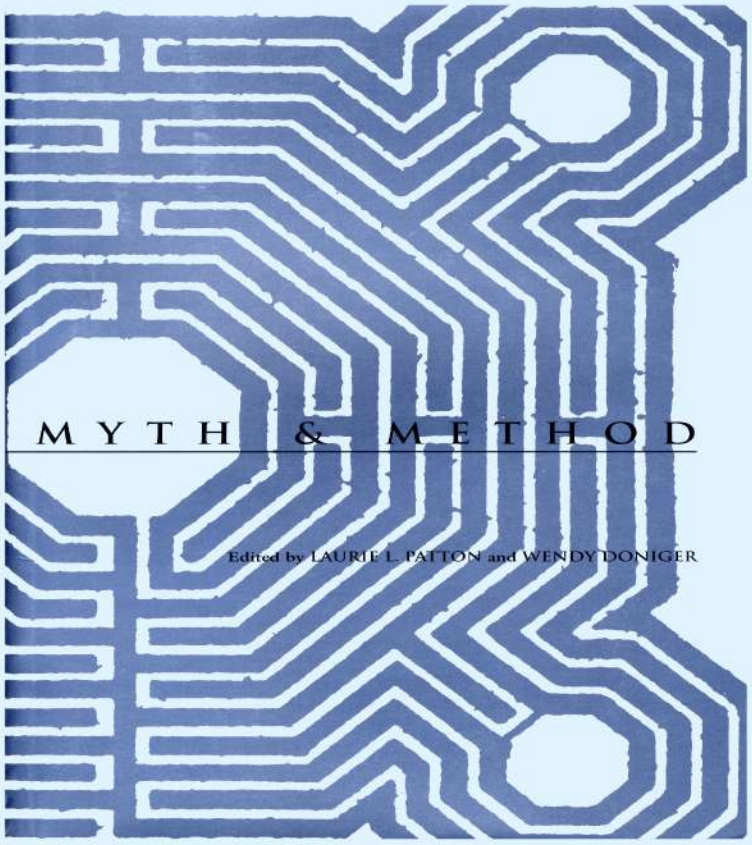
MYTH & METHOD
Edited by LAURIE L. PATTON and WENDY DONIGER

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HARNESSING THE DRAGON: A MYTHOS TRANSFORMED IN MEDIEVAL JEWISH LITERATURE AND ART

"Why is [the word *dragons* in Genesis 1:21] written *HaTaninim* [plural] and not *HaTanin* [singular, since the Leviathan was reputed to have no mate]?—Lest one should say, 'It is a god,' as it says [Job 41:25].' When he raises himself up the mighty are afraid.'" "*The serpent* corresponds to God."

—R. YEHUDAH HEHASID

"'T'li' is a name for the *tanin*, and it is a symbol of the world of the intellect, because by this name are known those hidden things which are impossible to perceive with the senses."

—R. YEHUDAH HALEVI

Sylvain Lévi, the Anthologizers, and Jewish Mythophobia

SYLVAIN LÉVI'S ALSATIAN-JEWISH identity may well have had a good deal to do with his distaste for the ritual-hating mythophilia that became a sine qua non of the Aryanist program, as Ivan Strenski argues in his essay in this volume. Contemporary Jewish scholars of Judaism avoided the term *myth*, in part, no doubt because they perceived in it a similar, often anti-Semitic, mythophilia. But more importantly, the idea of *myth* did not fit their post-Enlightenment conception of what Judaism should be. Scholars

across the spectrum of observance strove to represent Judaism in the best and most universally honorable light. Liberal reformers and rationalist neoorthodox scholars alike believed that the essence of Judaism should be rational, not mythical or mystical. Most did not even acknowledge that such an entity as Jewish myth existed. Much like contemporary apologists for Christianity, they defensively contended that Judaism needed to cut itself free from the burdensome legacy of stultifying legalism and the ridiculous fantasies that were embarrassingly present in rabbinic literature. This would require a return to the pristine Hebrew Scriptures, which were deemed to represent the triumph of rational monotheism over the fearful and etiological world of pagan myth. It was a glorious moment for these self-perceived inheritors of the legacy of the Deuteronomist. It was as if once again, as in the time of Josiah, a long-sequestered book, this one inscribed *Ethical Monotheism*, had been rediscovered in the Temple, and with it all the accreted substrata of superstition—and myth—would be wiped away forever. God had triumphed over "the gods"; *sola Scriptura* was the byword of the moment. As for Scriptura herself, the divine authorship of the literal text having been dispensed with, the learned vied for the privilege of revealing that the uncomfortable and sometimes disconcerting mythic elements she bore in her very bosom were (to everyone's great relief) borrowed from the ancient Near East and, like the contemporary Yiddish edition of Shakespeare, "translated and improved."

Thus, scholars characterized the blatantly anthropomorphizing, richly iconic, and in fact deeply mythic texts they engaged as "legends," as folkloric elements, or as the old wives' tales of the rabbis. The great anthologists Jellinek, Wertheimer, Bialik, Ravnitsky, Eisenstein, and Ginzberg stripped the "legends" from the "legal material" in which they are often intimately intertwined in rabbinic texts, anthologizing them out of context. Having titrated the *legends*, they proceeded to philologically deconstruct or folkloristically motif-index them, depending on their inclinations. This entire process served to downplay the presence of truly mythic motifs found in rabbinic literature. The creators of the great anthologies evinced a philology-and-folklore–centered mythophobia as virulent as the Aryanists' ritual-hating mythophilia. Thus, the *legends of the Jews* came to be represented as existing apart from the central and pure monotheistic rationalism of the Jews, which they believed always to have been the essence of Judaism.

Unlike Lévi, who was a Sanskritist and later a scholar of Buddhism, the anthologizers of rabbinic legend could not respond to the mythophilic threat with a reassertion of the power of ritual. Lévi had the requisite distance for such a response. He had the luxury of being able to appreciate the ritual *sitz am leben* of "other people's myths," without the necessity of engaging its centrality in understanding the myths of his own people. Post-Enlightenment Jewish scholars working on Jewish topics could not reassert the power of ritual, since with the same zeal as they held fast to the ideal of an aniconic Judaism, the reformers were simultaneously battling what they perceived as the blind subservience of the ignorant Jewish masses to empty and outmoded ritual, and the neoorthodox were attempting to fit ritual into a dignified and rational framework. The time was not yet ripe for a reclamation of Jewish ritual as religiously empowering and the celebration of its intimate relationship with myth. That has only occurred among the inheritors of Gershom Scholem in the present generation of scholars, and mainly in the context of Kabbalah.

But Kabbalah is an obvious, and in some sense a relatively safe, area in which to acknowledge the existence of myth. Even before Scholem, its mythic nature was appreciated. Scholem's great contribution, in fact, was to demonstrate that Kabbalah was marginalized by Wissenschaft scholars precisely because it was so uncomfortably mythic in content. What is to be done about the fact that even in a post-ritual-phobic, Kabbalaphilic age, the position that Judaism is myth free has persevered, and done so considerably longer in the history of Jewish thought than it has almost anywhere else? Why is myth still a theologically dirty word for Jews?

It is time to acknowledge that not only legendary but truly mythic elements exist in, and coexist with, rabbinic culture both within and without the kabbalistic traditions. Certainly, some of those elements were what we might call "borrowings from Babylon," but when such so-called borrowings are still appearing in nineteenth-century texts and in twentieth-century oral folklore, it is time, perhaps, to notice that, origins aside, they have a life of their own and that the history of that life may be interesting and necessary to chronicle. The nineteenth-century mania for motif-indexing myths has proved difficult to overcome. The so-called Hebrew versions are still perceived as variants that add

local color, while leaving unscathed the "universal core" of the myth, which is alleged to be inherently conservative and conventional. This is what makes the myth recognizable. In the case of the Hebrew versions, it is also what conveniently erases all taint of the arcane and particular. Even today, the most difficult part of gaining acceptance for an understanding of myth within Judaism and as part of the history of medieval Jewish *mentalités* is surmounting the common wisdom that "Hebrew myths" are universal gems presented in a Jewish setting, but that they have nothing particular to teach us about Jews.

What follows is an examination of the process of "harnessing myth" and turning it into a category of theological expression in Judaism. It uses as its example and central metaphor the harnessing of the dragon mythos by medieval Jews. I will examine various legends in rabbinic and medieval texts concerning dragons in which some of the rawer, riskier, more bothersome elements of the dragon mythos seem to have been maintained and transmitted. The ways in which ancient and medieval Jews attempt to "harness the dragon" in some ways directly parallel their attempts to harness myth, rather than to eradicate it, as we have observed their nineteenth-century descendants attempt to do. The theological method of the medievals, in turn, may point to certain ways in which we, as modern students of myth, ought to be carefully harnessing certain theories, rather than summarily jettisoning them. We will discern medieval Jews doing with myth, in other words, what the contributors to this volume have attempted to do with various theories of myth. We will observe them as they, in the words of the editors, "ask what they can salvage from [it] to bring forward into [their] new agendas."

I will focus inter alia upon several overlapping "harnessings," the literal image of the harnessing of the dragon in the service of God and the metaphorical implications of this image for the ways in which medieval people harnessed myth in the service of theology.

Before I do so, I want to explore two possibilities of harnessing in a theoretical framework: the possibility of harnessing certain nineteenth-century subjectivist tendencies in the service of the discourse of cultural particularism, not in a chauvinistic, but in a contextual sense, and the possibilities of harnessing Jung and Eliade, of rediscovering in particular traditions certain terms used by them in a universalizing sense.

Harnessing Subjectivist Chauvinism and Universalist Archetypes

In the nineteenth century, the Hebrew versions of world legends were deemed, by virtue of their translation into a "more highly developed ethical monotheistic context," to have "improved" on the benighted pagan versions because their moral and ethical fiber content was higher. Scholars today would certainly deem this a chauvinist and subjective value judgment. Yet there is a grain of truth to it. Truthfully and objectively, at first glance "Hebrew myths" do seem strikingly like universal gems presented in a Jewish setting. One can certainly find examples in Jewish lore of such "universal motifs" as the primeval serpent or dragon or of the world-encircling serpent or dragon, of the "cosmic serpent" or dragon, even of the serpent or dragon who swallows the sun; but that does not mean that they have nothing particular to teach us about Jews. Simply because myths in Jewish sources look like those of the surrounding culture, their underlying morals ought not to be tacitly assumed to mirror non-Jewish versions exactly. The biblical authors did transform myth in order to cause it to reflect a specifically YHVHist point of view, and rabbinic culture subsequently transformed myth as a forum for teaching Jewish moral lessons. Thus, it would seem that we should not jettison the nineteenth-century observation that the mythic strata are transformed in the biblical and rabbinic tradition, but only the chauvinistic hierarchy that their manner of presentation implies. They were right to observe differences, but perhaps we ought not to see them as deviations from or improvements over certain *archetypes* but merely as contextually related (and contextually revealing) variants.

The term *archetype* itself is one that needs to be harnessed. In the light of the assumption of the essential universal nature and merely Jewish flavor of Jewish myth, it would seem that the nascent field of the study of Jewish myth has no alternative but to situate itself squarely in the camp of the deconstructionist and New Historicist critics of Jung and Eliade. Such critics assert that Jung and Eliade inherited the universalizing, motif-indexing methodology of the nineteenth-century folkloristists and moved it toward grander but ultimately objectionable conclusions. The bitter fruit of this ancestral legacy, they assert, is painfully evident in the slipshod, free-associative free-for-all manifest in the work of those who would wrest myth from the political, historical, and cultural milieus of the societies that produced it. Many seek, undoubtedly legitimately, to overthrow the Jungian conception of archetype as the Platonic form that lies beyond and dwarfs in importance the petty and particular manifestations of the myths of individual cultures, along with the expansive but ironically reductionist conclusion of such speculation—that these universal archetypes are the product of a metacultural Universal Mind. At the same time, it seems fascinating to consider that particular traditions themselves maintained concepts of archetypes in a pre-Jungian sense: primeval figures, paradigmatic creations, prototypical models. Thus, when I write of medieval texts discussing "the primordial serpent," I am literally translating a Hebrew term, *naḥash hakadmoni*. One can reclaim an entire range of indigenously Jewish understandings of terms associated with primality, paradigm, and prototype, language so intimately connected with the work of Jung and Eliade that it is hard to remember how they were used before them. I would like to be able to use the term *archetype* in this internal context; hence I have coined the usage *indigenous archetype* to distinguish the idea from that of the universal Jungian archetypes.

In discussing the harnessing of the dragon, we ought to tread a sort of via media: while accepting the increasingly prevalent opinion that the idea of mythic archetypes ought no longer to be defended universally and uncritically, we should recognize nevertheless that this idea must not be eschewed summarily. Rather, we should seek such archetypes in the context of indigenous traditions, not as overarching inevitabilities but as fascinating examples of the ways in which native mythopoetic traditions order their internal world.

Harnessing the Dragon

To study the ways in which medieval Jews, building on the Talmudic and midrashic heritage, harnessed myth itself in the service of theology, transforming the near-mythic (or freshly demythologized) biblical image of the dragon in literature and art, one needs to begin with a survey of that image's development from the biblical transformations of the ancient Near Eastern dragon mythoi through the Talmudic periods, something that at first looks like conventional historical philology. But in its twists and turns this survey will reveal survivals of ancient and often disquieting elements of the dragon mythos in Judaism, specifically its signification of the tension and of the liminal arena be-

flung into the desert.[15] This image of the vanquishing of the *tanin* finds parallels in other biblical texts and will prove crucial to an understanding of the dragon as a liminal symbol, situated upon the ambiguous dividing line between the divine and the demonic.[16]

The "J" source, or second creation account, in Genesis 2, mirrors the "P" source in introducing a prototypical reptilian figure.[17] The first animal "J" mentions by name is the *naḥash*, the "primordial serpent" of the Garden of Eden (a dragonlike creature, as we shall see).[18] Like "P"s *taninim*, it is the only animal singled out for individual mention in this account. In fact, the primordial serpent is the first creature to which Scripture devotes a narrative. The image of the serpent as a crafty, evil tempter presented in that narrative, and its correlation with the *tanin*, figure prominently in the development of the image of the dragon.

Naḥash is also the generic term for serpent in the Bible, but perhaps thanks to the powerful image of the serpent limned in Genesis 2, the *naḥash* often attains dragonlike proportions and powers. But the interchangeability of the terms *naḥash* and *tanin* is already clearly evident in Exodus, where on one occasion Moses' staff changes into a *tanin*, as I mentioned, but on another, into a *naḥash*. Usually used in a metaphorical or natural historical context,[19] the very term *naḥash* ("hissing" or "whispering") carries with it connotations of craftiness, poisonousness, and punishment.[20]

Harnessing the Dragon in Rabbinic Literature

Dragons are quite prominent in rabbinic literature, and the attitude of tannaitic and amoraic culture toward these creatures directly informs their manifestations in medieval texts and iconography. In the legends of the Talmud and in the midrashim both the serpent and the dragon embark upon their odyssey through the history of Jewish ideas as indigenous archetypes of evil and power.[21] In these sources, as in Exodus, the terms *naḥash* and *tanin* are often interchangeable: a Talmudic source may refer to a *tanin*, and its midrashic retelling may refer to a *naḥash* or vice-versa.[22] This interchangeability is used to bolster and corroborate the hints found in the biblical sources that the serpent is a reduced dragon.

The primordial serpent is cursed after it tempts Adam and Eve: "On your belly you shall crawl," God tells it, "and dirt shall you eat."[23] The fact that the serpent seems not always to have been a crawling beast leads the rabbis to conjecture that originally it "stood out distinguished and erect like a reed, and had legs . . . it was the size of a camel."[24] The midrashim elaborate upon the manner in which, after its crime, the serpent is brought to trial by God, and is punished with the loss of its legs and its stature.[25] Because the serpent "set its eyes on that which was not proper for it—sought what it was not granted," observes the Talmud, "what it possessed was taken away from it."[26] But the serpent's crime was not simple deception of Adam. It sought to have sexual relations with Eve, and, thus cuckolding Adam, to usurp his place as God's image and representative on earth.[27] This attempt to assume the place of Adam is, in effect, an attempt to usurp the place of God.[28]

The threat to Adam's supremacy posed by the serpent of the Garden of Eden in rabbinic legends amplifying the "J" account is implicitly paralleled by the threat to God's supremacy posed by the *tanin* in those elaborating upon the "P" account. In the latter, the *tanin* rallies the mysterious forces of "the Deep" to usurp the divine throne, and is subjugated by God.[29] Another aggadic parallel is the threat posed to God's supremacy by the fall of the unnamed angelic prince (Satanail-Lucifer), formerly the most favored in Heaven, when he becomes jealous of the first man and refuses to do homage to the "image of God." He is cast out from before the cosmic throne.[30]

The serpent of the Garden of Eden, the *Tanin*, and Satanail-Lucifer all receive similar punishments for their rebellions. They are, in each case, reduced from what they once were. The Edenic serpent was once essentially a dragon. Now it has become a mere snake. It must crawl on its belly and eat dust like a worm.[31]- Satanail-Lucifer, a prince of angels and favorite of God becomes *HaSatan*, the hinderer, God's tool and instrument. And the rabbis reduce the *tanin* by almost completely neglecting that fearsome and awful rebel of the *Urzeit* in favor of the Leviathan. The Leviathan is God's servant, but ultimately it is relegated by the rabbis to the *Endzeit*, where, though certainly a powerful beast from a human perspective, it is a divine plaything. For the amusement of the righteous who denied themselves the pleasures of the circus and of gladiatorial contests in this world, God arranges a battle between the Leviathan and its terrestrial counterpart, the monster Behemoth. The archangel Michael delivers the coup de grace, butchering both beasts for the delectation of the audience

at an eschatological banquet.[32] Though the snake, the Leviathan, and Satan are each associated with wiliness, power, and cruelty, they are reductions of the Serpent, the *Tanin* and Satanail-Lucifer, which have been transformed from powerful rebels against God into servants whose power is harnessed and who do God's bidding.

Rabbinic tradition, following the lead of scripture, evinces a clear desire to vanquish and reduce the dragon, transforming it into a mere serpent or a blustering but ultimately subduable monster. Yet just as the modern-day snake retains the vestiges of the physiological infrastructure of its prehistoric legged ancestors, so does the serpent of rabbinic literature retain vestiges of the biblical dragon's tremendous and unchecked strength and power. In the rabbinic legend the serpent is often seen as an agent of fate.[33] Since it sealed the fate of human beings by being party to their fall, the serpent continues to serve as the agent of God in punishing them.[34] In a number of legends we learn that "the Divine Will is carried out through a serpent," as in the case of the Roman persecutor who is bitten by a snake as he relieves himself in a privy;[35] and that "a serpent never bites unless it is ordained."[36]

In some instances the serpent is not content merely to act as the agent of God in carrying out the fate of human beings. Indeed, it seems as if the serpent and its alter egos, the dragon and the Leviathan, begin to take on some divine characteristics themselves. For instance, the serpent seems to have tremendous power over life and death. In one source, planetary influence upon fate and "fate to be bitten by a snake" are mentioned together.[37] A snake is said to be the keeper of a miraculous stone which has dominion over life or death.[38] The Angel of Death himself is named Leviathan.[39]

In more dramatic illustrations of this phenomenon, rabbinic tradition not only attributes quasi-divine powers to the serpent, but, perhaps under the influence of or in response to Gnosticism, transforms the land-bound, dust-eating serpent into a cosmic figure. In a famous and exceedingly strange passage in Numbers, Moses is said to have made a serpent out of copper in order to remove a plague of "fiery serpents" from the Israelites in the desert.[40] He "mounted it on a standard," and all who gazed upon it were healed. The midrash understands the words *"sim oto al ness"*—"mounted it on a standard"—as "cast it up by a miracle,"

that is, he threw it up into the very vault of heaven, where it remained and was the determinant of the fate of the Israelites, for whosoever gazed up at it would live, and whosoever did not would die.[41] The so called *celestial* serpent, dragon, or Leviathan, is a powerful motif in rabbinic literature. The world is said to rest upon the fins of the Leviathan, or the Leviathan is seen as a serpent encircling the world.[42] A huge snake encircles the bier of a righteous person;[43] the righteous person surrounded by the snake is a microcosmic parallel to the world encompassed by the cosmic serpent, since *"zaddik yesod olam"*—"a righteous person is the foundation of the world."[44] A snake likewise encircles the machinery of Solomon's throne and by squeezing it sets it in motion.[45] This wondrous mechanical throne was a symbolic model in miniature of the universe, so the function of the snake that animates it is analogous to the function of the celestial serpent.[46]

The well-known ancient Near Eastern mythic motif of a serpent or a dragon of prodigious size becoming, in essence, the vault of heaven, forming the nexus of the sphere of the constellations, finds an echo in rabbinic sources, where it is theologically cleaned up and harnessed to the service of a monotheistic Rabbinic Judaism. In ancient Near Eastern mythology, after the battle between the god and goddess Kingu and Tiamat, the dragonlike Tiamat's upper body becomes the vault of the heavens. In rabbinic legend Behemoth and Leviathan, who are not gods or coregents but creatures, do battle, and the skin of the Leviathan forms a sparkling canopy over all the world.[47] Thus, it is not surprising that Jewish commentators, when discussing matters astronomical, saw the celestial dragon as the vault of heaven to which the signs of the zodiac are affixed. In that position it can assert its dominance over all powers in the universe, even to the extent of swallowing the sun.[48] By controlling the zodiac, as we shall see, this dragon can affect the course of fate.

Scripture itself is remarkably explicit that the serpent of copper was preserved and worshipped as a god until it was finally destroyed by King Hezekiah.[49] Some strata of rabbinic tradition have similarly few qualms about emphasizing the vestigial qualities of the snake that link it with the primordial serpent and the rebel dragons, depicting the snake as continuing its attempt to usurp the place of God as the one who determines fate. In the midrash God avers that humankind was ruled "yesterday by My will—but now by the will of the serpent."[50] The rabbis' response to this

"threat to God" is not to repress such statements but to acknowledge the potential danger of the power of the serpent while attempting to limit it. The Talmud, for instance, admonishes that if one is praying and a snake winds round one's heel one should not stop the prayer but "concentrate upon one's Father in heaven."[51] Likewise, there is the assertion that "it is not the dragon (or serpent) that kills, but sin that kills."[52] It appears from the evidence in the Talmud and *midrashim* that there was indeed a conception of a cosmic serpent or dragon that controlled the fate of humankind in some unspecified way. This power was awesome, potentially impinging upon the sovereignty of God, and hence one finds statements that attempt to limit the dragon's influence. That influence is ultimately illusory and the texts emphasize the potential of each individual through the observance of the law of God to alter his or her fate.[53] Medieval texts, particularly mystical works and commentaries, attempt similarly to mitigate the power of the dragon.

Harnessing the Dragon in Medieval Jewish Texts

Shabbetai Donnolo, an Italian physician of the tenth century, commenting on *Sefer Yezirah*, a mystical text of the third century, brings the idea of the relationship between the dragon and fate into the medieval world. *Sefer Yezirah* states: "The t'li (dragon)[54] is in the universe like a king on his throne, the sphere (or cycle) is in the year like a king in his country, the heart is in a living being like a king in war."[55]

Donnolo's commentary, called *Ḥakhmoni*, describes how the heart gives moral order to the internal universe, the year gives order to time and the physical universe, and the dragon rules over the metaphysical, fated aspects of the universe such as the movements of the constellations, thus appearing to control all the other factors as well. For Donnolo and other kabbalists, the great twisted serpent is the axis upon which the fate of the universe, as determined by the constellations, is hung.[56] Some identify it with the constellation Draco.[57] The dominant paradigm of Donnolo's age depicted the heavens as comprising a celestial sphere in which the terrestrial one floated. It had a celestial equator situated directly above the terrestrial equator and a celestial Pole situated directly above the earth's North Pole. The heavens were stationary, but the sun moved through them from west to east

over the course of the year. The circle traced upon the celestial sphere by the annual path of the sun as it moved through the heavens (or as moderns would express it, by the plane of the earth's orbit around the sun) is called the ecliptic, and the ecliptic has its own pole. The constellation Draco surrounds the ecliptic pole. In doing so, it winds through all the houses of the Zodiac, and all the stars appear to hang from it.[58] The *t'li* is also understood as the inclination between two celestial planes. In astronomical terms, this is the obliquity, the inclination separating the ecliptic and the celestial equator.

The commentators aver that it looks vaguely like the body of a huge fish, and hence is identified with the *t'li*. This furthers the association of the *t'li* with sea creatures such as the *tanin* and the Leviathan.[59] The two points, or "nodes" where the equator intercepts the ecliptic are the points of equinox. The vernal equinox is referred to as "the head of the dragon." The autumnal equinox is called "the tail of the dragon." These nodes are depicted as knots in the star charts.[60] Sa'adia, Al' Bargeloni and Maimonides refer to the *t'li* as *Al Jaz'har*, Persian for "knot" or "node."[61]

Other sources use the word *t'li* to designate the obliquity between the orbit of a planet or a satellite, such as the moon, and the ecliptic.[62] Like the points where the equator intercepts the ecliptic, the two points at which the orbit of a planet or satellite intersect with the ecliptic are called nodes. In this case, the "head of the dragon" is the ascending node (where the planet or satellite passes south to north); the "tail of the dragon" is the descending node (where the planet or satellite passes north to south).[63] The lunar nodes, the points at which the orbit of the moon passes through the ecliptic, are the points in the moon's orbit where an eclipse of the sun or the moon can occur. Hence, the midrashic image of the dragon who swallows the sun.[64] These nodes are deemed astrologically significant by R. Abraham Abulafia, who writes that the head of the *t'li* indicates merit, while the tail represents liability.[65]

According to some kabbalistic works, *T'li* is a place under the firmament called *Vilon*, inhabited by beings who are humanoid but behave like angels. These beings are imbued with divine wisdom, and have the power to impart it to human beings. *T'li* as cosmological locus rather than an animal of some sort thus serves as intermediary between the divine and the world in the same way that the Celestial Dragon does.[66]

One of the most startling identifications of the *t'li* is in *Sefer HaBahir:* "What is the *t'li*? It is the likeness before the Blessed Holy One. It is thus written, 'His locks are hanging.'"[67]

The literal sense of this seems to be that the *t'li* is the image that is most prominent before God because it is the largest constellation and is at the uppermost part of the celestial sphere. The *Bahir,* however, seems to imply that God is related to this "likeness" by more than a steady gaze: God and the *t'li* seem to mirror each other. The quote from the Song of Songs is about God Himself, in the guise of the Beloved. Just as his locks hang, so does the *t'li,* imitating God's appearance, as it were. The words likeness and before, which recall the Second Commandment,[68] in this context point out the danger of close equivalence between the "likeness" and the "Holy Blessed One." Idolatry directed at this image was certainly understood to be a possibility. Maimonides and others assert that the *t'li* was idolatrously worshipped in ancient times. R. Isaac of Acco identifies the *t'li* specifically with Baal.[69]

Thus, the commentaries on *Sefer Yezirah* and the astronomical-astrological texts paint the picture of the *t'li* as an enormous dragon that controls the constellations, has positive and negative astrological influences, can be related to the *tanin* and the Leviathan, and, possibly to God Himself, or, more accurately, to an idolatrous "challenger" to the divine throne.

According to Donnolo, the dragon only appears to rule over all. In fact, it was placed in its position by God, who has ultimate dominion over the universe and fate. And it is obvious that only through a relationship with God can one affect one's destiny. Donnolo extends this paradigm to the microcosm: he compares the function of the celestial dragon to that of the spinal chord in the human body, its head to the brain and its tail to the sexual organs.[70] By taming one's internal dragon, that is, by maintaining a proper balance between reason (represented by the brain) and instinct or emotion (represented by the sexual organs), one can theurgically affect the celestial dragon and alter one's fate. For Donnolo, the dragon represents not only power over good and evil in the world but the ability of human beings, by teaching their internal dragons proper behavior as it were, to control good and evil in the self and thus to affect their fate.

Donnolo's commentary was an important influence on the theology of the German Jewish pietists of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries known as *Hasidei Ashkenaz.* They, like Donnolo, manifested a desire to harmonize free will and determinism in their biblical commentaries as well as in their mystical tradition.[71]

The comments of Eleazar of Worms on the creation of the *taninim* (Genesis 1:21), are typical of this concern on the part of *Hasidei Ashkenaz* to limit the power of the dragon.

> *And God created:* Leviathan, upon whose fins the entire world rests. . . . And in the time to come God will command Michael and Gabriel to hunt him, and he will stand on his tail before them, and his head will reach the Throne of Glory. They will flee from him immediately, until he is destined to fall at the hands of Jonah. (Marginal note: This is the beast of which Job said, "And he is the ruler of all, the King of the children of pride" [Job 41:26], since even the proud angels fear him). And therefore, there is a hint here to "truth" (AMT) [in the final letters of the words] "And God created, (VaYivrA ElohiM eT)" for all the things which have been said regarding him are all true. And who will eat him? People of truth who are involved with the Torah of truth.

> *The taninim:* According to the plain sense they are great creatures, long and simple, and fire comes out of their mouths. Thus they live in water and pits (wells) and this is why it says (Psalms 148:7b) "*taninim* and all ocean depths." And it says in Isaiah (27:1) concerning the Leviathan "the Elusive Serpent," and . . . "the Twisting Serpent," and (it adds) "He will slay the *tanin* of the sea."

> Behold, the *tanin* is not the Leviathan, for it says "It was You who *crushed* the heads of Leviathan" (Psalms 74:14) but it says "It was You . . . who *smashed* the heads of the *taninim,*" (Psalms 74:13b) distinguishing two types [of monsters]. Thus, it was necessary to add the particle *ET* to include the Leviathan. . . . "*Taninim*" in *gematria* equals "The Great Leviathan."[72]

Eleazar begins by making a distinction between the Leviathan and the *taninim.* The Leviathan is the beast upon whose body the world rests. In this sense the Leviathan is a parallel to the celestial serpent. The Leviathan will be hunted in the future, when "his head will reach the Throne of Glory," that is, when he attempts to claim the celestial realms and usurp the throne of God. The primeval *taninim,* on the other hand, have the appearance of conventional medieval dragons, serpentlike and fire-breathing.

The *taninim* were destroyed, but the Leviathan will be preserved until "the time to come"—the eschaton.

The end of the passage is more difficult. Eleazar seems to erase the distinction he has drawn between the Leviathan and the *taninim* by showing how the two are equivalent in *gematria*, the mystical hermeneutical process that substitutes number and number combinations for the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. *Equivalent* is indeed the operative term here: the mathematics of this equation do not work out exactly. TNNYM (*taninim*) (*sic*) = 550, whereas HLVYTN HGDVL (*HaLeviatan HaGadol*) = only 549. In the context of *gematria*, however, this does not negate the possibility of their conceptual equivalence. An imperfect numerical correspondence can indicate approximation rather than duplication of the terms whose numerology is being compared. Eleazar understood the force of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet and their power to create and destroy worlds.[73] He uses *gematria* to demonstrate the transformation of *taninim* into *HaLeviatan HaGadol* as a literary metaphor for the creative operations of God. In crushing the rebellion of the *taninim* during the creation, God had, as if recombining letters by *gematria*, reordered the factors of the primordial rebel-dragon's "personality." The dragon of eschatology was the Leviathan, which, while "great," was still ultimately a servant of God, thus allaying all fears of usurpation.

The great teacher of Eleazar of Worms, R. Yehudah HeHasid, is even more direct in explaining and allaying fears about the powerful dragon. On the same verse he remarks: "*HaTaninim:* "Why is [the word *dragons* in Genesis 1:21] written *HaTaninim* [plural] and not *HaTanin* [singular, since the Leviathan was reputed to have no mate]?—Lest one should say, 'It is a god,' as it says [Job 41:25]. 'When he raises himself up the mighty are afraid.'" So it is written in the plural form, for the only truly singular One is the Blessed Holy One."[74]

The phrase "Lest one should say 'It is a god'" is quite startling. R. Yehudah here implies that the dragon assumes divine proportions and when it attempts to usurp the celestial throne, even the angels tremble. This is incontrovertible evidence that there was an awareness among the pietists that the mythic power of the dragon could grow out of proportion.

The celestial dragon also appears in the mystical literature of the pietists, once again in connection with the serpent of copper. In his biblical commentary Eleazar of Worms quotes the midrashic passage that Moses "threw the serpent up and it stood miraculously in the atmosphere of the world."[75] That this midrash was known in his circle and related to the celestial serpent is obvious from a passage in the mystical treatise *Sodei Razayya*, ascribed to Eleazar but most probably a work of his school.

The passage in question describes King Solomon's throne as an earthly parallel to the celestial throne. Connections between the prototypical and the actual and parallels between heaven and earth and macrocosm and microcosm (like those espoused by Donnolo) appealed to the pietists. They embraced the talmudic principle that "everything above is paralleled below."[76] Since one could not speak precisely about the awesome contents of God's abode, one would describe earthly parallels as a way of hinting at the celestial splendor.

As I mentioned, midrashic tradition describes how the machinery of Solomon's throne was set into motion by a giant serpent. This serpent is identified by the author of *Sodei Razayya*, who asserts that it was none other than "the serpent Moses made."[77] Moses' serpent, flung into heaven and the serpent on King Solomon's throne are one and the same. They both represent the celestial serpent affixed to the very throne of God. If this serpent performs a function on the divine throne analogous to the one it performs on Solomon's throne, it is powerful indeed, for then it would make the machinery of God's throne move—it would literally run the universe.

But this serpent of Moses, which moves the celestial throne, is not merely a serpent. Regarding it, Eleazar's teacher, R. Yehudah HeHassid, had said: "*The serpent* corresponds to God . . ."[78] [During the plague of serpents] God said, 'Make a *saraf*,' and Moses did not wish to, so God said, 'I will have mercy upon mine,' and thus it is written, 'and Moses made a serpent,'—corresponding to God."[79]

God commands Moses to make a *saraf*—a serpent. But *saraf* is also the term for fiery angel, and Moses fears that the people will worship it improperly. God is exasperated. "Very well, then," God thinks, "I *myself* will have mercy upon mine." The theologically careful Moses makes a serpent, and Moses and the people think that the image of the serpent curing the plague of serpents is a homeopathic remedy of sorts, the cure coming through the instrument of disease. But, R. Yehudah informs us, the image of the serpent corresponds to God's Self! Taken in conjunction with their other statements expressing fear that the *tanin* might be divinized, it seems that the major figures of *Hasidei Ashkenaz*

felt the ancient problem of the power of the celestial dragon still to be a relevant one and expressed it in terms very much like those of *Sefer HaBahir* and *Sefer Yezirah* and its commentaries. How did they propose to contend with it?

One of the strangest and most interesting appearances of dragons in the literature of *Hasidei Ashkenaz* relates to this question. The text is in the Bologna manuscript of *Sefer Hasidim:* "There is a noxious beast (or demon) which is called Drakon in the Greek language. If he is smote by a sword, he will not be damaged, but if there should come against him (someone) born of a dragon, that one can smite him. . . . The dragon who married the King's daughter said, 'I fear no one except the dragon born of the princess, and he is in the prison-house.' The King said to the son of the princess, 'I will make you a free man and you will leave prison. Go and take your father's sword and sit beneath the bed of the Queen.'"[80] What happens next is very strange. The dragon comes into the bedchamber and has sexual relations with the Queen, whereupon the prince springs out from under the bed and destroys him. The text continues: "The Queen didn't tell anyone that the dragon had had sex with her, for fear that if she said that the dragon was her husband, her human husband would be dead and she would have been [*sic*] poor and abject and without luck all her days. Instead she said, 'He came in the guise of the King, with the royal crown upon his head,' in the manner to which she was accustomed." The text goes on to describe dragons who appear to women disguised as their husbands and how dangerous these are. However, it concludes, these "noxious beasts do not attack anyone except someone who has attacked them, or if he or his ancestors wrote charms or callings-up or did magic or asked dream questions. Therefore one should not do these things or say, 'I will do this to save a life'—do callings-up or charms, for this is not wisdom. It shortens a person's life and the life of his descendants, and one shouldn't put a life in jeopardy in order to save a life.[81] For it is written, (Deut. 18:13) 'You must be wholehearted with *Lord* your God.' One shouldn't do anything except pray to God for any illness and disease, or trouble, or problem."

In the literary context of *Hasidei Ashkenaz,* there is precedent for understanding a dragon that disguises itself as a human being in terms of a most powerful indigenous archetype: the "primordial serpent." The Bologna manuscript of *Sefer Hasidim* relates how the primordial serpent "used to walk around on two feet and looked a bit like a human being."[82] Moreover, the details of the

tale correspond with the midrashic elaborations on the account of the temptation of Adam and Eve by the serpent in Genesis 3. Seen from this perspective, the king in the tale represents God, or more accurately, his "image" and agent—Adam. The princess or queen, who copulates with the dragon, corresponds to Eve, who, according to the midrash, copulated with the primordial serpent. The son of the serpent and Eve is humankind, imprisoned in mortality but given a chance by God to earn freedom from it (*Olam HaBa*—the world to come) if he vanquishes evil.

The claim of the queen to have mistaken the serpent for the king is paralleled in legends which state that the serpent took the form of Adam when seducing Eve in order to prey on her credibility. To demonstrate that such a deception is possible, we have the description of the manner in which dragons can appear as husbands in order to deceive wives. The moral of the story appears to be that one should not be beguiled by dragons in human or divine clothing nor fear that one's spouse and protector (God) will die. One should not involve oneself in magical practices or shortcuts. One should not consort with the dragon, for it is God who is the arbiter of all fate; one must vanquish the dragon and abandon all practices except the pious worship of the true God.

This tale draws upon an eclectic variety of sources, both Jewish and non-Jewish.[83] In its final redaction it is in many ways a paradigm of the grapplings of *Hasidei Ashkenaz* with the issues of free will and determinism, their ambivalent relationship with magic, and their elaborate metaphysical speculation. For them, the dragon was real, and they understood the world as remaining very much within its coils. Yet they believed, in accord with the traditions of the Talmud, the midrashim, and the commentaries on *Sefer Yezirah,* that it is not the dragon itself but God, the master of the dragon, and of all other created beings who holds the power to alter fate. To God alone should prayer and supplication be addressed.

Harnessing the Dragon in Medieval Jewish Art

Medieval Jewish iconography is intimately linked with rabbinic and medieval texts. It may in fact be read as a text of sorts, as I have demonstrated elsewhere.[84] Jewish art emerging from the medieval milieu can certainly be said to express "the wishes, dreams and aspirations" of its creators, rather than strictly aesthetical goals.[85] It echoes and amplifies. It often gives voice to

sentiments, political and theological, that it would have been difficult to make explicit in a medieval climate yet are implied in the texts it illustrates.

The important dragons and dragonlike creatures in Jewish literature appear only rarely in iconography; there are, for instance, no depictions of the primeval dragons in Jewish art.[86] When dragonlike creatures are illustrated, as in the case of the serpent of copper or the primordial serpent, there is nothing to distinguish them from their analogues in Christian manuscripts. The primordial serpent, for instance, may be depicted with a female human head, in direct conformity with Christian iconographic tradition.[87] Likewise, the serpent of copper is depicted as a winged dragon, which is one of the conventions for its appearance in Christian art.[88] The only inherently and explicitly *Jewish* dragon that appears in Jewish art is the Leviathan. It is generally depicted as a large fish alongside the Behemoth or engaged in the eschatological battle with that creature.[89] However, apropos of the function of the Leviathan as *ourabouros*, the serpent whose body forms the sky or is wrapped around the earth, and in accordance with its designation in Isaiah 27:1 as "the twisted serpent," the Leviathan is often depicted with its head touching its tail.[90] On Eastern European and Middle Eastern popular-style hallah covers for the Sabbath and on synagogue ceilings, the Leviathan is depicted enclosing other elements—the Behemoth, or the city of Jerusalem, a microcosm of the world as a whole. This motif may allude to the Messianic "day which is totally Sabbath," when peace will be spread over the city of Jerusalem and over the whole world, just as the Leviathan's skin will be spread as a canopy over the righteous.[91]

Most of the dragons that appear in medieval Jewish art are very similar in appearance to the grotesques found in the margins of medieval Christian manuscripts. This has led to their designation as purely decorative elements and to the neglect of their consideration as inherently Jewish symbols. This is odd, since, as I have demonstrated, the dragon is a powerful indigenous archetype in the ancient and medieval literature of the Jews. If one refrains from arbitrarily assuming that these dragons have no association with the textual context or with the iconographic context of the larger illustrations on a given page, one may begin to perceive some visual analogies between these illustrations of dragons and the more cosmological textual uses of the dragon as a fulcrum between the divine and the demonic.[92]

Threatening, demonic dragons and a protected Israel are a theme that pervades medieval Jewish art. The liturgical poem *Adon Imnani* for the first day of Shavuot is illustrated with dragons in nearly all its appearances in important Franco-German illuminated *mahzorim*, festival prayerbooks.[93] In a thirteenth-century example, dragons, some of which look very much like those on the facade of the cathedral of Troyes, seem to have been added merely for decoration, but if one observes their position, one notes that they are menacing the Israelites yet are unable to touch them as they receive the Torah and are sprinkled with the blood of purification by the priest at the altar.[94] This may again allude to the desire to have Jews focus on the law and worship of God rather than attempt to appease the cosmic dragon and to the belief that one will be protected from all such demonic creatures if one directs one's prayer to God alone.[95]

If the dragons were merely decorative, one might assume that they would be ubiquitous. Yet in the entire group of *mahzorim* surveyed by Gabrielle Sed-Rajna in her *La Mahzor Illuminee*,[96] this is one of the very few places such dragons do appear. Furthermore, they exhibit remarkable seriousness of purpose for grotesques—they do not double over on themselves or contort to fit the space; their attention is always fixed on the Israelites no matter which direction their bodies are facing. In some cases, they do more than merely threaten: they literally gnaw at the architectural foundations, symbolically attempting to destroy the foundations of Torah.

On the opening page of the book of Numbers in the Duke of Sussex Pentateuch (fol. 179v), there are four knights holding banners with the symbols of the major tribes camped around each of the four sides of the Tabernacle in the wilderness.[97] They are flanked by four hybrid grotesque dragons, three of which are winged, and by two smaller dragons of the two-legged variety, one of which is winged. These have been called "merely decorative" in the literature.[98] Yet their size and prominence, as well as the fact that the standard bearers are specifically depicted as knights, may hint that the artist intended the dragons as personifications of the difficulties the Israelites encounter in the saga of the book of Numbers. Perhaps they represent the fiery serpents in the desert. Or, as the human parts of the hybrids seem in some cases to correspond to caricatured ethnic types, perhaps they represent the occupants of the land of Canaan whom the Israelites would vanquish in battle. As the dragons rage outside, the knights stand

calmly within small golden aedicula lined with red. Thus the artist evokes a sense of divine protection commensurate with the spirit of both the biblical verse "[God] led you through that great and terrible wilderness in which there were venomous serpents" (Deuteronomy 8:15) and the eschatological prophecy of Zechariah 2:9, "And I will be for you, says God, like a wall of fire around you."[99] These hybrids are not "merely decorative" elements. If we are to look at this iconography as a sort of text, how might we read them? They serve as protagonists, introducing a narrative tension into a static and hierarchical tableau. They convert the whole scene from a mere diagram of the relative positions of the Israelite tribes around the Tabernacle to a representation that summarizes in iconographic shorthand the entire premise of the book of Numbers—the various trials the Israelites faced in the desert, and how God preserved them from these perils. It is appropriate that such a shorthand depiction of the predominant theme of God's protection in the book of Numbers should appear with the opening rubric of the book.

The iconographic tradition provides its own solution for the problem of the threat to faith, Torah, and even divinity posed by the dragon. When understood in the context of the texts they illustrate, some of the many images of dragons in Jewish manuscripts may represent the conquered *t'li*. In an Ashkenazic High Holiday prayer book from the second half of the fourteenth century, there is an elaborate and lovely arch framing the words to the *Kol Nidrei* prayer. There is a kneeling figure within this arch, and all seems appropriate and right given the solemnity of the liturgical context for which the text is intended. The entire lower register of the page is dominated by two huge dragons with tails intertwined who gnaw at the pillars of the arch within which the words appear. What are such large grotesque dragons doing in such a prominent place on such an important page? There is a tradition that there are two intertwined *t'lis*—one male and one female—corresponding to the plural *taninim* of Genesis and the two serpents mentioned in Isaiah. Perhaps in this illumination the blue dragon at the right represents the Pole or Draco (related to the constellation and hence celestial blue), and the red dragon at the left represents the Coiled Serpent, or the ecliptic (related to the luminaries, hence fiery red). A red and a blue dragon, also intertwined, illustrate a liturgical poem in the fifteenth-century additions to the same manuscript. In this instance, the blue dragon is depicted above the red dragon, corresponding accurately

to the relative positions of Draco and the ecliptic on the celestial sphere. In both of these illuminations, when related to the broader context of text and illustration, the dragons are symbolic of the reader and his congregation having conquered their belief in fate as read in the motion of the stars moved by the whim of the celestial dragon. The dragons illustrating the liturgical poem refer to the text "Happy is the nation for whom this is not so—from its God and redeemer it will garner a blessing." This is a play on the words of Psalm 144:15: "Happy is the people who have it so . . ." Thus, happy is the nation whose fate is not determined by the celestial dragon—from God alone will it receive its blessings. The dragons of the *Kol Nidrei* page relate to both the central illustration and the text. Though the apparently capricious and destructive forces of fate seem to gnaw at the underpinnings of faith (just as the threatening dragons discussed above were gnawing at the very foundations of Torah), the reader and his congregation realize that on Yom Kippur their fate is in the hands of God alone.

These illustrations acknowledge that the dragon exists, he is part of the universe, but he is a servant. His job is to uphold the structure of the constellations in their orbits—he is the foundation of the cosmos, but he is not its ruler, nor is he the arbiter of fate, for fate can be altered only by the power of *"Tshuvah, U'T'fillah, U'Z'dakah"*—repentance, prayer and charity.

Another example with a very similar message is found in an Ashkenazic manuscript of the fourteenth century. It is the illuminated catchword *Melekh* (King) beginning the liturgical poem *Melekh Amon Ma'amarkha MeRahok Muzav*.[100] This is a *piyyut* (liturgical poem) for the second day of Rosh HaShanah, a day upon which the poetic mood begins to shift from the celebration of the creation of humankind to the theme of Judgment as the cycle of the year moves toward Yom Kippur. The poem is based on *Pesikta Rabbati* 40,[101] which, in turn, is an excursus of several verses in Psalm 119: 89–96: "The LORD exists forever; Your word stands firm in heaven. Your faithfulness is for all generations. You have established the earth; it stands. They stand this day to [carry out] Your rulings, for all are Your servants . . . I am Yours; save me! For I have turned to Your precepts. The wicked hope to destroy me, but I ponder Your decrees. I have seen that all things have their limit, but Your commandment is broad beyond measure."

This Psalm asserts the primacy, the "firm foundation" of God's "word"—God's laws, as opposed to cosmic anarchy—in the heav-

ens and on earth.[102] It forges a stern distinction between the divine laws and the servile and limited status of the heavenly bodies. The medieval Jewish commentators on this verse assert that it is God's will, rather than astrological conjunction, which orders the universe, and they celebrate the Psalmist's complete faith in God.[103]

Like the Psalm, *Pesikta Rabbati* 40 and the *piyyut* promulgate a theology which proclaims that, while God's justice is ordained of old, it is constantly tempered with mercy. "Your Merciful Name is exalted," writes the poet, "even as you sit in Judgment."[104] This context, with its image of a God who sits in judgment yet who always acts with mercy, recalls an aspect of the dragon that has not yet been discussed, and which is found in RaShI's interpretation of Lamentations 4:3, "Even the *tanin* offers the breast": "*Even the tanin* offers the breast and suckles its young: Even though it (the *tanin*) is cruel, it uncovers its breast."

The ambiguous image of a cruel dragon who cares for its young is a striking and important one, for it stands in answer to those who would assert that a God who is stern in judgment can have no mercy. This is the ultimate harnessed dragon, its mythology intact on the one hand but dramatically declawed and domesticated on the other, a figure of stern justice and yet, at the same time, of parental mercy. It is a far cry from the primordial rebel-dragon, but it seems appropriate for the illustration of a poem recited on a day that is the gateway to that day wherein Jews remind God that "we are Your children and You are our Parent."[105] The sources of the *piyyut*, with their emphases on the power of God over all the celestial and astrological powers, and the text of the *piyyut*, with its emphasis on mercy within judgment, are brought together by the image of the dragon. In the illumination of the initial word, a network of violet vines on a blue ground forms the well-hidden figures of dragons, like the powerful and ancient elements of the myth itself, the images of the dragons are hidden, subjugated by the sovereign power of God, represented by the word *Melekh*. Yet these domesticated dragons form a visual analogy with the idea of mercy within justice presented in the poem. This strongly corroborates the tensions that develop in the classical literature between the dragon as cosmic serpent and arbiter of fate, and divine law, which it always seems ready to overthrow. However, a new element is present here: just as in *Sefer HaBahir*, the dragon here is the mirror image, so to speak, of God.

This is the mythic substratum that the rabbinic tradition has had to deal with all along—the powerful intermingling of the divine and the demonic that will simply not go away. The negative repercussions of what the *Bahir* calls this "likeness" are evident in many contexts. It was because of its divine likeness that the primordial serpent was able to deceive Eve, that the copper serpent became an object of idolatry, that the *tanin* was such a threat to God, that the serpent on God's throne has such power, and that the psalmist and the kabbalists must, each in their own way, assert God's dominance over the cosmic serpent. But here, finally, the disturbing mythos of the dragon is harnessed theologically.

The traditional Jewish morning liturgy praises God, "who forms light and creates darkness, who makes peace and creates everything." This is a paraphrase of Isaiah 45:7, which contains a theology so profoundly difficult and disturbing that if pronounced every morning it would make all but the most pious tremble and go back to bed. The original verse reads, "I am the *Lord* and there is none else, I form light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil." In many ways, the odyssey of this verse into the liturgy parallels the odyssey of the dragon mythos. Isaiah's words represent a biblical negation of the mythic consciousness which asserted that there were two (or more) powers in heaven. Even though the scriptural verse deconstructs and demythologizes that paradigm, the idea of praising a God who created evil was too much for the rabbinic creators of liturgy, and so they paraphrased it, employing "everything" as a euphemism for "evil." But to readers who know scripture, the subtext is still there. Such readers understand that God is the author of everything, including evil, and they are either troubled by that, or they take comfort in it—the choice is theirs. The biblical statement has been softened, but it still retains its original rebuke. A theological compromise has taken place.

A similar process takes place with the dragon. As we have observed, the dragon of scripture was originally a god in its own right but is transformed first into God's creature, then into a subjugated rebel against God. First in biblical, and later in rabbinic tradition, it is harnessed, but the harness does not hold. It is almost as if the dragon is constantly straining at the bit to escape, to get out and to attack God or to usurp God's place. Gradually, during the Middle Ages, a cold peace is struck with the underlying mythic elements of the image of the dragon. The dragon now becomes a theological metaphor for God's self, a positive image, but, almost sadly, a domesticated one.[106]

It is not only the harness of rabbinic tradition that can barely contain the dragon. The universalist archetypal harness will not hold him either. Symbols are forged not exclusively by Ur-passions but by specific historical contexts and, ultimately, often by compromises. And the study of myth itself is subject to historical change and development. Laurie Patton has asserted that if the native traditions and indigenous contexts are heeded, and the intellectual ancestors selectively applied, myth can be used to do good history. I would add that it can also be used to do good *histoire des mentalités.*

Yet it does not come easily. Readers who know myth as well as scripture understand that just as there is a fine line between, and often an intermingling of, the divine and the demonic, there is a fine line between Ur-passions and history, between art and text, and, in fact, between Jung and Eliade and us. They are either troubled by that, or they take comfort in it—the choice is theirs.

Notes

1. On the origin of the dragon concept, see Jonathan D. Evans in South, ed., *Mythical and Fabulous Creatures*, 26–58, esp. 30–31.
2. HaLevi, *Sefer HaKuzari*, bk. 4, chap. 24, 184.
3. Gen. 1–2:4a.
4. Gen. 1:20–21. The development of the depiction of dragons in postbiblical Jewish literature and art from sea creatures to creatures with both piscean and avian attributes is certainly due to the influence of the art and literature of the societies in which the Jews lived. But it may ultimately be precipitated by the fact that the "great *taninim*" were created on the fourth day of Creation, the day upon which both birds and fish are created.
5. Gen. 1:26.
6. Gen. 2:20.
7. Isa. 51:9; Job 7:12; Jer. 51:34; Deut. 32:33.
8. The *taninim* are equated with "the Depths" or "the Deep," with which they occasionally appear in poetic parallelism. Cf. Ps. 148:7, "Praise . . . *taninim* and all depths."
9. Cf. Job 41:25, and preceding note.
10. Isa. 27:1; Job 3:8 and 40:25; Ps. 104:26.
11. Exod. 7:9, 10, 12.
12. Ezek. 29:3, and see 32:2. This description, and all of Ezekiel's other pronouncements regarding the contemporary pharaoh, resonate with associations with the archetypical pharaoh, the pharaoh of Moses' time.
13. Another interpretation, and one that is most appropriate in terms of the final argument of this essay might be that the *tanin* of Moses' staff represents God, whose name is inscribed on the staff, and who subjugates all lesser powers. Both interpretations can coexist because of the intensely ambiguous and ambivalent relationship I hope to demonstrate exists between divine and demonic power.
14. Representing the ultimate dominance of God over the power of the dragon, which will be discussed further below.

15. Ezek. 29:4–5.
16. Ps. 91:3, 84:3.
17. Gen. 2:4b and following.
18. As mentioned above, the term *primordial serpent* is a direct translation of the Hebrew *naḥash hakadmoni*. See, for example *Bereshit Rabbah* 23:12.
19. Gen. 49:17; Ps. 58:5, 140:4. Deut. 8:15.
20. Eccles. 10:8. The *saraf* and the *tan* are two creatures which, due to confused etymologies and translations, are often mistakenly included among dragons in postbiblical literature. The *saraf*, whose name means "burning," in some contexts indicates one of the class of *serafim*, "fiery angels" (Isa. 6:2, 6). In other contexts, it implies a poisonous (burning, or literally fiery) snake (Num. 8:15, 21:6). The *tan* is a wild canine, probably a jackal. There is a difference of only a single letter between its plural form (*tanim*) and *tanin*. This is most notable in an instance in Lam. 4:3 where, although *tanim* is clearly meant (and is so amended in public reading—*kr'i*), the written text (*ktiv*) is retained as *tanin*. The Septuagint consistently translates *tanim* as *drakon*. Many later translators and commentators repeated its error, mistakenly bringing under the rubric of "dragon" a great number of references to a howling, solitary mammal of the wilderness and further confusing the issue of what exactly the term means.
21. In the Talmud and in the various *midrashim*, there are descriptions of the natural history of serpents, of the primordial serpent (BT *Sotah* 9b), and of the *tanin* as the primordial water dragon and the Leviathan as the eschatological plaything of God (BT *Bava Batra* 74b, *Bereshit Rabbah* 7:4 [ed. Mirkin, 47–48]). There are fantastic tales of serpents of prodigious size (BT *Nedarim* 28a, BT *Shevu'ot* 29a), and *halakhic* concerns regarding poisonous serpents whom it is feared will taint drinking water and wine (see, e.g. BT *Bava Kama* 115b). These last, *halakhic* serpents are the most numerous, but following closely behind are the many references to the serpent as the instrument of punishment by God and the serpent or dragon as a magical or cosmological arbiter of fate. It is clear that often when the text speaks of serpents, it can refer to dragons as well; *Drakon* is a Greek loanword and is rarely used. *Tanin* is usually used with specific reference to primordial water dragons, so the word for serpent is often used to refer to beasts conventionally regarded as dragons. *Naḥash*, (serpent) is by far the most common term.
22. Exod. 4:3, 7:15 *naḥash*/ Exod. 7:9, 7:10 *tanin*, in retelling of same story. This may occur even within the text of the Talmud itself. See BT *Berakhot* 33a and see RaShI on the biblical verses quoted. Such interchangeability is present in other languages and linguistic contexts as well, as for example in the case of the Old English "Wyrm," which means both snake and dragon.
23. Gen. 3:14.
24. *Bereshit Rabbah* 19:1 (ed. Mirkin I:134).
25. See, e.g., *Bereshit Rabbah* 20:4–5 (ed. Mirkin I:146–48).
26. BT *Sotah* 9b.
27. Ibid. obliquely, and see BT *Shabbat* 146a.
28. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:10 (ed. Mirkin, I:55–56). Cohen, "*Be fertile and increase*" is a comprehensive treatment of this theme.
29. See, e.g., Wakeman, *God's Battle*, and Day, *God's conflict*. The image of God as having "killed the *tanin* which is in the sea" (Isa. 27:1) is far less common than that of God's "crushing the heads of the *taninim* on the water" (Ps. 74:13, among other places). This is an ancient Near Eastern image of subjugation that has echoes in iconography. Many are the bas-reliefs of Egyptian or Assyrian kings placing a foot on the head—"crushing the head"— of a prostrate enemy, not killing, but subjugating him, making him, as it were, his plaything: "The Leviathan you have formed to sport

with" (Ps. 104:26). Thus, the pattern appears to be one of reduction which destroys rebelliousness but preserves power (albeit on a less awesome scale), and subjugation rather than eradication.

30. The earliest source for the fall of Satan is 2 Enoch 29:4–5: "One from the order of the archangels [identified as 'Satanail' in manuscript P] deviated, together with the division that was under his authority. He thought up an impossible idea, that he might place his throne higher than the clouds which are above the earth, and that he might become equal to my power. And I hurled him out of the height, together with his angels" (*Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. Charlesworth, 1:148). This angel was called Lucifer by the church fathers, due to a misapplication of Isa. 14:12. See Davidson, *Dictionary of Angels*, 176.
31. *Bereshit Rabbah* 19:1 (ed. Mirkin, I:134–35). One might extend the idea of reduction as a metaphor for what we are attempting to do methodologically with Jung's archetypes in transforming them into indigenous archetypes.
32. Cf. Eleazar Ben Kallir, *VeYipathu Sha'are Eden Gan*, trans. in Carmi, *Penguin Book*, 227–32.
33. Had humankind not fallen, the serpent would have been the servant of humanity (BT *Sanhedrin* 59b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 19:1 [ed. Mirkin, I:134–135]).
34. The "snake of the rabbis" punishes lawbreakers; for it there is no remedy (BT *Shabbat* 110a). One who gives a legal decision in the presence of his teacher (thus attempting to usurp the teacher's prerogative) "deserves to be bitten by a snake" (BT *Eruvin* 63a). A man encounters a series of troubles, but his meeting with a serpent is the culminating one that makes him forget all others (BT *Berakhot* 13a). Slanderers are punished by fiery serpents because the serpent was the archtypical slanderer (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 19:22 [ed. Mirkin, 10:237]).
35. *Kohelet Rabbah* 5:8, 15a.
36. *Kohelet Rabbah* 5:5, 27a. The serpent does not only punish evildoers: it may also despatch heroes to their death. In doing God's will in a way that seems to be part of the *natural order*, a serpent is sent to kill Bar Kokhba so that the Romans should not have the satisfaction of believing that they killed him (*Eykhah Rabbah* 2:2, 21a).
37. BT *Shabbat* 110a.
38. BT *Bava Batra* 74b.
39. BT *Bava Batra* 16a.
40. Num. 21:6–10.
41. *Bamidbar Rabbah* 19:23 (ed. Mirkin, 10:238).
42. This world-encircling serpent, which parallels the Greek *ourabouros*, finds an echo in various midrashic accounts. Cf. *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* 9; *Midrash Aseret HaDibberot* 2 (Jellinek, *Beth HaMidrasch*, I:63).
43. BT *Bava Metsiah* 84b–85a.
44. Prov. 10:25.
45. Cf. *Midrash Kisseh VeIpodromin shel Shlomo HaMelekh* (Jellinek, *Beth HaMidrasch*, V:35).
46. Jellinek, *Beth HaMidrasch.*, II:83–85, and Gaster, *Exempla of the Rabbis*, 209, for a complete listing of sources, both Jewish and non-Jewish.
47. See Wakeman, *God's Battle*, 16–22, and *Midrash Hadar Zekenim* Gen. 3:21, 11.
48. BT *Avodah Zarah* 8a.
49. 2 Kings 18:4.
50. *Bereshit Rabbah*, 19:9 (ed. Mirkin, 1:141). In presenting the image of a servant whose power seems to threaten to eclipse that of his master, *midrashim* on the dragon invite comparison with those which present a similar image of Moses. If ever the reputation of a servant seemed to impinge on the power of his master even when that master was God, it was Moses, called the "man of God," who was liable to be seen as a "man-God" (Cf. Ps. 90:1). Moses compares himself both to a serpent (*Shemot Rabbah* 3:12 [ed. Mirkin, 5:78–79]) and to the Leviathan (*Midrash Tanhuma [Shemot]*) as a servant of God, and in light of the traditions concerning the serpent and the Leviathan, this appears to be an apt comparison. For among all the prophets it was Moses who came closest to being considered quasi-divine. The rabbis, who need to establish their own authority, deal with the problem of the frightening power of Moses by playing up the very human side of his character and asserting that his gravesite was never revealed for fear it become a temple to his worship rather than to the worship of God (*Midrash Lekakh Tov, Deut.* 36:4 [ed. Buber, Vilna, 1884]).
51. BT *Berakhot* 30b.
52. BT *Berakhot* 33a.
53. The desire to limit the power of the serpent may shed light on the only actual occurrence of the word *dragon* in the entire Talmud. The discussion occurs in BY *Avodah Zarah* 42b. The Mishnah there teaches that the image of a dragon is grouped with the images of the sun and moon as a depiction that must be "cast into the salt sea" should it be found on a vessel, since it is considered idolatrous. A *baraita* (extracanonical mishnah) insists that all planets except the sun and moon are "permissible" as are all faces except the human face and all figures except the dragon. There is a further discussion of what exactly constitutes a dragon. Some say it is a creature with scales "between its joints." Some specify the joints of the neck, but the joins of the vertebrae seem to be the accepted placement. RaShI on this text comments that the dragon is "like a snake," and says that it has hair between its joints, perhaps still attempting to reconcile mammalian and reptilian characteristics.

    BT *Avodah Zarah* 42a mentions that if a dragon-shaped vessel is found and the head of the dragon has been removed, one my only use the vessel if it is certain that the head was removed by a non-Jew. Why should this be? It may be that Jews believed that they could take a magical shortcut to alter their fate by breaking the power of the cosmic dragon in effigy, rather than by the conventional path of piety. Such images were prohibited because they were suspect of having been employed for idolatrous purposes by Jews who clearly believed that it was the dragon and not sin that killed. While such idolatry was expected of non-Jews, resort to magical shortcuts by Jews was deemed inappropriate; or, perhaps, feared effective.
54. The word *t'li* seems to be related to the verb TLH—to hang. (Targum and RaShI to Gen. 27:3, 98). The word is *hapax legomenon* in the Bible. It occurs in the tale of Esau's hunt, when Jacob tells Esau, "Take your gear, your *t'li* and bow" (Gen. 27:3). The biblical word *t'li* has been interpreted as a "hanging" sword, a quiver, or a bola (a line with a ball which -hangs- from its end). In commentaries on *Sefer Yezirah*, *t'li* has been identified with the *Naḥash bari'ah* of Job 26:16, 68; the *Naḥash bari'ah* and *Naḥash 'akalaton* of Isa. 27:1; as well as with the *Tanin* or Leviathan.

    For an enumeration of speculations on the nature of the *t'li* in the Bible and in commentaries on *Sefer Yezirah*, see A. Kaplan, *Sefer Yezirah*, 232 ff. For sources on the etymological bases of the word *t'li* and an exploration of the celestial dragon's astrological-astronomical significance, see Gefen, "*Teli*," 126–28; Harkavy, "*Tli Atalya*," 27–35; and Ish Shalom, "*Tanin, Livyatan Ve-naḥash*," 79–101.
55. *Sefer Yezirah* 6:1, 118 par. 42. The triad of the dragon, the sphere or cycle, and the heart is the culmination of *Sefer Yezirah*. Note that this triad is remarkably similar to that mentioned in the Talmud as idolatrous (BT *Avodah Zarah* 42b).
56. See Gikatilla, *Ginat Egoz* part 2, 254; Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim* 21:8,

100a. See also *Zohar* I:125a, and Abraham b. Mordechai Azulai's *Or HaHamah* (a commentary on *Zohar Shemot*, part 2 of his *Kiryat Arba* (New York, Jewish Theological Seminary ms 2179), on that citation in the *Zohar*. For what follows on Donnolo the author is indebted substantially to Sharf, *Universe of Shabbetai Donnolo*.

57. *Sefer Raziel HaMalakh*, 18b; RaMbaM in standard editions of JT *Avodah Zarah* 3:3 (19a)—the constellation here, as in the commentary of R. Ovadiah M'Bertenoro and the Mordechai on Mishnah *Avodah Zarah* 3:3, represents an idolatrous deity.
58. Ptolemy, *Almagest*, chap. 7, 235. The *Almagest* is found in Hebrew translation (though Ptolemy's authorship was suppressed) as *Mishpetai HaMazalot*. A particularly striking illuminated example exists in Sassoon ms. 823 (astronomical tables by Jacob b. David b. Yom Tov Fu'al) (cf. D.S. Sassoon, *Ohel David* [Oxford, 1932], 2:1043; no. 823). See Langerman, Kunitzsch, and Fischer, "Hebrew Astronomical Codex ms. Sassoon 823," 253–92.
59. Dunash on *Sefer Yezirah*, 69); Saadia on *Sefer Yezirah*, 59–60); Bargeloni on *Sefer Yezirah*, 209.
60. In the aforementioned manuscript of *Mishpetai HaMazalot* (Sassoon ms. 823), for instance, Draco is depicted replete with its two nodes, on fol. 112, and with only one "knot" on fol. 118.
61. Sa'adia on *Sefer Yezirah* 59–60; Bargeloni on *Sefer Yezirah*. 209; Maimonides on JT *Avodah Zarah* 33 (19a).
62. *Baraita DeShmuel HaKatan* 2 (8a); *Sefer Tekhunah*, 101–4; Ibn Ezra Exod. 3:15, 25–34, particularly the end, and Job 28:3; and Moscato, *Kol Yehudah* on *Sefer HaKuzari* 4:23, 54a.
63. See, for example, the diagram in the Eleazar of Worms, *Perush HaRa MiGermayza le Sefer Yezirah*, 12b), where the ascending node is labeled "head of the dragon," and the descending node is called "tail of the dragon."
64. BT *Avodah Zarah* 8a.
65. *Or HaSekhel 4:1 (New York, Jewish Theological Seminary ms 2320.11), fol. 41a.*
66. See Vital *Ez HaHayyim*, chap. 8, 403.
67. *Sefer HaBahir*, par. 106, on Song of Songs 5:11.
68. Exod. 10:3–4: "You shall have no other Gods *before* Me. You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image or any *likeness* of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters below the earth."
69. RaMBaM, *Mordechai* (840) to JT *Avodah Zarah* 3:3 (19a). Isaac of Acco, *Ozar Hayyim* (New York, Jewish Theological Seminary ms 1674.14), fol. 6a. See also JT *Shabbat* 9:1 (57b), *Avodah Zarah* 3:6 (22a), and RaMbaN on BT *Shabbat* 83b, *"Zeh"*.
70. Donnolo, *Il Commento*, 20.
71. Both Donnolo's ideas and those of the Hasidim concerning free will and determinism sprung from the same Talmudic roots, "All is foreseen, but the right of choice is granted" (*Mishnah Avot*) 3:15.
72. *Perush HaRokeah Al'HaTorah*, Gen. 1:21.
73. Though it contains a great deal of astrological and astronomical information, Eleazar's commentary on *Sefer Yezirah* is especially and essentially concerned with the creative and destructive power of the Hebrew alphabet (Cf. *Sefer Yezirah* (ed. Shapiro, (Przemysl, 1888), 22 ff)).
74. *Perushei HaTorah LeRabbi Yehudah HeHasid*, Gen. 1:21.
75. *Perush HaRokeah Al'HaTorah*, Num. 21:8. Eleazar ascribes the plague of serpents in the desert to the fact that Israel "slandered their Creator, like the (primeval) serpent" (3:78).
76. *Shemot Rabbah* 33:4 (ed. Mirkin, 6:90–91), and see HeHasid, *Sefer Hasidim Parma* ms, 349; Bologna ms, ed. Margoliot, (Jerusalem, 1957), 205.
77. *Sodei Razzaya*, 24. The author quotes a midrash whose source is now lost.

78. ". . . and 'the *saraf*' to Moses."
79. *Perushei HaTorah LeRabbi Yehudah HeHasid*, Num. 21:8–9, 184.
80. *Sefer Hasidim*, 319, no. 469.
81. Ibid.
82. *Sefer Hasidim*, 579.
83. Such as the legend of the birth of Alexander, who was said to be the offspring of a queen and a dragon.
84. Epstein, *Dreams of Subversion* and "Elephant and Law," 465–78.
85. Berenson, *Aesthetics and History*, 180.
86. Though elemental dragons occasionally appear, as in an illustration of the earth opening up to swallow Sodom and Gommorah, as in the Miscellany presumed to be from Troyes, c. 1280. [London, British Library ms Additional 11639, fol. 740v], which is clearly based on contemporary Christian depictions of the mouth of Hell.
87. Miscellany, Troyes (?) c. 1280, fol. 520v. Yet in Spanish Haggadot, the serpent is depicted in a completely reptilian manner. (Cf. Golden Haggadah, Barcelona c. 1320, London, British Library ms Add. 27210, fol. 1v; Sarajevo Haggadah, North Spain c. 1350, Sarajevo, National Museum, fol. 3v; Sister Haggadah, Barcelona, mid–14th c., London, British Library, ms Or. 2884, fol. 2r.)
88. There are essentially two ways in which the serpent can be depicted in medieval Christian art. One is as a snake suspended or draped over a pole, which is overtly Christological. A famous example is the mid-twelfth-century walrus-ivory cross from Bury St. Edmunds, now in the Cloisters, N.Y., ill. in B. R. Jones, "Reconsideration." Significant later examples are to be found in the block-book editions of the Biblia Pauperum (see Schmidt, *Armenbibeln des XIV. Jahrhundert* , and the example of this scene with its typological companions, the Crucifixion and the Binding of Isaac in Avril, *Biblia Pauperum*, plate e). The Cologne Bible of 1479 has a similar depiction, but the stick is not forked, and actually forms a Tau-cross. The other manner of depicting the copper serpent is as a dragon or winged snake upon a platform supported by a column or columns. Examples include the opening initial for the Book of Numbers in the Stavelot Bible (London, British Library Add. ms 28107, see Dynes *Illuminations*, plate 23), as well as the Bible Moralisee (see *La Bible Moralisee* [Paris, 1911], plate 81.]), and the Visconti Hours (see Meiss and Kirsch, *Visconti Hours*, plate 123). This depiction may go back to ancient prototypes such as the crowned, winged serpent depicted on the walls of a Pompeiian villa (see Hogarth and Clery, *Dragons*, 83). It is also the model which the sculptor of the famous Copper Serpent in the Basilica of St. Ambrose in Milan chose to use (see Bonnefoy and O'Flaherty, *Mythologies*, 2:682). The only depictions of the copper serpent in medieval Hebrew manuscript illumination follow this convention rather than that of the hanging serpent (Miscellany, Troyes (?) c. 1280, fols. 120v, 742v). Although this might lead to speculation that the tradition is originally even of Jewish origin, it is more likely that this mode of depiction, which may have ancient pagan roots (cf. Pompeii), may have been adapted because it is not Christological.
89. See Guttman, "Leviathan, Behemoth and Ziz." One of the more striking images is that of the Miscellany, Troyes (?) c. 1280, fol. 518v.
90. See the 13th-century depiction of the Messianic banquet in Biblioteca Ambroseana, Milan ms B30–31–32, 1236–1238 fol. 136r.
91. Cf. Leviathan enclosing Hebron (a parallel to the huge snake that encircles the bier of a righteous person [BT *Bava Meziah* 84b–85a]): Sabbath Cloth, Jerusalem, 1876 wool thread embroidered on cotton net, 81 X 78 cms. (Jerusalem, The Israel Museum. illus. in Ungerleider-Mayerson, *Jewish Folk Art*, 122 bottom right). Leviathan enclosing the Shor HaBar: print, Poland, nine-

teenth century (British Library, see Goldstein *Jewish Legends*, 117). Leviathan enclosing a city: dome of Gwodziec synagogue, 1640, see Davidovich, *Ziurei-Kir BeBatei Knesset BePolin*, plate 13. Davidovich identifies the city as Worms, presumably since Worms was depicted resting on a dragon (as a pun on its name, cf. Mogilev Synagogue, in Wischnitzer, *Architecture of the European Synagogue*, 142, plate 123.) But that image is not a dragon—it is clearly a fish. It is, furthermore, accompanied by the verses recited after the *'Aleynu* prayer, "You will not fear sudden terror, or the disaster that comes upon the wicked (Prov. 3:25) [if they] hatch a plot—it will be foiled; agree on action—it shall not succeed, for the LORD is with us (Isa. 8:10). Till you grow old, I will still be the same; when you turn gray, it is I who will carry; I was the maker, and I will be the Bearer; and I will carry and rescue [you] (Isa. 46:4)." These verses are certainly appropriate either in an aggadic context that describes the Leviathan as the "bearer" of the earth or the heavens or in an ethical-philosophical context that demands that one not fear "sudden terror or the disaster which comes upon the wicked" if these be the effects of the twisting and lashing of the servant or Leviathan, but to trust only in God, for "the LORD is with us."

92. It must be remembered however, that the cosmological understanding of the dragon, its association with God and with fate, was never completely explicit in any of the literature examined above. For instance, both the mystical text *Sefer Yezirah* and the opaque exegesis and legends of *Hasidei Ashkenaz* were intended only for initiates of elite groups adept at mining symbolism in search of secrets. It would follow, then, that when that symbolism was expressed in art, it might be done in a comparably opaque manner.
93. See, for example, the *Laud Mahzor* Ashkenaz, c. 1250–60. (Oxford, Bodleian Library ms Laud Or 32), fol. 127v, described in the text following; the "Esslingen" Mahzor, c. 1290. (Part 1: Dresden, Sachsische Landesbibliothek ms A 46 a; Part 2: Wroclaw, University Library, ms Or I,10), fol. 202v; and the Darmstadt Mahzor, Hammelburg, 1348. (Darmstadt, Lessische Landes-und-Hochshulbibliothek ms cod. Or. 13), fol. 126r, where the illustration is much simplified: Moses alone appears with the tablets, and the threatening dragons are accordingly simplified—a single dragon attacks a hare. See Epstein, *Dreams of Subversion*, Chapter 2, for a discussion of this hare as a symbolic representation of Israel.
94. Laud Mahzor fol. 127v.
95. The presence of dragons at Mt. Sinai is certainly also linked to the idea that though "the snake came to Eve and cast his filth upon her" (see BT *Shabbat* 146a; *Zohar* I:28b; I:122b; I:126a; I:145b among many other places), "When they stood at Mt. Sinai, Israel's filth was cleansed (literally 'ended'), [but] the nations which did not stand at Mt. Sinai, their filth was not cleansed" (See *Zohar* 1:26b; BT *Avodah Zarah* 22b, among many others). This has obvious parallels in the Christian doctrine of the Original Sin, which was exculpated by Mary in giving birth to Jesus. Iconographically, one would expect to see fleeing, rather than threatening, dragons if this were the context of the illuminations.
96. These are the Michael Mahzor, Ashkenaz 1285. (Oxford, Bodleian Library ms Michael 617 [no. 1033], 627 [no. 1035]; both volumes of the Worms Mahzor, Worms, 1272–90, (Jerusalem, JNUL Heb 4 781 I/II); the Leipzig Mahzor, Ashkenaz c. 1310. (Leipzig, University Library ms V 1102/I–II [1]); and the Tripartite Mahzor, Ashkenaz c. 1320, (Part I: Budapest, Academy of Science, ms a 384; Part II: London, British Library, ms Add. 22413; Part III: Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms Michael 619). Together with the Laud "Esslingen" and Darmstadt *mahzorim*, mentioned in note 93, these comprise all the important Ashkenazic *mahzorim* of the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries.

97. London, British Library, ms. Add. 15282.
98. Narkiss, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts*, 104.
99. These verses are, in fact, linked together in *Shemot Rabbah* 24:4 (5:274), implying that the Israelites were protected by a wall of (supernatural) fire, just as appears to be the case in the illumination.
100. See Goldschmidt, *Mahzor L'Yamim HaNoraim* 1:47.
101. Ed. and trans. Braude (New Haven, 1959), 702.
102. See Ibn Ezra on this verse.
103. Ibn Ezra, on the verse "They stand as servants to do your will" emphasizes the adherence to God's laws to the [implied] exclusion of viewing the heavenly bodies as forces with independent power over fate. This is amplified by David Altschuler in the eighteenth-century commentary *Mezudat David* Psalm 119:89–91 (standard editions of the Hebrew Bible with commentaries): "Even if the heavenly bodies and their powers indicate that [things be] worse or better, behold, the decree of Your word is what stands in the heavens, and it nullifies their instruction. . . . Each day all the heavenly bodies and their powers arise to do Your bidding according to Your command—even if their instruction should [appear to be] the reverse [of Your will]—because they are all Your servants and are all compelled to perform the decree of the Omnipresent." A similar attitude may be found in the medieval commentators on the serpent of copper. They apologetically profess that it was not the serpent itself, but that when the Israelites gazed upwards they directed their hearts to their Father in Heaven, which was effective in stopping the plague. They desired to paint the experience of the Israelites with the serpent of copper in the desert as an eloquent testimony to the weakness of human beings in often idolizing the instrument, rather than the source of salvation. See RaShI, e.g. Num. 21:8, quoting BT *Rosh HaShanah* 29a, 470. The disjunction between these attitudes and those of kabbalists and philosophers may be due to the audiences for which the works were intended.
104. Literally, "Your Name," here referring to the Name HVYH, which represents God's mercy (Goldschmidt, *Mahzor* 47 n. 1).
105. Cf. *Ma'ariv*, Eve of Yom Kippur. See Davidson, *Ozar Hashirah* II:45. The origin of this *piyyut* is *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 2:17.
106. The idea that God may be compared to a creature is an accepted one among exegetes. See RashI on Exod. 19:18, 241: "Scripture offers human beings a pattern which is well-known to them. . . . [Hosea 11:10:] 'As a lion He [God] does roar.' But who gave the lion power if not He, and yet Scripture compares Him [only] to a lion! But, [the reason is] that we describe Him by comparing Him to His creatures in order to make intelligible to the human ear as much as it can understand."

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