

**STORM-THEOPHANY AND THE PORTRAYAL OF
YAHWEH AS CREATOR-KING IN PSALM 104 AND IN
PROPHETIC AND WISDOM LITERATURE**

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Abstract

In this article, special emphasis is laid on the correlation of storm theophanic imagery with the motifs of creation, wisdom and judgement in the depiction of Yahweh as creator-king and judge. With those elements in view, the first part of this article is devoted to a re-examination of Ps 104. It is noted that this Hebrew psalm, often compared with the Egyptian hymn to the god Aten, has more in common with the Babylonian idea of a mythological Chaoskampf resulting in creation. Accordingly, significant differences and similarities in the respective depictions of creation out of chaos are briefly noted. This close analysis and exegesis of Ps 104 provides the framework for discussion of other biblical texts, from wisdom and prophetic literature (especially Jeremiah), with the same themes and motifs considered in this work. Particular attention is given to the linkage between the effects of Yahweh's storm phenomena and his wisdom reflected in cosmological activities. It is noted that Yahweh's control of chaos with elements of the storm that he creates as exemplified in Ps 104, is no longer directed against primeval chaos, as shown in the texts discussed here, but against human wickedness. However, we emphasize that the form and content in the depiction of

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Yahweh's roles as the creator-king and universal judge derive from storm theophany tradition linked with creation, wisdom and judgement motifs.

The focus of this article is on the conception of Yahweh as creator-king and judge viewed through the use of ideas and images relating to the ancient tradition of the storm-god. This idea shines through some selected texts from the psalms, prophetic and wisdom literature, Ps 104, Amos 1:2, 14; 4:12-13; 5:8-9; 9:5-6; Jer 10:1-16; 25:30-32; 51:15-19 and Job 9:4-10; 26:7-14; 38 respectively, that show language deriving from creation ideology in expression of Yahweh's control of chaos with storm phenomena. Here—though not all elements are the same in each text—Yahweh is featured accompanied by a profusion of clouds, rain, lightning/fire and smoke as well as disruptive effects in the natural order caused by his thunder. The idea, therefore, echoes the ancient tradition of the storm-god in battle that Frank Cross identifies as a complex genre.² Yet, Jeremias, on the other hand, sees this as a development of the theophanic form from a single to a more complex genre.³ However, the emphasis in this article, as it relates to the analysis of the selected texts, is not whether or not the description in the texts fits the genre. Rather it relates to the expression of distinct phenomena representing Yahweh's storm theophany in correlation with motifs of creation, wisdom and judgement in depicting Yahweh as creator-king.

² Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History and Religion of Israel* [Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973], 147-77).

³ Jörg Jeremias, *Theophanie: Die Geschichte einer Alttestamentlichen Gattung* [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag des Erziehungsvereins, 1965], 100-11).

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Our discussion on the association of the storm theophany motif,⁴ wisdom thought and judgement with the theme of creation begins with Ps 104. This biblical psalm is often compared with the Egyptian hymn to the sun god Aten.⁵ The similarities are often considered as signs of direct dependence of the author of the biblical psalm on the Egyptian hymn, even though the problem of authorship for the former remains unresolved to date. It should be noted, however, that of the seven⁶ parallels drawn between the biblical psalm and the Egyptian hymn only two prove to be more than mere coincidence: the similarity between the expressions of awe over the wondrous creative acts and the effectiveness of the designs of both deities (Ps 104:24; cf. "Hymn to Aten," lines 52-54, 74), and the mention of creatures and ships in the sea. There are elements, however, that occur in Ps 104 that are unparalleled in the Egyptian hymn⁷, but that are more in keeping with the

⁴ The idea of the judgment of the wicked as another factor that calls forth Yahweh's storm theophany in order to establish justice is dealt with at length in my forthcoming monograph: *Storm Theophany and the attribution of Socio-Political Roles to Yahweh in ancient Israel*. However, in this article, we argue that it is plausible to regard creation as the ultimate origin of the idea of obliterating wickedness (as equivalent to primeval chaos), or whatever conflicts with Yahweh's created order.

⁵ John A. Wilson, "The Hymn to the Aton" in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament* (ed. James B. Pritchard; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955 & 1969), 369-71; cf. Aylward W. Blackman, "The Psalms in light of Egyptian Research," in *The Psalmist* (ed. David Capell Simpson; London: Oxford University Press, 1926), 177-82; R.J. Williams, "The Hymn to Aten," in *Documents from Old Testament Times* (ed. D.Winton Thomas; New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 142-150.

⁶ Wilson, "Egyptian Hymns: The Hymn to the Aton," in *The Ancient Near East: an Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (ed. James B. Pritchard; Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), 324-28.

⁷ Peter C. Craigie, "The Comparison of Hebrew Poetry: Psalm 104 in the light of Ugaritic and Egyptian Poetry," *Semitics* 4 [1974]: 14. Craigie notes that similarities with the hymn to Aten are specifically cosmological

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Babylonian *Enuma Elish* (EE). In contrast with the Egyptian hymn, creation in Ps 104 is expressed in the mythological form of a *Chaoskampf*,⁸ which parallels more closely the Babylonian model. Like Marduk, who assumes the character of the storm-deity in combat with the dragon of chaos, Tiamat, and subsequently proceeds to create ingenious things, Yahweh appears with meteorological forces in his attendance in order to subjugate the cosmic waters and establish the earth. Not only does this mythic conflict shine through in Ps 104, but this psalm links elements of storm theophany with wisdom thought and judgement motif such as also happens in the epic in praise of Marduk. Ps 104, therefore, is paradigmatic for other biblical texts which combine similar motifs in the portrayal of Yahweh as creator-king, as is shown in the subsequent analysis.

PSALM 104

First and foremost, in this psalm is the portrayal of Yahweh's glory and majesty as it is revealed at his theophany.⁹ Here, too, the psalmist makes use of ideas and expressions that are often associated with the storm theophany of Yahweh. The idea of הוד והדר, "splendour and majesty," that is stated in v. 1 represents the self-disclosure of Yahweh and does not carry the literal meaning of royal regalia (cf. Ps 93). Other references in the Hebrew Bible show that the phrase "splendour and majesty" expresses the grandeur of Yahweh's presence (Ps 96:6, [cf. 9; Ps 29:4; 1 Chron 16:27, 29; 2 Chron 20:21]). This phrase הוד והדר תלבש,

and not cosmogonic. Cosmogonic parallels exist between Ps 104 and the *Enuma Elish*.

⁸ Bernhard W. Anderson, *Creation in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, London: SPCK, 1984), 12.

⁹Cf. Hermann Spiekermann, *Heilsgegenwart Eine Theologie der Psalmen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 27.

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on the one hand, is repeated almost verbatim in Job 40:10, appearing in a context emphasizing Yahweh's self-disclosure through the power of his strong arm and of his thunder. It should be noted that particularly in Ps 104:6-7 and Job 40:9-10 the context shows Yahweh's majesty experienced in thunder (cf. Ps 104:7; Job 40:9). In Hab 3:3; Ps 148:13 and Job 37:22 the word הוד (splendour) relates to Yahweh's storm theophany.¹⁰ Hence, the occurrence of the phrase "splendour and majesty" in Ps 104:1 suggests that the same phenomena are implied. The idea that "he (Yahweh) covers himself with light (אור) as with a garment" (v. 2) is also reflective of storm phenomena.¹¹ The substantive אור and its verbal form also occur in contexts referring to Yahweh's storm theophany. For instance, in Job 36:32; 37:3, 11, 15, אור means lightning (cf. Hab 3:11). In Job 37:15 אור occurs with a technical term הופיע often used in theophanic texts (cf. Deut 33:2; Pss 50:2; 80:2 [1]). In Pss 77:19 [18] and 97:4 the verb אור in its *hiphil* form expresses the brilliance or numinous radiance caused by lightning at Yahweh's storm theophany. Also, the reference to Yahweh "enveloped in light" (נאור) in Ps 76:5 [4] is illustrative of the idea of lightning, as the context further mentions Yahweh's "rebuke"¹² by which he wields control over the enemy, or, as

¹⁰Cf. Yitzhak Avishur, *Studies in Hebrew and Ugaritic Psalms* (The Hebrew University: Magness Press, 1994), 155-56.

¹¹ Some scholars misinterpret Yahweh's donning of light as the first act of creation paralleled in Gen. 1:3. See, Jon Douglas Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: the Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), 55. As attested in Ps 104, and also in comparison with the character of Aten and Marduk, "light" is a component of Yahweh's intrinsic nature. However, Yahweh, like in the case of Marduk (*EE* IV:57-58; cf. VI:127), is described by the psalmist with similar luminous appearance for posture preceding his storm theophany and the subsequent ingenious acts he performs at creation.

¹² For the meaning of גערה, as a metonym for thunderstorm, we concur with A. Caquot (גער in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* Vol. 3 [eds. G.J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren; Grand Rapids Michigan: William

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in the case of Ps 104:6, the “waters” (מים). It is possible, then, that the mention of Yahweh covered with light in Ps 104:2,¹³ describes the effulgence associated with his lightning. Undoubtedly, the phrase “majesty and splendour,” juxtaposed with the idea of donning light, therefore, describes the celestial splendour of Yahweh (Ps 104:1c-2a). Thus, with the use of participles, tantamount to epithets, the psalmist compliments Yahweh who appears “wrapped in light” (עטה אור); “stretches out the heavens” (נטה שמים) and “lays the foundations” (המקרה) of his celestial abode (vv. 2-3a). We may note here that the motifs of “stretching out the heavens” and “creating” or “founding” the earth are often connected in texts that emphasize the nature and power of Yahweh as creator.¹⁴ In relation with other theophanic texts

B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978], 49-53) that this Hebrew term expresses phenomena representing Yahweh's storm theophany. The root גער, “rebuke,” is often used in the Hebrew texts to express Yahweh's fierce pronouncement against the rebellious waters (Isa 17:13; 50:2; Nah 1:4; Pss 18:16 [15]; 104:7; 106:9). Yahweh's rebuke causes the drying up of the seas and rivers (Isa 50:2; Nah 1:4) or the Sea of Reeds (Ps 106:9), or makes the waters to flee (Isa 17:13; Pss 18:16 [15]; 104:7). Therefore, the terminology of rebuke seems to be part of the theophanic genre describing how Yahweh does battle with the watery chaos. This idea on גערה, as representative of the storm theophany of Yahweh, is dealt with in detail in Chapter 1 of my forthcoming monograph (*Storm Theophany*).

¹³ Sverre Aalen, אור, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* Vol.1 (eds. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren; Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 164. Aalen sees this verse as problematic. Even though he realizes that the noun אור and its synonym נגה (“brightness;” Hab 3:11; Ps 18:13 [12]; cf. Ezek 1:4, 27, 28) appear in theophanic texts, he objects to the idea that the word “light” in Ps 104:2 is associated with Yahweh's theophany. Instead, he argues that the reference to “light” here should be considered as an attribute of Yahweh.

¹⁴ Norman Habel, “He Who stretches out the Heavens,” *CBQ* 34, 4 (1972): 417-21. Habel notices that Deutero-Isaiah incorporates the motif of “stretching out the heavens” seven times (Isa 40:22; 42:5; 44:24; 45:12; 48:13; 51:13, 16) and correlates it with the establishment of the earth in developing the theme of salvation. He notes further that the

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(Jer 10:12 = 51:15; Job 9:8; cf. Job 26:7), discussed in detail in my forthcoming monograph, the creation of the heavens is one other factor that proves Yahweh's pre-eminence in contrast to idols (cf. Ps 96:5). It is apparent, though, that the formula "he who stretches out the heavens" is isolated in Ps 104:2, and, as Habel notes,¹⁵ functions to identify Yahweh as the creator who establishes the heavens like his tent whence he emerges in splendour to create the earth. In Ps 104, therefore, Yahweh's establishment of his heavenly abode acts as backdrop to his exclusive authority to create and employ the atmospheric elements for his mobility, in order to accomplish his purposes as the creator.

In keeping with the language of theophany in vv. 1-2, the psalmist appropriates images of storm that are familiar in ancient mythology in order to depict Yahweh's self-disclosure. Clouds, winds and flaming fire—symbolic of lightning—attend his theophany. Hence, Yahweh is depicted as the one "who sets clouds (as) his chariot" (הַשָּׁמַיִם רֶכֶב), "who walks on the wings of the wind" (הַמַּהְלֵךְ עַל-כַּנְפֵי-רוּחַ, cf. Ps 18:11 [10]) and "makes/creates¹⁶ (עָשָׂה) winds (as) his messengers" and "lightning (as) his ministers" (vv. 3b-4). As in the case of Marduk, who creates (*banû*) all the different types of winds and the rain-flood which he employs as ammunition on his mission to exterminate Tiamat (*EE* IV:45-50), Yahweh's power to create and employ the winds (cf. Amos 4:13) bodes well with the idea of his storm theophany. This portrayal of Yahweh in storm imagery is consistent with

power of Yahweh as creator is the same power at work to redeem his people.

¹⁵ Habel, "He Who stretches out the Heavens;" 422-23.

¹⁶ For the dual meaning of עָשָׂה, "make/create," see Helmer Ringgren, עָשָׂה, *TDOT* Vol. 11 (eds. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren and Heinz-Josef, Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, UK, 2001), 387, 388 & 390.

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and authenticates his phenomenal repelling of the waters of chaos by his voice of thunder. That here we have a pale reflection of a cosmogonic battle is indicated by the use of the verbs “flee” (נוס) and “take to flight” (הפז), which both suggest commotion. The verb הפז (take to flight), when used with animate subjects, often conveys the meaning of haste or hurried flight owing to panic (cf. 2 Sam 4:4; 2 Kgs 7:15; Ps 48:6 [5]). In a sense, then, the occurrence of הפז (take to flight) in parallel with ¹⁷נוס(flee) expresses the disorderly flow of the waters while personifying them. The reference to the waters “going up”¹⁸ (עלה) the mountains and “flowing down”¹⁹ (ירד) the valleys, as stated in the subsequent verse (v. 8), figuratively shows the waters,²⁰ stirred up by Yahweh's

¹⁷ If the *nun paragomicum* (נון-) is peculiar to older forms of verbs (cf. Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, [Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1990], 347, 20.2f), then Ps 104 is an early Hebrew psalm. It is in v. 7 describing the impact of Yahweh's thunder on the waters that the paragomic *nun* makes its first appearance. There are more verses in Ps 104 that retain this feature: vv. 9, 10b, 22, 26a, 27a, 28, 29, 30a. Gesenius-Kautzsch (47m), on the other hand, notes that the occurrence of this morphological phenomenon in verbal forms expresses marked emphasis.

¹⁸ This verb is also used with natural phenomena: either in expression of mist going up from the earth (Gen 2:6), waters going up from the north (Jer 47:2), or as a metaphor of Egypt rising like the Nile (Jer 46:7-8), and land compared to the rising of the Nile (Amos 8:8; 9:5).

¹⁸In Deut 9:21 this verb also expresses the idea of a stream flowing down the mountain; cf. waters flowing downstream in Jos 3:13; Ezek 47:8b.

¹⁹ In Deut 9:21 this verb also expresses the idea of a stream flowing down the mountain; cf. waters flowing downstream in Jos 3:13; Ezek 47:8b.

²⁰ Cf. Edmund F. Sutcliffe, “A Note on Psalm CIV 8,” *VT* 2, 2 (1952): 179. We are to read “waters” as the subject of the verbs in v. 8a, due to the gender agreement with the masculine plural forms used. There is a suggestion to read “mountains” and “valleys” as the subjects, but there is lack of congruence, with the latter being a feminine substantive. Moreover, the idea of confinement in the parallel phrase (v. 8b) suits the plight of the waters as substantiated by a similar case in the Marduk epic (*EE* IV:140).

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thunder, moving pell-mell to the places assigned to them. Yahweh directs the springs to flow in the valleys and to go between mountains (v. 10). Consequently, he marks out a boundary for the waters, so that they do not return to cover the earth (v. 9). This control of the chaotic waters (cf. Ps 93:3-4) results in the establishment of the earth; it is firmly secured on its foundation and cannot be moved (v. 5; cf. Pss 93:1-2; 96:10). It is clear, therefore, that the psalmist understands the creation of the earth in terms of the ancient cosmogonic pattern.²¹ Here, too, the battle of the warrior-deity, armed with his storm weapons, and his ultimate victory may be interpreted as creation out of chaos.

The psalmist's portrayal of cosmic order in the rest of the psalm further conforms to the mythic pattern at many points. In keeping with the mythical tradition of victory over chaos,²² whereby the subdued waters are assigned a purposeful function (Ps 104:11-23), the psalmist explores the theme of divine providence and sustenance. As Weiser²³ points out, the confined waters of chaos, which Yahweh turned into springs (cf. Ps 74:15), become a source of life for the beasts and birds (vv. 10-12). Yahweh also stations the sun and moon in order to govern the orderly cycles of life on

²¹ Some scholars argue that the Baal-Yam battle should be seen as cosmogonic; see Loren R. Fisher, "Creation at Ugarit and in the Old Testament," *VT* 15, 3 (1965): 316; cf. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 43, 113-20; Richard J. Clifford, "Cosmogonies in the Ugaritic Texts and in the Bible," *Orientalia* 53 NS (1984): 183-201. Clifford once supported the same view, but no longer maintains this argument (see Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East and in the Bible* [Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1994], 132).

²² Hermann Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1895), 91-99.

²³ Cf. Artur Weiser, *The Psalms* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1962), 668; cf. Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150* (trans. Hilton C. Oswald; Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1989), 300.

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earth (vv. 19-23; cf. *EE* V:11-20). The emphasis on the regularity of the sun and moon-marking day, night and seasons, respectively, shows Yahweh's control as creator of the luminaries (Ps 74:16; cf. 19:5b-6 [4b-5]). From that perspective, the Hebrew tradition vehemently condemned the worship of heavenly bodies with the claim that Yahweh created them (see Deut 4:19; 17:3; cf. 2 Kgs 23:5; Isa. 47:13; Jer 10:2; Dan 4:7; Am 5:8a). In this light, and with a profound sense of awe at Yahweh's creation and providence, the psalmist understands cosmic order as bearing witness to divine wisdom. As the psalmist proclaims, the manifold works of Yahweh on earth display his wisdom (Ps 104:24; cf. *EE* VII:116-117). Undoubtedly, the comprehensive sounding "all of them" (כלם, cf. Jer 10:16 = 51:19; Ps 146:6) implies Yahweh's creations in the nautical realm, the "sea" (ים) and "Leviathan" (לוייתן), as well as pointing to the skill and craftsmanship of the sovereign author. The "sea" and "Leviathan," which in ancient mythology are symbolic of chaos (cf. Ps 74:13-14; Job 7:12) are here depicted as part of Yahweh's design. Here the sea is benign and teeming with innumerable creatures of diverse form and sizes (Ps 104:25); among them is Leviathan, a harmless and sportive creature of Yahweh (v. 26b; cf. Job 40:25-32 [41:1-8]). It is plausible that the poet in Job alludes to a primeval battle in which Yahweh subdued and reduced Leviathan to a status of a playful pet. All the living creatures depend on Yahweh's providence and are sustained by his continual presence (Ps 104:27-28). In essence, the psalmist emphasizes that all life revolves around Yahweh, who orders and sustains creation.

The psalmist concludes this descriptive psalm by expressing the wish that the "glory" (כבוד) of Yahweh, which is manifested through his works (v. 31; cf. Pss 19:2-5a [1-4a]; 97:6), may endure forever. He, therefore, extols Yahweh and bids him to rejoice in his creative works. Though the

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psalmist discerns the purposeful function of Yahweh's created order, he, at the same time, shows how creation is at Yahweh's disposal. By restating the idea of theophany in reverse form, the psalmist portrays Yahweh as the one who appears in thunderstorm to establish the earth on its foundations and to confine the waters of chaos, yet, also as "the one who looks" (הַמְבִיט, cf. Job 28:24) to the earth and causes it to tremble, and touches the mountains and they smoke (v. 32; cf. Amos 9:5; Ps 144:5). Here the psalmist shows that the cosmos is not independent of Yahweh's sovereign will. The cosmic order is susceptible to a return to chaos. With this awareness of Yahweh's governance of the cosmos, the psalmist possibly views the continuity of the created order as expressing the creator's faithfulness. Thus, in acknowledgement of Yahweh's glory displayed in the created order, the psalmist vows to honour Yahweh throughout his life (v. 33), and to act in accordance with Yahweh's purpose (v. 34). Again the psalmist alludes to Yahweh's "wisdom." Moreover, intrinsic in his response of praise is an expression of reverential fear²⁴ and a submission to Yahweh's lordship as the creator. Also, in accordance with the intended harmony of the created order, the psalmist petitions for the "wicked"²⁵ or "sinners" to be

²⁴ James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An introduction* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 85. Crenshaw defines 'fear of the Lord' as a distinctive feature in theological wisdom indicating religious devotion. As he states, this implies the vital essence of a relationship with the creator. It is apparent in the biblical Hebrew tradition, however, that the expression of reverential fear is also in keeping with the intended response from the worshippers at Yahweh's theophany (Exod 20:18-20; cf. 1 Sam 12:13-18). This reverential trust is characteristic of the conventional principle represented by "the fear of the lord" (יִרְאֵת אֲדֹנָי) in the sapiential traditions (see Job 28:28; cf. Prov 1:7; 9:10).

²⁵ *Contra* Moses Buttenwieser, *The Psalms: chronologically treated* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938, 15 Buttenwieser sees the idea of the wicked as foreign to the theme of the whole psalm, but as belonging to Ps. 103.

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annihilated (v. 35), though he does not suggest how the wicked should be blotted out. An answer to this may be drawn from the divine discourse in Job 40:1-10. Here, as a rejoinder to Job's accusation that the wicked are allowed to prosper, Yahweh does not give a definitive response. Instead, Yahweh challenges Job as to whether he has a strong arm like his, or can thunder with his voice, in order to crush the haughty and the wicked (Job 40:9-13). However, as implied by the rhetorical statements in this text, Yahweh, with his thunderstorm, unleashes his wrath against the insolent. He shows impartiality in his exercise of justice by wreaking vengeance on the wicked (cf. Pss 18:27-28 [26-27]; 68:2-3 [1-2]; 97:2a-3, 10; Hab 3:13-14), to maintain his cosmic order. In essence, the desire expressed by the psalmist against the wicked may recall similar statements seeking the total banishment of Tiamat, who represents chaos and threatens the created order:

May Marduk vanquish Tiamat, may he constrict her life and make it short.

May she be far removed, and be distant forever.
(*EE* VII:132, 134)

As in the main, however, Ps 104 combines motifs familiar from other ancient traditions in order to enrich the Israelite monotheistic idea of Yahweh as sovereign creator. Motifs from the mythological tradition of the *Chaoskampf* shine through: the wielding of storm elements over the chaotic waters and, ultimately, the creation of order are expressed as a function of wisdom. Cosmic order, therefore, is established and is sustained by the deity's acts of wisdom. The will to follow the design of the sovereign creator is inculcated by reverential fear. By contrast, any dissidence from the creator's design disrupts the created order and is equivalent to returning creation to primeval chaos.

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Therefore, the profound wisdom and power of Yahweh at creation, that are manifested through storm elements (Ps 104:1-4), are also reactivated in order to restore order in the mundane realm.

GOD'S WISDOM IN JOB

Although we are not dealing here in depth with texts from Job (wisdom literature) until at a later date, the idea of Yahweh wielding the natural phenomena against the wicked is correlated with the enigma surrounding his divine justice, as noted in Job. In view of the wider context of the texts with regard to Job's quest for divine justice, it is apparent that Yahweh's use of storm elements to eliminate the wicked supersedes his vanquishing of primeval chaos at creation. In the doxologies in Job 9:4-10 and 26:7-14, Yahweh's power in storm phenomena and his creative deeds are brought together in depiction of him as the creator. Yahweh's acts of creation are described as a display of his profound wisdom and power (Job 9:4; 26:10-12). These ideas are further taken up in combination with the mystery of divine justice presented in the divine discourse in Job 38. Here, too, with sustained rhetoric, Yahweh's creation of the cosmic order and control of the natural elements are attributed to his wisdom (vv. 1-38). The annihilation of the wicked is also expressed as part of Yahweh's creation of cosmic order (v. 13). Not far from the idea of Yahweh unleashing judgement on the wicked by using storm elements, is the reference to Yahweh's celestial reserve of snow and hail as his arsenal (v. 22). Yahweh himself declares that he preserves these elements for times of trouble and days of war and battle (v. 23). So, in Job 38, there is a conflation of elements of creation, wisdom and judgement motifs in portrait of Yahweh asserting his dominance through storm theophany. The same ideas are transposed into the prophetic passages in

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Jeremiah expressing the sovereignty of Yahweh on the mundane plane, as the subsequent discussion shows. Here, also, the petition for the annihilation of the wicked from Yahweh's created order (cf. Ps 104:35) is brought into historical focus in the prophecies of Jeremiah.

PROPHETIC LITERATURE

Jeremiah 10:1-16

In the prophecies of Jeremiah, elements of creation, wisdom and judgment-thought are integrated with the storm theophany tradition in description of Yahweh's exercise of his power in eliminating forces that conflict with his divine plan and design. In essence, as expressed in the message of Jeremiah, Yahweh's storm theophany and exercise of his will in the mundane realm supersede the similar wielding of his power at creation (cf. Ps 104:7-9; Job 9:8, 10, 13; 26:11-13), and focuses on the idea of his storming against the wicked aroused by idolatry (Jer 10:11, 14-15). Although the message in Jer 10:1-16 is addressed to the entire house of Israel (v. 1; cf. 4:1), Jeremiah deals with the problems associated with following religious practices of other nations. The religious practices of the nations also involve worship of astral bodies, to which Jeremiah is totally opposed. He, therefore, elaborates on the polemic against idolatry already found in Jer 2:5-37 and shows the distinctive features separating Yahweh, the true deity, from idols.

Therefore, in 10:1-16,²⁶ Jeremiah shows in detail the falsehood of a religion based on images made by human

²⁶ The provenance of this text, however, is often questioned. Proposals are even made to omit this text on the basis of its contents. Disputing the authenticity of Jer 10:1-16: John Bright, *Jeremiah* (AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 79; Ernest Nicholson, *The Book of the Prophet*

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hands (vv. 2-3), and as such, the impotence of idols that is inherent in their manufacture. With a note of irony, he describes how a tree from the forest is cut down and modelled with an axe (v. 3), then ornamented with gold and silver, and finally fastened with nails so that it will not totter (v. 4). Moreover, the fact of the idols' immobility, as stated in v. 5, represents the kernel of Jeremiah's message on their worthlessness. He describes them "as palm trees of hammered work"²⁷ (כתמר מקשה, v. 5). As a result of this state of inertness, they are incapable of doing any good deeds, or inflicting harm. As a counterbalance, Jeremiah emphasizes the incomparability of Yahweh and extols him for his unparalleled greatness (v. 6a). He praises him for his might and power that characterizes his name (v. 6b), in order to throw into bold relief the futility of adhering to idols, as objects incapable of speech or motion. At the same time, Jeremiah draws in terminology familiar from sapiential traditions to emphasize the character and nature of Yahweh in contrast to idols. Thus, by a rhetorical question implying the "reverential fear" to be accorded Yahweh as "king of the nations" (מלך הגוים, v. 7a), he emphasizes the commitment to true religion and the expression of reverential trust that is due to a deity who manifests his might (vv. 6b-7a), and who,

Jeremiah 1-25 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 100; William Lee Holladay, *Jeremiah 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 324; M.E. Andrew, "The Authorship of Jer. 10:1-16", *ZAW* 94, 1 (1982): 128-130; William McKane, *Jeremiah (ICC)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), 219; Douglas Rawlinson Jones, *Jeremiah (NCBC)* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 171; Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah* (London; NY: T&T Clark International, 2004), 254-259; Leslie C. Allen, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 124-129. But, with a dissenting voice, including mine, attributing Jer 10:1-16 to Jeremiah are Weiser, Overholt, Margaliot, Thompson, Lundbom.

²⁷ For this expression, some biblical critics prefer to give the translation "a scarecrow in a cucumber field"; see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 323.

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above all, is superior to all the “wise ones of the nations” (חכמי הגוים, v. 7b; cf. *EE* IV: 93; VII:104). Implicit in this statement is that all wisdom derives ultimately from Yahweh, which underlines the point expressed in v. 8 concerning the senselessness and idiocy enshrouding idolatry. The stupidity and foolishness of the worshippers emanates from their wooden idols, whose inanimate nature cannot afford them any “counsel” (מוסר, v. 8), as that is not inherent with them! Even though these idols are manufactured by skilled artisans; they are still a product (cf. Ps 135:15) - the “work of the wise men” (מעשה חכמים, Jer 10:9). In contrast, however, Yahweh embodies “truth” as the living and “eternal king” (מלך עולם, v. 10). Moreover, unlike the idols, Yahweh manifests his “wrath” (קצף) that causes the earth to shake (רעש; cf. Is 30:27; Pss 18:8 [7]; 68:9 [8]a), and the nations cannot withstand his “indignation” (זעם, Jer 10:10; cf. Isa 30:27; Nah 1:6; Hab 3:12). The expression of his wrath implies that Yahweh’s divine plan and purpose are at stake, and so everything not in conformity with his will is eliminated. Therefore, Jeremiah’s statements in Jer 10:10 not only buttress Yahweh’s authority over the earth, but anticipate the emphasis on Yahweh’s predominance deriving from his role as creator, pointing by this means to the inevitability of judgement and the manifestation of Yahweh’s wrath against the idolaters.

Subsequently, resuming poetic form with the initial hymnic element in v. 12, Jeremiah emphasizes the profound “wisdom,” “discernment” and “power” of Yahweh displayed at his “stretching out” (בטח, cf. Ps 104:2; Job 9:8; 26:7) of the heavens and founding (כון/עשה) of the earth (cf. Prov 3:19). Though Jer 10:12 continues to express the contrast between Yahweh and idols in terms of creation (cf. v. 11), perhaps most significant here is the echo of sapiential thought that reinforces the distinctiveness of Yahweh from nonentities. In keeping with the hymnic pattern lauding Yahweh as the

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creator, Jeremiah also adopts the participial style to allude to Yahweh's creative acts (cf. Amos 4:13; Job 9:9). Hence, Yahweh is the "creator" (עֹשֶׂה) of the earth by his "power" (כֹּחַ) and "establisher" (מְכַיֵּן) of the world by his "wisdom" (חִכְמָה, v. 12). As in general, the reference to the earth founded by Yahweh's "power" and "wisdom" recollects his appearance with meteorological elements—thunder, lightning, winds—at the primeval battle (see, Ps 104:6-9, 24; cf. Job 9:4-10 and 26:7-14; *EE* IV: 39-50, 93). With the mention of the "sound of his utterance" (קוֹל תְּתוֹ, v. 13 = 51:6; cf. Jer 25:30; Pss 18:14 [15]; 46:7 [6]b; 68:34 [33]b), that is, Yahweh's thunder effecting the "tumult of the waters" in the heavens, his storm theophany shines through. Nonetheless, the emphasis is also on the rainmaking act of Yahweh, as this can be derived from correlated elements of mist, lightning, and winds as originating from Yahweh (cf. Job 36:27; 37:3-6, 11; 38:34-36) and not from idols (cf. Ps 135:6-7). The element of storm theophany, however, may not be denied in view of the earth-shaking experience mentioned in v. 10. Yahweh's effectiveness is expressed through the elements and, distinctively as the "maker" (יוֹצֵר) of all things (Jer 10:16) even the phenomenal natural elements, he will emerge to abolish idolatry upon his visitation (v. 15). Thus, here also, elements of the wisdom tradition and motifs of creation and judgement are drawn together to emphasize the role of Yahweh as the sovereign creator-king and his power to restrain evil, in this case idolatry. It is in view of this latter aspect that Jeremiah emphasizes the storm theophany of Yahweh, a subject which occupies Jer 25:30-32, whose interpretation is crucial in determining that Jeremiah portrays Yahweh, as the creator-king disclosing himself with storm phenomena in order to quell forces arrayed against his will and purpose.

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Jer 25:30-32; 51:15-19

It is also evident in Jer 25 that idolatry is the cause of Yahweh's rage. As Jeremiah states, the people of Israel were heedless to all the persistent signals (vv. 4-5) cautioning them not to defer to other gods and bow down to the work of their own hands, thereby provoking Yahweh's anger (vv. 6-7). However, as represented in the text, Yahweh's retributive measures take on a universal dimension. Yahweh will summon the nations of the north and raise Babylon as his agent of judgement to "exterminate"²⁸ (חרם) all the surrounding nations including Judah (v. 9; see Jer 49:13; 50:21, 26). However, even Babylon, though serving as Yahweh's agent of wrath, is not free from the guilt for which the other nations are indicted. Upon completion of Yahweh's purposes, Babylon, too, will be requited not only for bringing Zion to ruin (50:28-29; 51:6, 11, 24; cf. 50:15), but also for the "work of its hands" that is, its idols (25:14; cf. 51:52). Babylon will suffer the same fate, and will be consigned to perpetual ruin (25:12; 50:21, 26; 51:2-3). This idea of the universal scope of Yahweh's judgement envisaged in Jer 25, further affirms Yahweh's universal lordship by virtue of being the creator.

²⁸The term חרם is often used in the OT to mean "put under ban" or "devote" to destruction, as in the case of the Israelite destruction of cities at the conquest of Canaan (Josh 6:17, 21) in keeping with the Deuteronomic command (Deut 20:16-18; cf. Num 21:2-3). In expression of the meaning "exterminate" or "totally destroy" as implied here; see also Leon J. Wood, חרם, *TWOT* 1 (eds. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer and Bruce K. Waltke; Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 324; N. Lohfink, *TDOT* 5 (G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 181-183.

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It is notable that Jeremiah employs conventional terms of storm theophany in depiction of Yahweh's judgement. He describes Yahweh's appearance from his holy "abode" (מעון // מרום; Jer 25:30a^β; cf. Ps 68:6, 19 [5, 18]) in order to pass judgement, with the familiar expressions "he roars" (שאג; cf. Amos 1:2 = Joel 4:16 [3:16]; Job 37:4) and "he gives his voice" (יתן קולו; 25:30b; cf. Pss 18:14 [13]; 68:34 [33]), often referring to his storm theophany. These expressions "he roars" (ישאג) and "he gives his voice" (יתן קולו) occurring in Job 37:4 and Ps 18:14 [13] respectively, both appear in parallel with the phrase "he thunders" (ירעם). So, as Jeremiah states, Yahweh's "roar" reaches to the ends of the earth; thus indicating his far-reaching cosmic judgement effected through storm phenomena (Jer 25:31-32). Yahweh's purposes for this phenomenal self-disclosure are explicitly stated: in order to bring a "lawsuit" (ריב) against all the "nations" (גוים), impose judgement on all flesh, and commit "the wicked" (הרשעים) to the sword (v. 31). Moreover, as implied in vv. 32, and 38, Yahweh dispenses his judgement by a mighty "storm" (סער) that he stirs from the ends of the earth and that goes up from one nation to another, perhaps marshalled along with the sword of "the oppressor" (היונה, v. 38). Of significance, too, is the fact that the devastating effects of the storm winds intended for "the shepherds" (הרעים, 23:1, 19-20; cf. 22:22) of Israel, are here turned against "the shepherds" of all the nations (25:34-37).

In due time, with Yahweh's purposes accomplished, the divine retribution is in turn directed to Babylon, Yahweh's agent of wrath. As already noted in Jer 25:12-14, 26, and also in the oracles in Jer 50-51, Babylon would pay for her deeds and for "the work of its hands" after serving Yahweh's purposes. Whereas Babylon as "the oppressor" from the north is stirred up to invade a whole host of nations, for its own predicament, Yahweh prepares an alliance of nations to bring about Babylon's demise. Here, too, Yahweh's

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sovereignty is thrown into bold relief by reference to the predicted capture of Babylon and subjection of its prime god, Bel-Marduk, to shame and terror (50:2), implying the helplessness of Babylon's gods or idols. The futility of worshipping these images and idols is exposed through a presaged confrontation with Yahweh's unrivalled might, at the inevitable devastation of Babylon. Therefore, Jeremiah announces Yahweh's injunction to attack Babylon for its sins in vengeance for its destruction of other nations (50:14-15; cf. 51:25) and the temple of Jerusalem (50:28; cf. 51:24). The severity of the attack will cause Babylon itself and the earth to tremble (רעשה; Jer 50:46; cf. 51:29). This latter element, along with other features relating to Yahweh's appearance by means of storm phenomena, is further defined in an extensive oracle in Jer 51, in prediction of Yahweh's judgement on Babylon.

In keeping with the characteristics of Yahweh's appearance with storm phenomena, and his involvement in the historical arena, the band of foreigners (Jer 51:2) emerging from the north to devastate Babylon, is said to be accompanied with a "wind of destruction" (מִשְׁחִית רוּחַ; v. 1; cf. 4:11, 12) aroused by Yahweh for his vengeance. Hence, Yahweh intends to vanquish this nation that lives by "many waters," and endowed with treasures by deceitful means (v. 13). Yahweh's response to carry out his purposes is in no uncertain terms, as he has sworn by himself (v. 14) to bring destruction on Babylon. At this point, in Jer 51:15-19,²⁹

²⁹ Jeremiah appropriately inserts the doxology in verses 15-19 (=10:12-16), often alleged to be an erratic block, without relation to its contextual background, in order to set up a contrast between Yahweh and idols. In contrast, Alice Ogden Bellis, *The Structure and Composition of Jeremiah 50:2-51:58* (Lewiston NY / Lampeter: Mellen Biblical Press, 1995), 36-37, sees this as a later addition to Jer 51. Similarly, Lundbom refers to Jer 51:15-19 as an interpolation and proposes changes to it; Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37-52* (AB; New York; London: Doubleday, 2004),

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Yahweh's identity is made explicit: he is the creator (vv. 15, 19) who is distinct from the breathless molten images. As much as Jeremiah pictures the creative power of the deity threatening Babylon with its nemesis, as is the case against Judah in 10:1-16 (see, above), the thrust of this hymnic element is that Yahweh's power prevails over idols. In actual fact, the brief view of the nature and character of Yahweh presented in this segment (51:15-19), as in 10:1-16, evinces a better use of images familiar from the creation, sapiential and storm theophany traditions. Therefore, the depiction of Yahweh whose wisdom is manifested in the creation of the earth and heavens in 51:15 emphasizes his sway over creation, and, consequently, his ability to let the sea deluge Babylon, as though returning creation to primeval chaos (v. 42). On the other hand, the reference to storm theophany is implied by the mention of Yahweh's voice (=thunder) and the associated idea of the "tumult of the waters" in v. 16a. The effects of Yahweh's storm theophany are further affirmed on the basis of the reference to the "shaking" (רעש) and "writhing" (חול) of the earth in v. 29, resulting from Yahweh's intervention at Babylon's capture. Hence, the presaged "shaking" (רעש; cf. Judg 5:4; Pss 18:8 [7]; 68:9 [8]; 77:19 [18]) and "whirling" (חול; cf. Pss 29:8; 97:4) of the earth at Babylon's capture (Jer 51:29b-32; cf. 50:46), emphasize the inevitable intervention of Yahweh with his storm phenomena: as Yahweh thunders, he releases his lightning with the rain (v. 16; cf. Job 28:26) to mete out his wrath (cf. Job 37:9-13a). To that end, Jeremiah also appears to declare that the one who is able to bring out "wind" (רוח) from its storehouses (v. 16c) is the one stirring the "wind of destruction" (see, v. 1) against Babylon. Therefore, Jeremiah ridicules submission to idols as folly. Yahweh had already predetermined the idols

450-52. Allen (*Jeremiah: A Commentary* [2008], 509) also considers the text as a late composition and a recycle of material from Jer 10:12-16.

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utter destruction, as proof of their worthlessness (v. 18a; cf. Ps. 96:5).

Hereinafter, Jeremiah also uses images suggestive of storm theophany in his message of doom to further challenge the impotence of idols, as he forecasts the desolation of Babylon in face of Yahweh's might. He portrays the destruction of Babylon in terms of Yahweh's combat with a dragon. Accordingly, the image of punishing Bel by making him regurgitate all that he ingested (51:44), though symbolic of Yahweh's recompense of Babylon for destroying the nations, and especially in revenge for the ruin of Zion (51:11, 34), carries mythological overtones of a primeval battle with the dragon.³⁰ Yet, more significant is the idea of Yahweh laying waste and silencing Babylon's din as being comparable to the subjugation of the "many waters"³¹ (מים רבם, Jer. 51:55). Though Babylon is pictured here as the resurgent waters whose waves roar and raise a tumult (שאון וקולם; cf. Ps 93:4), Yahweh will vanquish the "great sound" (קול גדול) in it. This image expresses the finality of Babylon's demise initiated by Yahweh's disposal of its idols (see, Jer 51:47, 52). At this point Yahweh's collateral identity (with that of creator; see, vv. 15, 19 above) is also made explicit: he is "the king" (המלך, v. 57; cf. Ps 97:9) and, therefore recompenses in full, as God of retribution (Jer 51:56; cf. Ps 97:10). Thus, overall, Jeremiah's message expresses the nature of Yahweh as "the king" who can break into the historical arena to assert his judicial power as the sovereign creator.

³⁰ Bellis, *The Structure and Composition of Jeremiah 50:2-51:58*, 194-195.

³¹ We argue that the term מים רבם, though reminiscent of the symbol of the archenemy in the mythical battle with the storm god, should be viewed as representing historical foe(s). This idea is dealt with in detail in ch. 2 of my forthcoming monograph in discussion on Pss 18, 77 and Hab 3.

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It suffices, therefore, to state that in the texts of Jeremiah which have been discussed above, in particular, Jer 10:12-13 = 51:15-16; 25:30-32, images of the cosmogonic myth explored in connection with Yahweh's creation of the cosmos are transferred to the historical arena. Yahweh's storm-theophany is no longer determined against cosmic chaos, but against human arrogance. Here Jeremiah gives the impression that Yahweh, whose profound wisdom and power are manifested in the creation of the heavens and the earth has on that basis alone the right to intervene in the historical arena and restore just order. The metaphor of Yahweh disclosing his power with storm phenomena, as though creation has returned to chaos, is employed to express his annihilation of forces not in harmony with his will. Thus, here too, elements from wisdom thought and from the creation and judgement motifs are apparent. Therefore, we may conclude that in Jeremiah (as in other related texts), the imagery of storm theophany is borrowed and correlated with elements from wisdom thought, creation and judgment motifs in order to show Yahweh's involvement in the historical arena.

In sum, the meaning and purpose of the texts discussed in the main show that the language of storm theophany, associated with the description of Yahweh's cosmological acts, enriches the portrait of Yahweh, which is unique to the biblical Hebrew tradition. Yahweh is acclaimed as the creator who displays his wisdom as he exerts his power through the phenomenal storm elements in order to vanquish primordial chaos and, consequently, establish his cosmic order. Yet, by the same phenomenal storm elements, he breaks into the historical arena to quell any forces antithetical to his divine will and cosmic design as he fulfils his roles as creator-king and judge on the mundane plane.

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