

Essay 1

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The similarities between The Baal Cycle and the *Enuma Elish*

The world is filled with different ideas, customs, and religions but the one thing that remains the same throughout civilizations is a power-struggle myth. Throughout time, the struggle for power and creation has been symbolized by a fierce battle between the sky and sea, something proven in both the *Enuma Elish* and The Baal Cycle. The cultures themselves might differ, but when looking at the core themes and tropes of the stories, we can recognize repeating patterns. The similarities between them show that the myth in which a storm god battles a monster is quite similar from one culture to the other.

The likeness of both the *Enuma Elish* and The Baal Cycle begin at the origin with Tiamat and Asherah. In the *Enuma Elish*, Tiamat is referred to as "...maker...she who bore them all..." while in The Baal Cycle, Asherah is known as "Their mother... Lady of the Sea". Tiamat and Asherah have more than just motherhood in common, they are also both known as the primordial waters, a symbolization of the beginning of life across both cultures. Since Tiamat was the one who gave the gods life, she is (in a way) the mother of

Marduk. Asherah may have been a mother to Yam and a sea goddess but it was her son who ruled. Yam, the God of the Sea, ruled the kingdom with a temper similar to Tiamat. Yam is describes as ruling "...the Gods with an iron fist" causing them to "labor and toil under his reign". Yam is painted as a cruel god, one who will not surrender power even at the hands of his mother, something he shares with Tiamat. In the *Enuma Elish*, Tiamat is feared and hated by those around her and that is made clear when Ea tells his grandfather Anshar that "...Tiamat, she who bore us, detests us....and is furious with rage." This parallel sets the tone for the battle to soon come in both myths. Already we can see the similarities line up, and the myths have just gotten started.

At the beginning, we had the creations of the gods, but now we have conflict. In both myths, the gods against the sea are terrified of the power that Tiamat and Yam possess as they keep running away from the fight that lies before them. In The Baal Cycle, the gods react to seeing Yam's messengers by "...lowering Their heads upon Their knees...upon the thrones of Their lordship" but Baal, the major storm god, does not bow down and instead becomes angry. He threatens to kill Yam's messengers and instead lets them live but vows to kill Yam himself. In the *Enuma Elish*, Ea and Anu run away from Tiamat out of fear, very similar to the gods lowering their heads in cowardice in The Baal cycle. The only one not afraid of Tiamat is Marduk, a storm god, who promises that "...I indeed, as your avenger, Am to vanquish Tiamat and save your lives...". Although both stories are from a different culture, they follow a very similar path of heroism and bravery.

A storm god battling a sea monster does not vary in most culture and The Baal Cycle and the *Enuma Elish* are proof of that. When Baal declared war on Yam, he had help from Kothar. Kothar smites Baal two clubs which helps Baal defeat Yam. Marduk also

had help from weapons forged, a bow and arrow which deals the final blow in the destruction of Tiamat. Both battles were over quickly, symbolizing the dominance of the storm and sky over the chaos of the sea. At the end battle, Baal and Marduk made sure to completely decimate their opponent, Baal by making sure that “Yam sinks, Falls to the Earth. His joints fail, his frame collapses” and Marduk by releasing “...the arrow, it tore her belly, It cut through her insides, splitting her heart” and finishes by standing and Tiamat’s leg and “...with his unsparing mace he crushed her skull.” Once the fight ends and victory is gained, Marduk was granted “...kingship over the entire universe... [his] word shall be supreme...” while Baal was proclaimed “...King of the Gods. Lord of the Mountain of Saphon”. Again, we can clearly see the similarities between both myth and to the same extent, between both gods. Both are greatly rewarded for their bravery and both Baal and Marduk gain victory in a battle over the sea.

The similarities keep adding up when Baal and Marduk build a place of rest that doubles as a place of servitude, which is followed by a feast for the gods. Marduk lets the people build him a throne for him to rest in, but Marduk asks for them to construct Babylon instead where the “...great gods took their seats, They set up festive drink, sat to a banquet. After they had made merry with it...”. In The Baal Cycle, Baal builds a temple made from cedar with great mines surrounding it, adorned by silver and gold and when the house is completed, he feasts. Baal calls over the “...Seventy sons of Asherah...the shep Gods...the ewe Goddesses...the bull Gods...the cow Goddesses...the throne Gods...the chair Goddesses...the jar Gods...the jug Goddesses...to drink wine. Until the Gods had eaten and drunk...”. The celebration seems exactly the same, with both Baal and Marduk inviting all the other Gods to drink and be merry at their new place of