

Enthroned as King Forever

Psalm 29:1 *"A Psalm of David.*

Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

² Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.

³ **The voice** of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over many waters.

⁴ **The voice** of the LORD is powerful; the **voice** of the LORD is full of majesty.

⁵ **The voice** of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

⁶ He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox.

⁷ **The voice** of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire.

⁸ **The voice** of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

⁹ **The voice** of the LORD makes the deer give birth and strips the forests bare, and in his temple all cry, "Glory!"

¹⁰ The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as king forever.

¹¹ May the LORD give strength to his people! May the LORD bless his people with peace!

Psalm 29

Modern Storm, Ancient Storm

LATE NOVEMBER, 2016. A cell of four ISIS militants on the Syrian side of the border just east of the Golan Heights—the sight of the famous Six-Days war, itself marked by bizarre happenings that those involved, including a friend of mine who was there, say displayed the hand of God—opened fire on an IDF patrol of Israeli soldiers. It was the first time that the Islamic State had ever directly attacked Israel’s forces. Immediately, the soldiers returned fire, killing all four attackers. Scrambled Air Force fighters were soon in the air, striking targets within Syria, not far from Damascus.

Several days later, on December 1, 2016, a bizarre weather feature blew its way through social media. As reported in *Israel Today*:

Israeli soldiers stationed there reported that over the weekend a literal pillar of cloud descended on the border. The bizarre storm completely engulfed the Syrian side of the border, but stopped just at the boundary and did not enter Israel. A number of soldiers videoed the phenomenon on

their cellphones. Not a few Israelis labeled the storm as “divine intervention.”

“Huge miracle! Notice how God stopped this enormous storm exactly on the border,” wrote Yifat Romano.

“Thank you, Father!”

Netanel Tanaami wondered, “What more do you need to believe?”

“The Creator of the world is protecting us,” proclaimed Nissim Nahoum.¹

Many more have said how it reminds them of the pillar of cloud that guided Israel through the Exodus. No question watching the video, it is a strange thing. A huge cloud develops right on the border, refuses to cross into Israel’s territory, while blocking ISIS’ view of the Golan?



Storm Over Syria Border, Dec 1, 2016

¹ “Pillar of Cloud Defends Israel’s Border With Syria,” *IsraelToday*, 12-5-2016, <http://www.israeltoday.co.il/NewsItem/tabid/178/nid/30652/Default.aspx>.

This recent storm is nothing compared to the one described in Psalm 29. This Psalm has been categorized by many scholars as a **victory hymn**, like Moses' Song of the Sea (**Ex 15:1-18**) or the Song of Deborah (**Jdg 5**). It is *A Psalm of David*. The LXX adds the curious line “**concerning the conclusion of Tabernacles.**” Tabernacles (Sukkot) was **the great autumn harvest festival**, and how God took care of Israel during their desert journey, including answering their prayers for rain. The Talmud explains that this song was sung either at the beginning or end of that great feast.²

The **central** and most striking feature of the song is the seven-fold repetition of “the Voice of the LORD.”

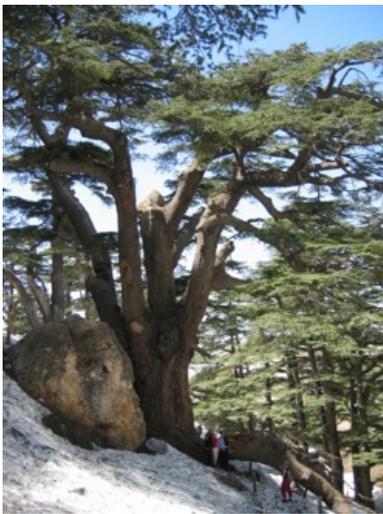
- A. Give to the LORD glory and strength (**1**)
- B. Glory due the LORD/the LORD over the waters (repeated; **2-3**)
- C. **The seven-fold power and majesty of the Voice of the LORD (4-9a)**
- B¹. Glory/ The LORD sat enthroned at the Flood (**9b-10**)
- A¹. The LORD will give strength to His people (**11**)

This seems to follow suit with the seven processions around the altar along with the pouring of water that occur on the seventh day of this seven-day feast. Curiously, another

² Bert Polman, “The Liturgical Use of Psalm 29,” in *Psalm 29 through Time and Tradition*, ed. Lowell K. Handy (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2011), 92.

source (Soferim) puts the Psalm in the liturgy of Pentecost, the earlier of the two harvest festivals. And as we will see, it also certainly would have brought to mind the seven lightning bolts of Baal.³ “**Baal?**” you ask. Yes, and this is one remarkable song in this regard.

As I said, the song depicts a **great storm**. It is no ordinary storm. It is a **storm theophany**: an appearance of God in the



realm of men, unveiled, dangerous, and powerful. It is the storm's track (as weathermen say today) that is so interesting. **Vs. 3**, “The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over many waters.”



The water in view here is most likely the great **Mediterranean Sea**, as the rest of the poem presents a storm, dark and ominous like the exceedingly rare hurricane

³ **Frank Moore Cross**, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Harvard University Press Cambridge, Massachusetts 1971), 148.

that hits California, moving in from the west.

At first, you see a slow rise in the waves. Then, ever so slowly, the sky grows dark on the western front. Now the winds pick up. Faster and faster. The heavens grow darker. The gusts are blowing hard now as the storm approaches landfall. It hits, moving inland, **breaking the great and mighty cedars ... of Lebanon (5)**. We are north of Israel, north of the ancient cities of Tyre and Sidon, in the land of the ancient Sidonians, what we today call Lebanon.

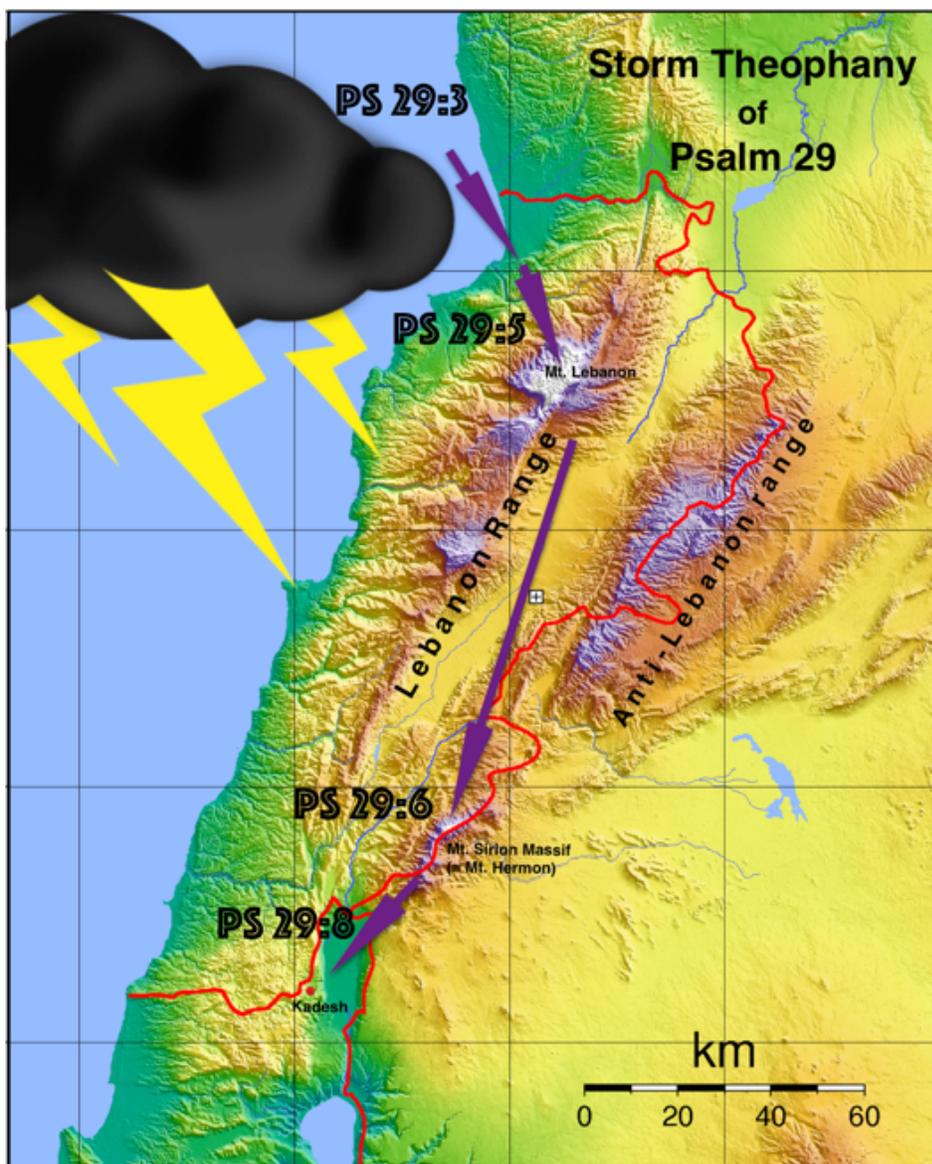
Lebanon is a beautiful land, full of tall mountains and two great north to south mountain ranges called the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon. Mt. Lebanon is in the northern part of the country, standing proud and tall at 10,131 feet as it rises just 17 miles from the sea shore. **But not this day**. With the massive trees fallen, and the peak hiding its face from the blustery squalls, unexpectedly, the storm turns south. Rushing down the valley between the two ranges like bowling ball speeding towards its ten-pen target, it hits a strike at the end of the



valley at the great mountain called Sirion. Moses tells us that this is the name the Sidonians gave to Mt. Hermon (**Dt 3:9**).

The 9,232 ft. **Mt. Hermon** sits at the southern end of the Anti-Lebanon range which creates a natural border with Syria. Hermon is its own large massif and serves today as the southern boundary between Lebanon, Syria, and Israel in the Golan Heights. It is the largest mountain in Israel and one that has a history that probably plays into this psalm.

Our storm is still raging. It will not dissipate until it takes a track now south and slightly westerly in direction. As its rains create powerful torrents of destruction on the slopes of Sirion, the



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storm can now be seen from the Sea of Galilee. But this is not its target. Instead, it is going for an ancient Canaanite city excavated on in the past 20 years called **Kadesh** (**Ps 29:8**).⁴ It is Kadesh that becomes the key to unlocking the meaning of the Psalm. **Why is God sending this storm? Why is it coming upon Lebanon? What does a Canaanite city have to do with it? Why did I bring up Baal? And what is being taught us about the LORD in this Psalm?**

Praise Him Sons of God

The song begins with a command. **“Ascribe to the LORD, glory and strength”** (**Ps 29:1**). This is another way

Going Deeper: Many older commentaries took this to be the most famous “Kadesh” in the Bible--Kadesh Barnea, in the wilderness far to the south of Beersheba in Sinai Wilderness of what is today Egypt. For example, Charles A. Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1906–1907). But Dahood notes that the word *midbar* (translated in the ESV as “wilderness”) does not connote “desert” in our sense, but instead “land without permanent settlements.” He therefore calls it the “steppe of Kadesh.” (Mitchell



Dahood S.J., *Psalms I: 1-50: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, vol. 16, Anchor Yale Bible [New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008], Ps. 29:8). He therefore opted for the ancient city of Kadesh on the northern Lebanon/Syria border not far from Mt. Lebanon on the Orontes River. But others rightly noted that this Kadesh is too far out of the way, and thus hypothesized that there must have been a place called Kadesh somewhere in the foothills of Mt. Hermon by the city of Dan (cf. 2Sa 24:6). A. H. Lewis, “Kadesh,” ed. Geoffrey W Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979–1988), 3:2. In fact, just such a place was excavated from 1997-2012 on the Israeli-Lebanese border just a few miles south and west of Mt. Hermon. It was a Canaanite citadel conquered by Joshua and later became a city of Refuge (Josh 20:7).

⁴ **PICTURE:** *Tel Kadesh, Northern Israel.*

saying, “Give praise.” This is a classic thought for a song about God. The Glory is the *kavod*, the weightiness, the heaviness that belongs to his person, for he is otherworldly, transcendent, unlike you and I. The strength? Why, we’ll see throughout the Psalm his great power.

But it is the objects of the command that is surprising. Indeed, it begins the otherworldly nature and gives context for the need to understand Baal. The ESV renders them, “heavenly beings.” Some, like the Complete Jewish Bible, don’t like this thought. So they translate it as “you who are godly.” This is completely unjustified. The phrase is *beney elim*, a form of the more familiar *beney ha-elohim*.

This is a technical phrase that appears ten times in the OT (see chart below). Of these ten, several necessitate that the beings in view are non-human. For example, God asks Job where he was early in the original creation week, “When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:7). Someone was there shouting for joy prior to the creation of man. They are called “stars” and “sons of God.” Therefore, these sons of God cannot be humans.

“Sons of God” Passage	Hebrew Phrase
Genesis 6:2 Genesis 6:4 Job 1:6 Job 2:1 Job 38:7	<i>beney ha-'elohim</i>
Psalm 29:1 Psalm 89:6	<i>beney 'elim</i>
Psalm 82:6	<i>beney 'elyon</i>
Deuteronomy 32:8	<i>aggelon theou*</i>
Deuteronomy 32:43	<i>uioi theou*</i>
	* signifies only found in the LXX and Dead Sea Scrolls

Earlier in Job, we have the same sons of God going into the presence of God in heaven accompanied by Satan (or the *satan*, a title for a heavenly legal prosecutor; cf. Job 1:6; 2:1). In **Psalm 89** we have the sons of God in “**the heavens**” (vs. 5) and in “**the skies**” (6). They are in something called a “**council of the holy ones**” (7), around the throne of God in heaven. It is for these reasons that when we come again to the LXX (circa 200 B.C.), when they don’t simply transliterate the phrase into Greek (Gen 6:2, 4, Ps 29:1; 82:6, 89:7), they translate the phrase as “**angels of God**” (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Deut 32:8, 43). And that’s what we find in our verse too in the Psalms Targum. “**Ascribe to the LORD, O band of angels.**”

This is not unusual. We do it today in the Doxology (“Praise him above ye heavenly host”). “Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts!” (Ps 148:2). “Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word!” (Ps 103:20). “Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word!” (Ps 103:20). In each of these cases, the word is *malak* (angel). But that isn’t so in Psalm 29. It is important to know why.

This is where understanding that God is sending a storm *against the Canaanites* becomes vital. The Canaanite religion consisted of the great god **El** and his consort **Asherah**. Together, they bore seventy “sons of El.” These were the gods of the nations, and they included **the sea god** Nahar,⁵ **the death god** Mot, and **the storm god** Hadad, whom we think of as **Baal**.⁶

Now, the Bible has a similar idea, though it is different at the crucial point. Moses talks about these sons of God (or angels, if you must) being given over to the nations (**Deut 23:7-8; 4:19-20; 17:2-3; 29:26**). Jewish and Christian

⁵ Nahar means “Judge.”

⁶ Baal is a word that simply means “lord” (see note below on the three gods).

tradition puts that number at **seventy**, as it corresponds to the number of nations in Genesis 10 that we dispersed at the tower of Babel. El is the Father of these sons in the Bible too, as El is often the word translated “God” in our OTs. But the biblical El has no consort, no wife. Nor are these heavenly sons his biologically. **Rather, they are his sons via creation.** He made them.⁷ They are real, just like Satan is real.⁸ Thus, probably very much like his earthly counterparts in the NT, adopts them into his family because he is loving and kind.

The point is, *these* are the beings that are being commanded to praise Yahweh, and to ascribe glory and strength to him. Why? The answer is at once simple and easy to see in the story of the song, and yet profound and takes some understanding of the background behind the lyrics.

The Glory Due His Name

The first reason they are given to ascribe praise to him is because of “**the glory due his name.**” His name is Yahweh,

⁷ When you come to the end of the sermon, if you remember, return and consider this point in lieu of the fact that the NT says that *the Son of God* created all things in heaven and earth (cf. **Col 1:16ff**).

⁸ See my paper speculating that the Baal of the OT is actually Satan of the NT.

which comes from the verb “to be” or as we more often think about it: I AM. He is eternally God, the Ever Present One. This is the name God gave to Moses on that day he saw the burning bush. It is his covenant name. Curiously, the one who told him his name was Yahweh was the Angel inside the bush. *He* said, “I am Yahweh” (Ex 3:2, 6, 14). Of course, there is a Yahweh in heaven as well, and this angel speaks for Yahweh. But when that Yahweh (whom we would call the Father) tells the people about this Angel, he says, “Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgressions, for my name is in him” (Ex 23:20-21). Who can pardon transgressions but God alone? So, there are at least two persons that have the name Yahweh. Therefore, the sons of God are to worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness because of his name. Their names are not like his name.

The Sevenfold Voice of Yahweh

The second and most lengthy reason they are given to ascribe praise to him is because of his voice (Ps 29:3-9). That their names are not like his name means that they are not like him. A perfect seven times they are told to look at what the voice of the LORD does. Before looking specifically at those, it is important to know that “voice” here (*qol/phoné*) is not one of the normal words for “word” (*dabar, emer, logos*). Instead, this is the word for a sound.⁹ Sometimes it is the sound of approaching feet (1Kg 14:6; 2Kg 6:32). Other times, like here, it is the sound of his voice (Isa 30:31; Joel 3:16).

But this sound is always that of the Divine Presence, or *parousia*, which we translate as a coming in judgment like the Day of the LORD. The prophets often convey this as God’s presence and action in the world, whether as reflections on the past or apocalyptic portrayals of future judgments.¹⁰ That is the idea here of the theophany-storm. At Sinai, God’s *qol* came with lightnings and thunders and fire as the presence of God in the cloud enveloped the mountain. Here,

⁹ The Greek word is the root of things like phonograph, phonetic, phone.

¹⁰ Meredith Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Eugene: OR, Wipf & Stock, 1980), 98-99.

the *qol* is coming to different mountains in a cloud that has risen from far away in the north.

The first voice. “The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over many waters” (Ps 29:3). It reminds us of Genesis 1:2 with the Spirit of God hovering over the waters. This is the transcendent God, Creator of the creation. Beyond it. Above it. Now he has come in it. Transcendence becomes immanence. Not Emmanuel: God with us (from two Hebrew words: *immanu* “with us” and *El* “God”). But Elehemel. God against them. El has come.

I invented this word to help you recall again that El is a word/name of God not only in the Bible, but also among the Canaanites. He is the father god of the sons of God. “El” actually shows up in this verse. “The God of glory” (*El hakkabod*). This is the only time El or any other word for God appears in this entire Psalm. Except for Yahweh. Yahweh appears 18 times. So, who is El in Psalm 29? It is Jehovah. Nother would make a Canaanite more furious than to say that. Nothing could make an Israelite or a Christian more happy.

This is vitally important as we start to unpack reason the LORD is over the waters. Again, we return to the sons of God and the Canaanites. Recall the two gods we talked about: **Nahar** and **Hadad**. Nahar is the sea God. Hadad is Baal. These people had an elaborate story about how it was that they came to worship Baal. This is divided by them into two parts. First, a heavenly warrior battling for a victory. Second, that victor building a temple to become king.

The story goes that **at first, El's favorite son was Nahar** also called Yam. He was the lord of the gods, the highest-ranking son, “beloved” of El. He was given the kingship and a temple was commanded to be built for him on Mt. Saphon. Baal is not happy. It appears he had prior claims to it, but was passed over for his brother Yam because he somehow scorned his father. When the messenger gods¹¹ send word that everyone is to attend Yam's coronation, Baal is given the message to surrender. But he reacts violently, turns to a craftsman deity named Kothar who supplies “The Cloud Rider” with a weapon that allows him to kill his brother Nahar.

¹¹ These are the “angels,” and it one of the reasons why early on, angels were distinct from the sons of God.

In this act of defiance, usurpation, and murder Baal becomes the king in place of Yam. Through a series of political intrigues, he manages to get his mother to convince El to build him a temple instead. This takes place on the top of the mountain.¹² How does any of this relate to Psalm 29? It relates quite directly.

Consider that Yahweh is over waters, which in context is the Mediterranean *Sea*. Though the word *mayim* takes us back to Genesis 1, the idea is closely related to Yam. Yahweh is over the Sea! Theologically, this means the same thing it did in Genesis 1. It renders them/him [the sea(s)] powerless to return creation to chaos.¹³

Next, he “thunders” over many waters. Hadad probably means “Thunderer.” He is the storm God. Listen to the way they themselves tell of his rise:

¹² **Going Deeper:** From here the story turns to Mot, who was not invited to the coronation of Baal. For this insult, Mot turns against Baal, who is told he must enter the underworld where he dies. For a time, Athtar (“Morning Star”) rules, but Baal returns to reclaim his throne. What is curious about Yam, Mot, and Baal is that they have Greek counterparts in **Poseidon** (god of the sea), **Hades** (god of the underworld), and **Zeus** (thunder god of the heavens), where similar stories between the three brothers abound.

¹³ **Stuart S. Miller**, *At the Intersection of Texts and Material Finds: Stepped Pools, Stone Vessels, and Ritual Purity Among the Jews of Roman Galilee* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 133 and n. 104.

*Then Baal opened a slit in the clouds,
Baal sounded his holy voice,
Baal thundered from his lips. . .
His holy voice shatters the earth.
At his roar the mountains quake.¹⁴*

Baal's voice is powerful. Baal's voice is holy. This is obviously very similar to Psalm 29. Except it in the Psalm, it is not Baal's voice, but Yahweh's voice. *Voices 2 and 3*. "The voice of Yahweh is powerful; the voice of Yahweh is full of majesty" (Ps 29:4).

The very next lines in the Baal story read, "Baal eyes the East; His hand indeed shakes, With a cedar in his right hand."¹⁵ Compare this to the next line in the Psalm. *The fourth voice*. "The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars" (5). With Baal, these same cedars become part of his temple.

*Quickly he builds his house,
Quickly he erects his palace.
He sends to Lebanon for its wood,*

¹⁴ KTU 1.4 vii 28-34 = RS2.[008] = CTA 4. Translations from Wyatt (Religious Texts from Ugarit) and Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, 107.

¹⁵ Lines 40-41.

*To Siryon for its choicest cedar
Indeed to Lebanon for its wood,
To Siryon for its choicest cedar.*¹⁶

And the next verses in Psalm 29? “The LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon. He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox” (Ps 29:5b-6). The cedars of Lebanon were renowned for their beauty and strength. Solomon tells us, “I intend to build a house for the name of the LORD my God ... therefore command that the cedars of Lebanon be cut for me ... you know that there is no one among us who knows how to cut timber like the Sidonians” (1Kg 5:5-6). And in a remarkable twist, Hiram king of Tyre, hears these words and rejoiced greatly saying, “Blessed be Yahweh” (7) rather than Baal. In the Psalm, it is as if Solomon’s father David is saying, “You think those cedars that built Baal’s palace are something? My God’s voice breaks them in pieces like toothpicks.”¹⁷

¹⁶ KTU 1.4 vi 16-21.

¹⁷ We could add how Ezekiel likens the gods themselves to cedars (Ezek 31). And there are clear associations between certain words for trees and God/gods in Hebrew (see chart), thereby only adding force to the powerful, universe shattering voice of the LORD.

The interesting **vs. 6** talks about making the calves of Lebanon and the wild “**ox**” of Sirion “skip.” This verse deserves a moment’s reflection. Again, **Sirion** is the name for **Mt. Hermon**. So, a mountain is clearly in view. This mountain has links to the sons of God, in that this is where Jewish tradition says the sons of God came down to the earth in the days of the Flood (**1 Enoch 6:6**). It is also the site of at least twenty Canaanite temples, “**an unprecedented number in comparison with other regions of the Phoenician coast**”

Ancient Word	Reference	Contextual Meaning
'elohim	Gen 1:1 etc.	The God of Israel
'elohim	Gen 6:2, 4; Job 1:6, 2:1; 38:7	sons of God
'elim	Ex 15:11	gods
'elim (eylim)	Ex 15:27	location of <u>70</u> palm trees in desert
'elohim	Dt 32:17	demons
'elohim	Dt 32:43 (LXX, see DSS)	Angels (<i>aggelos</i>)
'elohim	1Sa 28:13	spirit of Samuel
'elim	Ps 29:1; 89:6	sons of God
'elyon	Ps 82:6	sons of God
'el (eyl) ¹⁷	Ezek 31:11	mighty leader, god, or tree
'eleyhem	Ezek 31:14	trees of Eden (terebinth tree), haughty(?)
'elon ¹⁷ (eylan) ¹⁷	Daniel 4	tree-king Nebuchadnezzar
'el probably derives from “mighty” or “first in rank.” ¹⁷		

which appear to be “ancient cult sites ... dedicated, evidently, to the celestial gods.”¹⁸

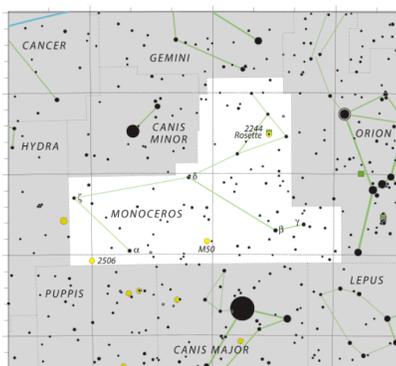
The literal word for “ox” here is *re'em*. The YLT calls it a “son of Reems.” The LXX has *monokeroton*, which the Latin and KJV have as “unicorn.” Other times it is translated as rhinoceros, buffalo, bull.¹⁹ Basically, no one knows what this thing is. Job is important as he talks about it at length. “Is the *reem* willing to serve you? Will he spend the night at your manger? Can you bind him in the furrow with ropes, or will he harrow the valleys after you? Will you depend on

¹⁸ Rami Arav, “Hermon, Mount (Place),” in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (ed. David Noel Freedman; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 159.

¹⁹ Sometimes this creature is clearly said to have two horns like oxen (Num 23:22; Deut 33:17). But others, it is clearly said to have one horn (Ps 92:10).

²⁰ The rhino is tempting, but did it ever live in the hills of Lebanon? The unicorn idea fits with the taking of someone else’s mythology. Though, I’m unaware that the Canaanites had a unicorn in their myths.

GOING DEEPER: This is speculative, but there are some strange possibilities as to why a unicorn might be mentioned here with Mt. Hermon. Hermon was a significant part of the Canaanite worldview (as seen above with its religious temples). The word Canaanite comes from a word meaning “subservient” (like a dog?). There is a strange law (Dt 23:18) where the expression “the hire of a dog” occurs, and some believe this designates a Canaanite cultic male prostitute (Oswalt, Harris, Archer, Waltke, “981 כלב,” *TWOT*, 439), which was almost certainly taking place on Mt. Hermon. Further, Jesus calls a certain Canaanite woman a dog (Matt 15:26), the Canaanites had a very special regard for dogs, burying them in by the thousands in huge dog cemeteries (see BAR 17:03 [May/June 1991]), and the consonants of dog in both Greek (*kuon*) and Latin (*canis*) certainly resemble those of the Hebrew and Phoenician word for Canaan, such that they have gotten it from the ANE. This establishes some very curious relationships with the land of Canaan and the dog. Combine this now with the heavens



and the ways the stars were said to be the “sons of God” (Job 38:7). The famous Dog Star (Sirius) makes up one of two dog constellations (Canis Major and Canis Minor). Right in the middle of them happens to be the Unicorn (*monoceros*). So is there some kind of a heavenly astronomical taunt going on with Mt. Hermon and the Unicorn towards the Canaanites, thus further mocking their gods?

him because his strength is great, and will you leave to him your labor? Do you have faith in him that he will return your grain and gather it to your threshing floor?” (Job 29:9-12). These are rhetorical questions and the answer assumes a “No.” Job can’t tame him, can’t bind him, can’t get him to plow, can’t put him to bed. Along with the behemoth (Job 40:15-19) and the leviathan (41:1-29), this animal is beyond his control. That seems to rule out the oxen. In Numbers 24:8, God’s own strength is likened to the *reem*. It is probable that something like a rhino or even a unicorn is in view.²⁰ (note is on previous page)

Finally, what does it mean that they skip? We think of a school kid happily coming home after school, not a care in the world. Not so here. The famous cedars of Lebanon are easily broken by the Lord’s voice; the immobile mountains of Lebanon skip like calves frightened at the sound of a voice. The language here takes Canaanite symbols of stability and mocks them through a demonstration of their instability in the context of the Lord’s thundering voice.”²¹

²¹ Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 2nd ed., vol. 19, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville, TN: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2004), 247.

The fifth voice. “The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire” (Ps 29:7). The obvious reference here is to a thunderstorm. Thunder creates lightning, and lightning produces fire. This appearance of God is so terrifying that it now consumes the wooded mountains in forest fire. However, I noticed in reading the Baal Epic that the very next lines after taking wood from the cedars of Lebanon is,

*A fire is set in the house,
A flame in the palace.
There! For a day and a second,
A fire burns in the house,
A flame in the palace.²²*

This goes on for six days. It is a temple building liturgy. Then, on the seventh day (remember seven voices of Yahweh), the fire leaves the house, and Baal takes his enthronement as king of the mountain. Given what we see at the end of the psalm, where Yahweh is enthroned in a temple that seems to include heaven and earth, I wonder if this fire that scorches the abominations of the Canaanites

²² KTU 1.4 vi 22-33.

isn't a temple cleansing fire. The earth is the LORDs, and all that is in it (Ps 24:1). "Heaven is his throne, the earth is his footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me?" (Isa 66:1). All that belonged to Baal is collapsing under the mighty voice of Yahweh.

The sixth voice. "The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh" (Ps 29:8). Again, the Baal story:

*The high places of the Earth shake.
The enemies of Baal take to the woods,
The haters of Hadd to the mountainsides.
And Mightiest Baal speaks:
"O Enemies of Hadd, why do you quake?
Why quake, O Weapon-wielders of the Warrior?"
Baal eyes the East;
His hand indeed shakes,
With a cedar in his right hand.
So Baal is enthroned in his house.²³*

²³ KTU 1.4 vii 36-42. Translation, Parker, *Ugaritic Narrative: Poetry*.

Who in the Psalm shakes things? Yahweh. And what does he shake this time? The wilderness or steppe (*midbar*) of [Kadesh](#). We saw that Kadesh was a southern Canaanite outpost in reaching into today's modern Israel. It is a remote place even now. It sits on a low foothill overlooking the Hula Valley—the delta of Israel. One can almost imagine some apocalyptic inferno rushing down the slopes of Hermon, crossing the plain, making its way to the outpost.



The view of Hermon from Kadesh would be something like this

As it happens, *the seventh voice*. “The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth and strips the forests bare, and in his temple all cry, ‘Glory.’” The deer are so frightened by

the sound of wood popping, timber falling, grass crackling, fire broiling, that the pregnant ones lose all control and give birth right there on the spot. Of course, it would also be to her own doom. But this is the earthshattering voice which now hits its crescendo. **The seventh and final rushing noise of the LORD.**

But suddenly, **another noise is heard.** This one is coming from Yahweh's temple, which now finally comes into view. **"Glory."** "Glory!" "GLORY!" Who can stand when God utters his voice? One scholar puts it powerfully. In **"the march of the Divine Warrior to battle, bearing his terrible weapons, the thunderbolt and the winds. He drives his fiery cloud-chariot against his enemy. His wrath is reflected in all nature. Mountains shatter; the heavens collapse at his glance. A terrible slaughter is appointed. All nature wilts and languishes. Chaos [and the gods are] defeated."**²⁴ All there is left to do is bow.

In the heavens, which is probably where the voices are crying out from now, they too have nothing to say but Glory. They don't complain. They don't make arguments. They don't seek to condemn God because of how unfair he

²⁴ Cross, 155-56. (Ugaritic *mdb*; see RS 24.245.1-2). See also Craigie, 247-48.

is. They don't whine about his justice or punishments. They don't turn away and run. They don't try to fight him. They don't act like they are above him. They don't try to usurp him. They simply cry, "Glory."

That is the point of this longest, second section of Psalm 29. God's voice is his glory. If a man's glory is his wealth or his family, if that is what makes him weighty among men, with God it is his works that are brought about simply by his voice. He speaks, and they are. He comes in power and majesty, and he will not stop until all of his enemies become his footstool. It all starts here, with Baal.

Yahweh Enthroned Forever Over the Flood

This brings us to **the third reason** the sons of God are commanded to praise Yahweh. "**He sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD sits enthroned as king forever**" (Ps 29:10). This seems to be a time frame on when the activities here occurred. The word "flood" is only used here (*mabbul*) and in Genesis with reference to Noah's Flood. Newer finds have uncovered lines that are eerily familiar even to this with Baal yet again:

*Ba'al sits enthroned, (his) mountain like a dais [throne],
Haddu the shepherd, like the Flood dragon.²⁵*

It is probable that the Canaanites were singing about the Flood too. They were just worshiping Baal as the one who calmed the raging sea, even as the Greeks sang of Zeus defeating Titan in those same days (see n. 8). Baal supposedly subjugated the chaotic forces of nature.²⁶ Not so in the Psalm. Then there is Yahweh *sitting enthroned as king forever* after his victory. Of Baal it is said when he defeats Yam,

*Take your everlasting kingdom,
your eternal dominion!²⁷*

But in the Psalm, it is Yahweh who sits enthroned as king forever over the waters.

So, what is being summarized in this verse? Craigie says, “*The enthronement of the Lord, expressed in the powerful*

²⁵ RS 24.245. In Cross, 147.

²⁶ Craigie, 248.

²⁷ KTU 1.2 iv 10.

imagery of v 10, conveys clearly the concept of the Lord as victorious, not only over chaotic forces in general, but over Baal, the conqueror of chaos, in particular; God's power is greater than the greatest power known to the Canaanite foes."²⁸ For this reason, the sons of God must bow.

Subversion: Infiltrate and Overthrow

I know how some feel when they discover the world beyond the Bible that really is out there and that isn't going away because they pretend it doesn't exist. They start to get very, very uncomfortable with these kinds of parallels. This is all the worse when they hear skeptics using these fact to somehow "prove" that the Biblical writers were plagiarizing their neighbors, making up a new religion as they went along, that they were syncretizing, or that priests after the exile were trying to purge their OT of the polytheism of earlier Jews, and on and on the nonsense goes.

These skeptics know nothing and are worse than regular unbelievers, because they mock God and deceive people with lies. What they don't understand is what the biblical

²⁸ Ibid.

authors, inspired by the Holy Spirit, are actually doing. It is the same thing people do in the arts today.

Take the recent Aronofski “**Noah**” movie, as its theme fits perfectly with that of our song. While retaining the name (which is essential), Noah becomes this crazy man who hears voices in his head. The world, which is still destroyed, is eradicated because they didn’t protect the environment, they weren’t “Green” enough. Sounds like Hollywood to me. And God? Why, he doesn’t say a word in the entire movie. Sure, he is *believed in* by Noah. But as Godawa says, taking the director at his word:

As an atheist, he doesn’t believe in the Biblical God, so if he is retelling a Biblical narrative, the best way to deconstruct God, or to make him in the story as if he wasn’t really there at all would be to claim that he is silent. This is brilliant subversion. Think about it, folks, God NEVER speaks in the entire movie. Not even to tell Noah that he was wrong to almost kill [his] girls. **Even when righteousness is finally achieved in Noah’s “redemption,” God still does not speak. He never speaks.** That is not happenstance. There is a reason for that. A Non-speaking God is virtually the same practical thing as a non-existent God. And it is explained

when Illa [Noah's adopted daughter] tells Noah that "God wanted you to decide if man was worth saving."

MESSAGE: It's all up to us humans, not a god.

Of course, the original sacred narrative requires a "god" in the story, but an atheist director wants to deconstruct that god into a being who is merely believed in, but ultimately is no different than humans making our own meaning.²⁹

Because most people today have heard of the Flood story, but have never read it, they watch that movie and its deconstruction works subtly on the subconscious making you think that THIS is what the Bible says. Subversion! It is a kind of infiltration with the goal of overthrowing it. It has been practiced by spies for millennia. These are the spies of art and worldviews. Use the figures of that story to tell a new story. Your own story. Or use the story with new figures. But infuse it with new meaning in such a way that it overthrows the power of the original.

As I was thinking through this Psalm, and how every modern scholar who knows his history realizes to one degree or another that it is taking the story of Baal and reworking it

²⁹ **Brian Godawa**, "The Subversion of God in Aronofsky's Noah," *Thus Spake Godawa: God, Movies, Culture, Blah Blah Blah*, April 2, 2014, <http://godawa.com/subversion-god-noah/>

for Israel's purposes, I couldn't help but think about how this was the original intent, which is something many people don't care about today, and might even make people upset. Godawa again:

In our postmodern world that has argued the death of the author, there is a disdain for objective meaning rooted in the text or authorial intent. Therefore, we have embraced a very subjective "reader response" way of interpreting things. People tend to be more concerned about what they see or get out of a story than what the author may have intended. Thus our narcissistic culture obsessed with what we subjectively feel over what is objectively true. Traditional hermeneutics (or interpretation) seeks to understand what the intent of the author is first, and then to respond with their opinions for or against. It can recognize the subjective experience and even acknowledge that sometimes the intent of the author is not achieved. But it respects the fact that in addition to ambiguities and unintended consequences, there is real authorial meaning in the text, or in this case, story.³⁰

³⁰ Ibid.

We don't have to be afraid of what the Biblical writers are doing. We do have to try and understand them. Biblical imagination does not engage in syncretism (blending opposing views), but in subversion (infiltrating and overthrowing an opposing view).³¹

In this case, when we do, I actually think that Psalm 29 becomes one of the most important passages in the entire Bible for proving something I have not yet discussed. That is, **the belief of David that the Son of God was his God**. His subversion actually becomes a key to unlocking the treasure chest of Christ in the OT. "Christ in the OT?" you ask? "What does any of this have to do with him?"

The answer is discovered in figuring out who Baal is and who he is being replaced with. Baal is a son of God. He is not El, but his son. This is vitally important. No self-respecting Canaanite would ever confuse Baal for El. They all knew perfectly well that they were different people. And they worshiped El through the worship of Baal.

But if Baal is a son of God, and Yahweh is said to do all of the things he did in Psalm 29, then we have to compare

³¹ Godawa. *Enoch Primordial* (Chronicles of the Nephilim Book 2) (pp. 342-343). Kindle Edition.

apples to apples: sons of God to the Son of God. “But,” you say, “Isn’t El also in Psalm 29? And isn’t he Yahweh?” Yes, and that is the great mystery of Israelite religion, and by extension, the Christian religion. It is as mindboggling today as it was then.

Beloved, there is One God, but more than one Person is called Yahweh in the OT. There are two Yahwehs in some verses, for example Gen 19:24 (“**And Yahweh rained down fire and Sulphur from Yahweh out of heaven**”) or Zech 2:8-9 where Yahweh of Hosts says that he was sent by Yahweh of Hosts. And in that passage, it may even be that the Holy Spirit is called Yahweh.

In Psalm 29, the Son is Yahweh. But because he is God, he is also El, which Baal is never called, nor does Baal ever think he can become. But in the Bible, the Son is the Name of the Father. Both are Yahweh. Both are El.

Sceptics say that there is a fusion of Yahweh with El in OT Scripture, as the Jews couldn’t quite figure out who they wanted to worship so they committed syncretism with pagan religions. No! The whole reason why the sons of God are commanded to worship Yahweh in Psalm 29 is because he is El—One God in more than one Person. The NT did

not make up the Trinity. Skeptics don't see it, because they don't believe the OT teaches a Trinity. But it is there throughout the OT.

As for me, I'm 100% satisfied that the OT authors knew and worshiped the Son of God, because they knew that he is the one who not only did what the sons of God were said to do. But he defeated them and everything they stand for.

All you have left to do this morning is to behold the wonder of the voice of Yahweh and to worship like the sons of God are commanded to do, like Baal was supposed to do. And then see how good this God is to his people. There is one more parallel to mention this morning. The sons of God are to ascribe strength to Yahweh. In the last verse, strength pops up again. The Canaanites have a text that says,

May Baal-KRNTRYS bless Azatiwada with life and with health and with vigor greater than that of any other king.

There is no blessing to the people. Only to the king who was said to be installed by the god to rule over the people for him.

But in the Bible, the king who rules his people in great strength gives that very strength to ... the people. “May the LORD give strength to his people! May the LORD bless his people with peace” (Ps 29:11). May that peace come to you as you recognize that the voice of Yahweh is not speaking to you this moment to judge or condemn you, but to invite you to trust in the Son: enthroned above the Flood as King Forever.