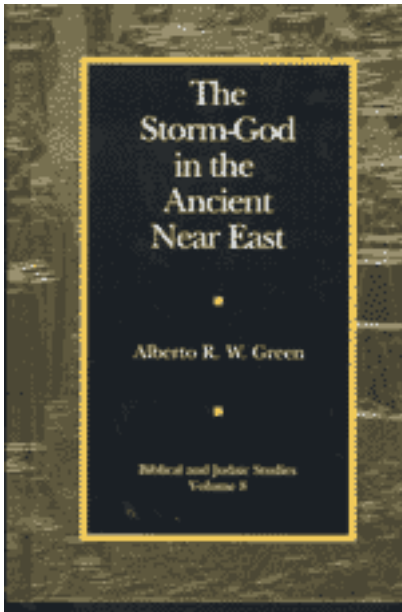


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The Storm-God in the Ancient Near East

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The appearance of Green's *The Storm-God in the Ancient Near East* is the latest offering in the Biblical and Judaic Studies series. This volume carries on the rigorous standards of scholarship for which the series is known. Offerings such as *The Hebrew Bible and Its Interpreters*, *Studies in Hebrew and Aramaic Orthography*, and *Psalm 119: The Exaltation of Torah* attest to the series' outstanding scholarship. The impetus for this work grew out of the conviction that materials related to the storm-god motif had not been properly integrated in their presentation. Green argues persuasively that prior to his work materials simply dealt with the mythic, iconographic, or literary evidence in a piecemeal fashion. Consequently, the author attempts both to survey and to integrate all relevant materials into a coherent presentation of the storm-god.

Green utilizes a critical methodology that exhibits a keen awareness of the sociocultural processes of ancient Near Eastern cultures. He attempts systematically to interpret the ideological and social significance of the storm-god motif. This interpretation follows a distinct two-stage process in each chapter. First, the author employs an integration of semidivine attendants of the storm-god utilizing both intercultural and intracultural analysis. This analysis is fundamental to Green's thesis of fluid and dynamic iconographic, textual, and mythic representation of the storm-god. It is through the

amalgamation of attributes of the semidivine that the storm-god grows in the ancient Near East. Second, the author systematically surveys the storm-god utilizing a marked geographic pattern. The investigation progressively moves through Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Syria, and Canaan. In each venue the author explores both cultural and geographical aspects that influence the presentation of the storm-god.

Green is to be commended for clearly delineating the parameters of his research. For example, he shows marked attentiveness for not forcing epigraphic, iconographic, and textual materials to fit his presuppositions. When literary and iconographic materials are in agreement (such as in the Ur III period) the author provides comprehensive integration. However, when disunity exists within the sources (as in the Hittite literary and iconographic representations), plausible suggestions are given for the reader. The research is richly illustrated with seals and textual representation.

The first of four chapters is devoted to the representation of the storm-god within the region of Mesopotamia. Green begins his investigation by postulating the blending of Adad and Iškur. It is during the Ur III period that a subtle shift occurs between the fertilizing Iškur and the Semitic thunder-god Adad. This shift produces the mythic storm-god Iškur-Adad along with his attendant consorts: the bull and dragon. Green correctly postulates that both literary and iconographic evidence mirrors political and religious developments during the Ur III period. However, the gods Adad and Iškur continued to develop throughout the centuries in their respective cultures. For instance, the author notes that Adad continued to exhibit his benevolent side as a fertility god. It is only during the Old Babylonian period that his attendants (the bull and dragon) become permanently attached to his entourage. Likewise, the continual evolution of the mythic concept is seen in Green's description of Adad's embracement of fertility. The Old Babylonian period sees a complete blending of fertility concepts germane to Mesopotamia. The author argues that conceptual fertility (brought by showers) is blended with that of the animal kingdom—especially the association with the bull.

Significantly, the Mari material is briefly examined for its textual role in the representation of the storm-god. Green postulates that the deity Ilu-Mer/Itur-Mer functions as a storm-god alongside Addu/Adad as a patron deity. The three principal patron gods—Ilu-Mer/Itur-Mer, Adad, and Dagan—are representations of the storm-god motif at Mari. It is argued that, since all three gods had separate temples and various textual materials, indeed all three should be viewed as separate entities. Yet it is at this point that Green shows the brilliance of his work. Although one may postulate the separate storm-gods, the author correctly notes the blending of each god into a coherent discernible motif within the Mari context.

The second chapter deals with the storm-god motif within the context of Anatolia. At the outset one is plagued with a disunity of thought within the iconographic and textual sources. This disunity may be seen in the presentation of the storm-god's bull attendant, which Green correctly contrasts with the Mesopotamian accounts. Likewise, the Anatolian weather-god functions in a rather different context than Adad of Mesopotamia. In Mesopotamia the storm-god was identified with cloud riding and atmospheric disturbances. However, in the Hittite textual materials the storm-god is never identified with such celestial might. Rather, due to his early identification with the mother-goddess and her forms of fertility, he evolves in a different manner. The storm god of Hatti is often referred to as either ^dIM or with the Sumerian logogram ^dU. In either case, the Hittite storm-god is closely associated with the soil and earth. Green argues persuasively that the blending of Taru with Wurušemu cogently fused the terrestrial and sky gods for the Hittite pantheon.

In chapter 3 the author examines Hadad's significance within the cultural sphere of Syria. According to Green, as early as the second millennium B.C.E. Hadad had already begun to assert himself as a potent atmospheric storm-god. One notes that while Hadad continually brought life-giving rains his role as a fertility god is rarely mentioned in either the literary or mythic contexts. In the Canaanite culture the Middle Bronze Age represents the time of blending for Hadad and Baal. At this point Green convincingly argues that physical elements, such as the lowering of the water table, help reshape the concept of deity. This factor leads to the fusing of Hadad's attributes with those of the latent Baal. Clearly, this ecological examination of the blending of deities is logically possible and even probable. The end of this chapter is devoted to the explanation of how El and Yam began to take subsidiary roles in the fertility myth. El is, in essence, pushed out of his role as chief fertility-god by the more aggressive Baal. Likewise, the attributes of Yam are subsumed by the newer storm-god in his effort to ensure Syrian fertility. Green subsequently probes the relationship between Baal and Mot in relation to the fertility cycle. He convincingly argues that Mot is the counterpart to a fertile Baal. It is postulated that without Mot, as a diametrical opposite, this theme would not have had a voice within the textual materials. Consequently, the reader is assured that fusion with Mot is not achieved due to his needed presence by Baal. If one may consider Baal's sphere equivalent to the wet season, Mot's sphere is to be understood as drought.

While Baal proved to be one of the most popular storm-gods in the ancient Near East, he was usurped by the warrior-god Yahweh. The third chapter deals with the emergence of the storm-god in the sphere of Canaanite culture. This portion of the book is quite remarkable in its presentation of both ancient Near Eastern and biblical materials. Green is both fair and sympathetic to the biblical materials yet does not eschew extrabiblical materials when they shed relevant light upon the subject. He hypothesizes that Baal and

Yahweh existed independently for some time and only later in the course of Israel's history became engaged in a titanic struggle. At the forefront of this struggle is 1 Kgs 18, with its martial depiction between Yahweh and Baal. One would expect the Deuteronomic Historian to cast Yahweh in a favorable light. However, Green clearly illustrates how the Historian began to fuse contemporary imagery and mythic language of the storm-god with Israel's national deity. Elements such as Yahweh's defeat of Yam-Suph, Leviathan, and Rahab all are illustrative of a blending of ideologies. Equally, traditional foes of Baal such as Mot and Reseph are dealt with decisively by Yahweh in a martial context. The biblical writers employ the divine habitation of Zion for Yahweh much like Baal's Zaphon. Green subsequently attempts to survey the Masoretic Text as well as toponyms to support the merging of Baal with Yahweh. While the Masoretic Text may have been purged of many "Baal" names, Canaanite geography tells a different story. The author argues that as early as the ninth century B.C.E. the division between Baal and Yahweh began to be emphasized by Israel's religious leaders. It is argued that Yahweh and Baal may be differentiated in three major ways. First, Yahweh was seen by his adherents as a historically evolving deity, unlike the cyclical Baal. Second, unlike the Canaanite Baal Yahweh was never understood as a dying and rising god. Yahweh appears throughout the biblical text as a historically anchored deity who moves through history with his people. Third, as the Creator of heaven and earth, Yahweh is seen as incomparably superior to Baal. This epithet is utilized by the biblical writers as a type of anti-Baal polemic in Israel's texts.

The final chapter synthesizes the storm-god and his associates within the Near Eastern context. Green proposes that the storm-god be understood in three principal areas of human concern. First, it is argued that the storm-god was an ever-present environmental force on which the peoples depended for their survival. Illustrative of this supposition is the dual image of the storm-god in the ancient Near East. Images of destruction (flood, lightning, and winds) are combined with the fertility of the storm. This dualism may be seen in the Sumerian, Akkadian, Hittite, and Canaanite pantheons. For example, Enlil may be seen as the archetype of the typical storm-god in the ancient Near East. He combines both the benevolent and malevolent characteristics of previous and subsequent storm-gods. At the core of the storm-god's characterization is the geography in which he is venerated. The geography played a major role in determining the way in which the storm-god was perceived. For instance, in the Middle and Upper Euphrates/Tigris region the storm-god was perceived as a fertilizing god sans violence. However, in Syria the god Hadad was understood in terms of lightning, peals of thunder, and destructive rainstorms. Second, Green argues that the storm-god provided the impetus for political stability in the ancient Near East. This idea may best be seen in the veneration of Adad from the Middle and Upper Euphrates. It was Adad who conceived the kings, established their thrones,

and armed them with his weapons. Clearly, the kings likened the roar of battle to that of the storm-god. Likewise, the storm-god functioned as the ideological underpinning of continued conquest and political domination. In contrast, Yahweh's power and political authority actually preceded his identification as a storm-god. Green aptly argues that Yahweh's power and authority was not embedded in the mythical framework but rather came from the historico-social action of the warrior band in southern Canaan. It is through a series of successful conquests that Yahweh becomes fused with the Canaanite god El. Gradually, according to Green, did the settlement bring synthesis to the adherent's conception of Yahweh. Lastly, the author argues that through the evolution of the storm-god's attendants we see the religious process. As an example one may look to Adad during the Old Babylonian period, noticing his associates. The bull, who had appeared only periodically, as well as the nude rain goddess now are seen as full-time companions. In the iconographic and textual materials the bull, dragon, and rain goddess each represent attributes of the storm-god in the religiohistorical process. Green argues persuasively that in addition to the anthropomorphic representations one should also consider cosmic elements such as wind, rain, flood, and lightning bolts as evolving symbols of the storm god. In comparison, Yahweh is presented in the biblical text as possessing elements of the storm-god, yet eschewing many facets of the nature deities. Yahweh's role is presented as not cyclical but within the historical and social sphere. In contrast to the divine attendants of the Near Eastern storm-gods, Yahweh is seen in his role as Creator, and thus the elements serve as his heavenly hosts. Green sums up Yahweh's threefold uniqueness as the Hebrew storm-god. First, he is seen as the only Creator god of all that is created. Second, Yahweh is portrayed as the god who acts in history rather than in a cyclical fashion. Third, Yahweh is the only god who is portrayed as a self-existing god, without the need of attendants.

Green's book is very well written, lucid in its comments and dynamic in its presentation. His methodology is to be commended for its ability to elucidate the reader via sociology, ideology, and geography. The approach combines divergent elements of the storm-god motif into a manageable coherent whole that is quite beneficial for the scholar. I am convinced that over time this work will take its place with notables such as *Der Wettergott in Mesopotamien*, *Baal Zaphon*, *Zeus Kassios*, and *L'iconographie du Dieu de l'orage*. This work would make an excellent text for midlevel graduate studies in Near Eastern studies departments.