology was designed to help men cope with the problematic human predicament, helping people to find their place in the world and their true orientation.

For modern man ‘myth’ usually has the connotation of something that is not true. The stories of gods walking among men, of seas miraculously parting or human beings ascending to heaven are incredible and demonstrably untrue. Since the eighteenth century a scientific view of history has developed that defines history as a description of ‘wie es eigentlich gewesen ist’. In the pre-modern world people talked and wrote of events, not in order to describe what actually happened. They were concerned with what an event had meant. A myth is a meaningful event that happened but it is happening all the time as well. Due to modern man’s restriction of a chronological view of history, no word exists for such an occurrence. Mythology is the ‘art form that points beyond history to what is timeless in human existence, helping us to get beyond the chaotic flux of random events, and glimpse the core of reality’ (Armstrong 2005:7).

It is a serious mistake to regard myth as an inferior mode of thought, which can be cast aside when human beings have become more reasonable (Eliade 1964:11). Mythology does not claim to be about objective historical facts. It is rather a game, like poetry or music, drama or opera that transfigures men’s fragmented, tragic world, and helps them to glimpse new possibilities (Armstrong 2005:8-9). It is a game of ‘what if?’ - a game that also led to the most important discoveries in philosophy, science and technology. Mythical
belief is true in the sense that it transforms people’s lives, telling them something important about their humanity, even though it cannot be proven rationally.

A myth is true because it is effective, not because it provides factual information that can be tested. A myth is true when it provides new insight into the deeper meaning of life. It works when it changes people’s hearts and minds, giving them new hope and compelling them to live fuller, fulfilled lives. A myth is essentially a guide, telling people what they must do in order to live more richly.

As circumstances changed, old myths were given new meanings. This was not a dishonest undertaking because myths allow people to use them in any way that is suited to people’s needs. Every time they took a major step forward, people reviewed their mythology and let it speak to their new conditions (Armstrong 2005:11). But human nature does not change that much and many of the ancient myths still address modern man’s most essential fears and desires.

C DANIEL 7 AND POETRY

It is difficult to define Hebrew poetry. For the purpose of this article the following passages are taken as poetical in Daniel 7, as the translators of the Revised Standard Version (1946 & 1952) and the New Jerusalem Bible (1985) also do – verse 9-10; 13-14 and 23-27:

9 תנִּהְלֵהוּ בַּהֲדוּשׁ יִרָד בִּירֶשְׁתּוֹ רָמִים
   וּתְעַסַּק יִשְׂמָךְ יִתְבַּח
   לֶבֶנְשָׁהּ כֵּתַלְתָּהָר

    שׁוֹעֵר רָאשָׁהּ סְנַפֶּר נָכָא
   הַפְּרָשָׁהּ בֵּשֶׂבֶּךְ רַרְבָּר
   בַּלַּבְלוֹתָהּ נָגָר דְּכַל
   בּוֹנֵרָהּ דְּרָיוֹרָהּ נֵעָר

  10 נַעֲשֹׁה מַרְכֶּזְמָדוּתָהּ
   אַלֶךְ (אַלֶךְ) (אַלֶךְ) (אַלֶךְ) (אַלֶךְ)
   שִׁמְשׁוֹת הַרְרָה (רְרָה) (רְרָה) (רְרָה) (רְרָה)
   כַּעֲפַרְיָיִים וְקַפְמוֹנָי
   רַבְּבֶּא (חֶבֶם)
   יָסֶרֶרֶו (חֶבֶם)
   פָּתְחָה (חֶבֶם)

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13 והנה להוה בחפיה לילה
14 בבראשונה שפניה
15 והנהventureות אפיה
16 והנה רויה שפלין
17 רוקח גופנה
18 והנה שפענה שמלן
19 והנה ראיה ничיה
20 והנה תחתבלה
21 והנה לבריתך מלך
22 והנה בחפירה
23 והנה מנכרי מלכותה
24 והנה כל אותה
25 והנה חדש טיב
26 והנה חדש ענני
27 והנה אחיה מלך
28 והנה אחיה חוף
It is interesting to note that verses 9-10, 13-14 and 23-27 comprise the essence of the vision.

**D DANIEL 7 AND MYTH**

Daniel 1:4 explains what the qualifications of wise men in the court of Nebuchadnezzar should be:

“They should be without blemish, of good appearance, skilful in all wisdom, having knowledge, understanding learning, with strength in them to stand in the king’s palace”.

An orthodox Jew could easily protest that these qualifications suppose a virtual assimilation with the mythological world-view of Babylonian people. The tales (Dan 1-6) demonstrate that the knowledge and wisdom in which Daniel was trained were only the fodder for the revelation than enabled his success. The mythological literature of Babylon provided the raw materials for Daniel’s career as a sage but in the end his faith in Yahweh provides him with the secrets necessary to serve the king with Yahweh’s counsel and to save his people (cf. Dan 2:18-19).

The vision in Daniel 7 has been thoroughly investigated by researchers looking for mythological influences. The following Akkadian or West Semitic influences have been described:

“The four winds of the heavens stirring up the Great Sea’ (Dan 7:2) have been related to the *Enuma Elish* (I:105-110), where Anu creates the four winds that stir up Tiamat. It is a typical mythical scene in which the churning of the cosmic ocean disturbs monsters and beasts, representing chaos and disorder.”
The description of the four beasts in Daniel 7:4-6 – a lion with eagle’s wings; a bear with three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; a leopard with four wings of a bird on its back and four heads; and a fearful, terrifying and strong beast with great iron teeth, devouring, crushing and stamping what was left with its feet, with ten horns – reminds Porter (1983:17-22) of the birth anomalies that occur in the omen series šumma ithubu, as portends of significant events.

Collins (1993:297) notes the resemblance between the winged lion (lion with eagle’s wings) of Daniel 7:4 and many figures found in Mesopotamian iconography.

The relation between the reference to stacks of horns in Daniel 7:7, 20 and 24 (the fourth beast with ten horns and another coming out) and the occurrence of horns on the crowns of Mesopotamian kings and deities is also noted.

The association between El and the Ancient of Days (in Dan 7:9-10) has been discussed by Cross (1973:16); Mullen (1980:160-161); Day (1985:161); Goldingay (1989:151) and Collins (1993:290).

In Daniel 7:9 the throne of the Ancient of Days is described: it is (like) flames of fire and its wheels (like) burning fire. The similarity to descriptions of thrones used in divine processions as well as in Ezekiel 1:26-28 and 10:1-2 is discussed by Collon (1987:160, #725-726).


The periodization of history into four empires in Daniel 7:17 (the four beasts are four kings) is also found in the Fourth Sibyl (Flusser 1972:148-175; Collins 1993:166-170).

These similarities have only a single point of contact and in some cases the question can be asked whether it is a true resemblance in the sense that material was borrowed between sources. The mere resemblance of symbols, themes and phrases does not necessarily prove intertextuality and does not add to our understanding of Daniel 7.

The chaos combat myths, with exemplars from the Ancient Near East, have greater potential because it follows the same basic outline as the vision represented in Daniel 7 (Forsyth 1987:44-66 discusses a number of examples). In Akkadian literature the chief representative is Enuma Elish. The chaos monster is disturbed by the churning of the sea (as discussed above). This leads to a revolt amongst the gods. They procure the Tablet of Destinies. The gods appoint a champion who fights on their behalf and defeats the enemy. He is granted dominion. Some of these themes have also been identified in the Ba’al Cycle in Ugaritic literature (Day 1985:151-178). Emerton (1958:225-242) was
the first who argued for a Canaanite origin for Daniel 7. The subduing of the forces of chaos enables the creation and organisation of the cosmos. But Forsyth (1987:44) shows that the creation element is just one of the variables, not the defining characteristic of the genre. Daniel 7 does not contain a cosmogony. Walton (2002:69-89) discusses the Anzu myth, another examplar of the chaos revolt paradigm in order to identify parallels that may be helpful in explicating the vision in Daniel 7.

E DESCRIPTION OF CREATION COMBAT MYTHS

The Anzu myth as well as the Enuma Elish are discussed as two exemplars of creation combat myths. The reason for choosing these two myths is that they are well represented in fragments.

1 Anzu myth

As part of the chaos combat myths the Anzu myth has versions in both Old Babylonian and Standard Babylonian with exemplars dating from the early second millennium to the seventh century.

The main character in the mythical story is Ningirsu, and later, Ninurta who had supplanted Ningirsu.

Anzu is a fierce beast, a combination of lion and eagle. He intimidates gods and men. The chief god is Enlil, who enlists this creature with his malevolence as his guardian. Anzu gets the opportunity to observe Enlil wielding the Tablet of Destinies to enforce his rule over the gods. When he gets the opportunity, Anzu absconds with the Tablet. He threatens to wreak havoc amongst the gods. Enlil initiates a search for somebody who can conquer Anzu and recover the Tablet. Adad, Gibil and Shara are given the opportunity but they refuse, terrified by the possibility of facing a renegade armed with the power of the Tablet.

Finally, the gods get Mami, the creatrix and mother goddess, to help them. They urge her to persuade Ninurta, son of Mami and Enlil, to take on Anzu for the sake of his father’s honour. Mami is successful in persuading Ninurta and he engages Anzu. The beast is however invulnerable. And his possession of the Tablet gives him the ability to counteract any weapon used against him. Ninurta then consults Ea who provides him with a strategy that will succeed. Ninurta should pluck Anzu’s wing feathers. The creature will summon them back to him. As the summons is voiced, Ninurta should loose an arrow. The summons for feathers will draw the arrow to its mark. In this way Anzu is slain and the Tablet is recovered. For an unknown reason, perhaps due to the fragmentary nature of the text, Ninurta does not hand over the Tablet immediately to the gods, but after some negotiations it is restored to its rightful owners. Then Ninurta is honoured and declared the greatest amongst the gods (Reiner 1985:64-65; Clifford 1994:84-86).
2 Enuma Elish

The Enuma Elish was probably composed in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I of Babylon (1125-1104 B.C.E.). It describes the rise of Marduk, god of Babylon, to become leader of the gods. This myth was recited on the fourth day of the New Year’s festival, the Akitu.

The myth starts in primordial times, ‘(W)hen skies above were not yet named / Nor earth below pronounced by name’, when Apsu, the first one, and Tiamat, the begetter and maker, had not yet formed anything (Dalley 1989:233). No gods existed. Only the primordial pair was on the scene. Apsu and Tiamat represent primordial waters. They create the gods, but the young gods are tumultuous. Apsu complains to Tiamat that ‘(T)heir ways have become very grievous to me, / By day I cannot rest, by night I cannot sleep. / I shall abolish their ways and disperse them. / Let peace prevail so that we can sleep’ (Dalley 1989:234).

Tiamat does not support the proposal but Mummu, Apsu’s counsellor, does. The young gods hear of the plot. Ea puts Apsu to sleep, and kills him. He stays on top of Ansu and creates two new gods, Bel and Marduk. Anu, father of Ea, creates four winds and gives them to Marduk to play with. But the winds stir up Tiamat and make the other gods restless. They ask Tiamat to act. Tiamat appoints Qingu as leader of her army. Ea discovers again what is happening. Ea and Anu try to confront Tiamat, but they are intimidated and have to turn back. Then Ea urges Marduk to fight against Tiamat. He agrees on condition that they allow him to decide on his own fate. ‘Whatever I create shall never be altered! / A decree from my lips shall never be revoked, never be changed!’ (Dalley 1989:248). The gods grant his request. They proclaim Marduk king.

Marduk and Tiamat engage in battle. Marduk releases a wind in her face. When she opens her mouth to swallow it, Marduk shoots an arrow that kills her. He rounds up the gods who support Tiamat and smashes their weapons. He cuts the corpse of Tiamat in two. From half of it he makes the sky and arranges the waters so that it could not escape. He establishes the constellations of stars as stations for the gods.

Next he devises mankind to do the gods’ work for them so that the gods may relax. Ea makes man from the blood of Tiamat’s ally, Qingu. Then the gods create Babylon. It takes them a year to build the city and the temple Esagila. The myth ends with a banquet in the temple, and a lengthy litany of Marduk’s praises.

The myth encapsulates a view of the world (Collins 2004:34). Tiamat, a complex figure, is Mother Nature. She is concerned about her offspring, but then devours them. She is not evil. But she poses a threat to the young gods, and must be destroyed. If life is to flourish on earth, nature must be subdued.
The kingship of Marduk implicates that kingship is also necessary in human society. The myth also legitimates the monarchy.

The myth is also a step in the direction of monotheism. Here the existence of other gods is acknowledged, but the pre-eminence of Marduk is emphasized.

The *Enuma Elish* drew on earlier sources. One of its sources is the *Anzy* myth.

**F  CREATION COMBAT MYTHS AND DANIEL 7**

Many elements in Daniel 7 display no resemblance to the creation combat myth paradigm, but there are a number of the major motifs that show a likeness.

The first three beasts in Daniel 7 cannot be compared to any motif within the combat myth. The comparison with the *šumma izbu* has already been shown.

The fourth beast is described physically only with reference to the iron teeth, bronze claws and ten horns. It is not compared to any known animal, as in the case of the first three animals (lion with wings like an eagle; bear; leopard with wings).

The fourth beast comes out of the cosmic sea that has been churned up by the four winds of heaven, a motif playing a prominent role in the creation combat myths. In *Enuma Elish* I:105-109 Anu forms the four winds and gives them to his son, Marduk, to play with. The wind churns up and irritates Tiamat.

Tiamat is identified with the sea but she does not come forth from the sea. In Ugaritic literature Yamm is the sea god, although he is also sometimes identified with Lotan, a chaos monster (Stolz 1995:1390-1401). Tiamat is never described as a monster, but in *Enuma Elish* (I:133-143) she creates various fearsome creatures to serve her cause. The creatures are a snake, savage snake, hairy hero, big demon, savage dog, scorpion-man, fish-man, and bull-man (as translated by Lambert 1986:57).

In *Anzu*, the antagonist is the monstrous beast. He is conceived in the flood waters (I:50-52). In this way he emerged from the sea. But he is not pictured as representing the chaos forces associated with the sea in the same way as Tiamat and Yamm are. The motif of the four winds churning up the sea is also absent in this myth. There is no physical description of Anzu in the text, but Mesopotamian iconography provides many representations of him. Early texts portray him as a bird with a human head, or a human with bird posture. Later representations picture him as a feathered creature with lion’s feet and legs, eagle wings and torso, and a lion-like face with gaping jaws and a horn (Lewis 1996:28-47).

Daniel 7 is thus closer to *Enuma Elish* with regard to the churning of the sea, but closer to *Anzu* in the description of the antagonist. It differs from both
when it sees the fourth beast as following on the other three. No mythological tradition has been found in the ancient Near East where a chaos monster from the sea does battle (Walton 2002:74).

The fourth beast of Daniel 7 crushes devours and tramples his victims, who are not identified. The war is led by the little horn against the Ḥĕwārā. The identification of this group mentioned in verse 21-27 is controversial. Traditionally this group was related to faithful Israel (Montgomery 1927:307; Hartmann & DiLella 1978:207; LaCocque 1979:126-127). More recently they are understood to be the angelic agents executing God’s plans (Collins 1993:312-318). In either case, in Daniel 7 they fill the role played in the creation myths by the gods who temporarily lose control of their authority, but regain it the moment the enemy is vanquished. The antagonist sets himself up against the Most High (v. 25), and he speaks boastful words (vv. 8, 20).

The boastful king threatens to change תְּבִּל ְיָאָה ('sacred seasons and the law'), reminding of the Tablet of Destinies (tuppi šimātī), the means by which the cosmos functions were established and regulated. A tablet of Sennacherib describes the Tablet of Destinies as ‘the bond of supreme power, dominion over the gods of heaven and the underworld, and kingship of the Igigi and Anunnaki, the secret of the heaven and the netherworld…’ (George 1986:134). The Tablet governs the operation of the cosmos, the jurisdiction of the gods, civilization and human history and destiny. The calendar and the laws and customs of society were established by the Tablet (Enuma Elish I:8; Oppenheim 1977:201-204). Even though nothing can be stolen in Daniel 7’s description, usurpation of the prerogatives associated with the Tablet of Destinies is in evidence.

According to Daniel 7:25, the enemy speaks against the Most High and oppresses the holy ones, and threatens to change the set times and laws.

In Enuma Elish, Tiamat and her consort, Qingu, leads a revolt against the gods, attempting to seize power from them. She is accused that she ‘attempted wicked deeds against Anshar, sovereign of the gods’ (IV:83). Tiamat does not try to steal the Tablet. She entrusts the tablet to Qingu, who has been appointed as commander-in-chief (I:148-162). The text does not explain how Tiamat procures the Tablet, and whether she steals it. But her authority is vested in the Tablet. Qingu is elevated above all the gods and he controls their destinies (III:102-111). Tiamat boasts in her declaration of Qingu’s station. After Tiamat and Qingu are destroyed, Marduk retrieves the Tablet (IV:119-122), reorganizes the cosmos (V:1-68), before turning over the Tablet to Anu (V:69-70).

In Anzu, there is no revolt against the gods, only one individual with a desire for power. Anzu steals the Tablet as an act of treachery rather than rebellion, and in this way he controls the gods (I:71-73). Anzu also boasts,
when he steals the Tablet (I:70-73) and when confronted by Ninurta (II:40-42). The threat in Anzu is how a creature will use the Tablet.

The fourth beast in Daniel is represented by the ten horns that have an eleventh (the little horn) added. In Enuma Elish Tiamat is accompanied by eleven monsters that she has created to serve her cause. Lambert (1986:56-58) is of the opinion that the eleven monsters are a reflection of that myth’s dependence on the Ninurta tales, including Anzu. Daniel’s use may reflect a conflation of the Enuma Elish and Anzu.

In the creation combat myths, the protagonists consist of three groups: the group threatened by the revolt, made up of the older, more established gods; the individual or individuals that are delegated to devise a solution to the threat, directed by the chief god; and the potential deliverers.

In Daniel 7 the champion position is filled by one “like the son of man”. Day (1985:167-177) is of the opinion that this title refers to Michael, in contrast to the traditional viewpoint which saw in this figure a Messiah. This figure is a cloud-rider (v. 13), and the comparison with Ugaritic texts has been shown.

The son of man does not do battle according to Daniel 7, however, and is not a champion in the sense found in the combat myths. He is rather given authority and dominion, without any battle. The authority of the beast is simply stripped away. The son of man does not even play a role in the court which strips the beast of its power. Here the magical element emerges most clearly when Daniel 7 is compared with the ancient Near Eastern exemplars. In Enuma Elish, Marduk is provided with special weapons including the storm winds and magical spells (IV:35-62, 95-104). His ritual is to cut Tiamat in two (IV:135-140). In Anzu, Ninurta uses the winds as weapons (II:31-34). In the end he also uses an arrow to kill Anzu magically. Thus in the exemplars the champion is the focus of the narrative and the victory the centrepiece. In the Daniel narrative this is cut out and replaced by the emphasis on the kingdom itself rather than on the new king.

In all exemplars the champion is honoured and given the kingship. This also happens in Daniel 7, where the kingdom is handed over to the γῇστος, the people of the Most High. But the Most High is the one who keeps possession of the everlasting kingdom and who is obeyed and served (v. 27). If verse 27 is compared with verse 14, it is clear that the Most High is to be identified with the son of man (Walton 2002:82). This is in line with the rest of the Old Testament in that it does not set up a second divine king succeeding the head of the pantheon, as portrayed in the ancient Near Eastern exemplars.

G SYNTHESIS

The combat creation myths and the vision in Daniel 7 have distinct elements that cannot be explained by comparing the biblical and non-biblical texts. What
is evident, however, is that the author(s) of Daniel 7 was/were familiar with the creation myths, and used some of the elements of the myths. It is not improbable that Daniel 7 used an exemplar that does no longer exist, but it has no use to speculate about such a source. Otherwise he is drawing from traditions in various exemplars. The evidence shows that the vision is a conflated and eclectic account. This leaves room that the account may be dependent on other ancient exemplars that have not been compared with the Daniel text.

Examples of such conflation can be found in the rebellion being characterized against the Most High (as in *Enuma Elish*) and against oppressive threats (as in *Anzu*); the eleven horns of the fourth beast; and the Ancient of Days in terms that are similar to the El traditions.

This should not be taken as that the Daniel author made extensive use of the combat myths. This is Collins’ (1993:281-282) conclusion as well: “We must bear in mind that whoever composed Daniel 7 was a creative author, not merely a copyist of ancient sources. It should be no surprise that his composition is a new entity, discontinuous in some respects with all its sources. What is significant is whether there are also aspects of the text that are rendered more intelligible when considered in the context of the proposed background” (Collins 1998:19-20). Our understanding of the sources of apocalypticism should be a generic approach rather than a genetic one.

In Daniel 4 the author converts mythological motifs, like the world tree, into historical contexts. In Daniel 7 he eschatologizes myth; he transforms mythological imagery into eschatology, in the same way that the Day of JHWH motif is converted from an imminent happening into an eschatological expectation.

The author does not rework an ancient myth into a new text. He rather uses motifs and patterns that contain certain associations for ancient man to support the tale he is recounting. Russell (1964:122-127) has already described this as the modus operandi of apocalypticism. Collins (1998:20) reminds that ultimately the meaning of any given work is constituted not by its sources but by the way in which it is combined.

Daniel 7 cannot be dismissed as “an example of cheap plagiarism or vitiated as an ill-disguised and haphazard patchwork quilt. Instead, it ought to be recognized as an informed and articulate literary mosaic whose author has assimilated and mastered a wide spectrum of literary traditions in order to transform them to his own theological will and purpose” (Walton 2002:88).

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