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The Book of Job and Winnie-the-Pooh: The Sources and Religion of "Pooh"

by W. M. S. Young

In the plethora of deliberations on the literary criticism of *Winnie-the-Pooh*, few savants, if any, have addressed themselves to one of the most ponderous conundrums which must be asked of any piece of literature. Namely, what are its sources (*Quellen*)? For instance, how could we now understand the conceptual polarity of confrontation vs. interiority (as well as other formulations along these lines, e.g. differentiation vs. nondifferentiation) in the Penta-teuch, if we did not first realize that the female writer of J relied upon the male writer of G, and that her magisterial work was subsequently screwed up by some guy named P, who added E and appended D (Q.E.D.). Thus, the *Polar Conzeptualizationen* in the Pentateuch, though ir-reconcilable to us, are reconcilable when we simply understand the *Quellen*. So, I believe, is the case with *Winnie-the-Pooh*, which has been widely misunderstood on account of the failure of scholars to realize its close relationship to the Book of Job.

The style and ideology of *Winnie-the-Pooh* is clearly a result of an intimate affiliation with the Book of Job. Now the reasons for Milne's obsession with Job are not

entirely clear. Some have related it to Milne's years of marital strife and eventual divorce. Others suggest that Milne felt betrayed by his closest friends when he had a toothache. A more speculative suggestion--though undoubtedly correct--is that Milne just liked the number seven. Whatever the reason, the profound influence of Job on *Winnie-the-Pooh* cannot be doubted. This can be illustrated by a few illustrative illustrations.

One of the outstanding features in the style of *Winnie-the-Pooh* is the little bear's use of non-sensical language. For instance, Pooh says, "It is either Two Woozles and one, as it might be, Wizzle, or Two, as it might be, Wizzles and one, if so it is, Woozle." The similarity of this remark to countless verses in Job can hardly be denied. One also wonders whether Milne's use of odd spelling, for instance the message of Christopher Robin, "GON OUT BACKSON BISY BACKSON," was not influenced by the peculiar mix of Hebrew, Aramaic, Phoenician, Ugaritic, Arabic and German which accounts for Job's peculiar spellings. Thus, "GON OUT BACKSON BISY BACKSON" hardly needs emendation to «BACK OUT GONE SOON BUSY GONE SOON» when we understand the

dialectical influence of the Book of Job on Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh*. Further examples of the Germano-semitic influence on the language of Pooh would be superfluous. Limitations of space prevent me from adding them anyway.

Finally, consider Pooh's poetry. Pooh, excruciated by ponderings as to the whatness and howness of things, is strikingly similar to Job. This becomes unquestioningly clear and unmistakable in Pooh's diatribe on the days of the week:

On Monday, when the sun is hot,
I wonder to myself a lot:
"Now is it true, or is it not,
That what is which and which is
what?"

On Tuesday, when it hails and snows,
The feeling on me grows and grows
That hardly anybody knows
If those are these or these are those ...

One scholar has characterized Job as "*Wisdom* (wisdom) in *Revolt* (revolt)." It is clear that Pooh's poetry is heavily indoctrinated by Job's revolting (Revolting) wisdom (Wisdom), that is, his *Revolutionärweisheit*.

Thus, from a brief examination of Milne's *Quellen* it becomes clear that Pooh is more than a "silly little bear." Rather, Pooh suffers from all the *Angst* of his Jobian predecessor, as any careful reader of *House at Pooh Corner* will undoubtedly espy.

Birthpangs of the "New World Order"

Professor Reuven Kimelman was overheard referring to himself as "*famisht*."

(*Special Correspondent*)

Mesopotamian Settlement in the Upper Midwest

Dr. Kyle Schrift, Director of the Center for Assyriologico-American Research, has announced a major new finding, the result of a twelve-year study of American place names. By all indications, colonists from Babylonia established a network of settlements in prehistoric Wisconsin. Such place names as Muskegon (obviously founded at the behest of Meskiagnunnak, known to us from the Sumerian King List) make the connection clear.

To be sure, not every comparison Dr. Schrift cites will stand the test of time. Some such *Mischname* as *Amil-warad-ki must surely underlie Milwaukee, and one has no quibble with the scribal error which presumably changed Sargon into Sheboygan. But is the liquid *l > r* shift really enough to explain Gilgamesh > Green Bay? It is equally difficult to agree that the name of the well-known Bong Recreation Area, off I-94, is a remnant of the pre-Sumerian language of Mesopotamia.

Nonetheless, Dr. Schrift's major contention must stand. It is buttressed by a long-forgotten article of Oppenheim's (written after a day-trip up from the Oriental Institute for beer and brats) pointing out that the name Wisconsin itself is nothing more than the postulated Protoliterate form of the word *muškenum*. The fact that fish is a basic staple of both regions, and that the state fish of Wisconsin is the muskie, lends extra support to the contention. Oppenheim's, too, was the basic insight, which came to him after hoisting a couple at the State Fair, that suggested the entire line of thought: *Beer is sacred to both cultures*. No doubt Professor Schrift's second job, on the night shift at the Stevens Point Brewery, prompted his own most welcome contribution to Americo-Mesopotamian studies.

Michael Carasik

Genesis 11:1-9 and the Leaning Tower of Pisa by Marc Brettler

(In memory of Marvin Caleb Rosner-Brettler, a faithful friend, who exemplified 2 Kgs 8:13aβ.)

Hermann Gunkel suggested that the story of the Tower of Babel (like everything else in the Bible) is comprised of two sources. This theory has been disregarded in recent scholarship due to the influence of the charts in Fokkelman's *Narrative Art in Genesis*,¹ which have left most readers too tired to put up a fight. However, Gunkel's hypothesis was quite popular at the turn of the century; it is accepted, for example, in Skinner's Genesis commentary.² According to this reconstruction, one version is an etiology of the name Babel; the other story, using as its *leitwort* the *hiphil* of פָּרַץ, told the story of a tower called Pis, which Gunkel interpreted as "dispersion."

Recently, scholars (in their zeal to be good religious people

and mediocre Bible critics) have become skeptical of source criticism in general and of the division of this pericope in particular. There is some justification to their skepticism; after all, until the recent *Book of J* by Harold Bloom³ was unearthed, we had no evidence for the existence of a complete, independent source. Furthermore, American professors found it embarrassing to have to discuss "Pis" in class.

As always when there's a problem in biblical studies, an emendation is called for. We propose the insertion of the words על בן קרא שם המגדל פצה.

This emendation confirms the typical artistic depictions of the tower, and proves that the original story was about the Leaning Tower of Pisa. After the exile, however, the Italian provenance of the story was forgotten, and the text was assumed to be a reference to pizza, known to be popular with the returnees after a hard day building the walls of Jerusalem. (The use of פצה with food in Ezekiel 2:8 obviously facilitated this confusion.) At some time during the Roman period, a scribe thought that this verse could be used as a prooftext to encourage

¹ J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic and Structural Analysis* (Amsterdam, 1975), 11-45, esp. 20 and 22. In all fairness, however, I must mention the scholarly consensus that the analysis of the Samuel material in his more recent books makes the Genesis charts look like child's play. Careful observation of works by my own children have enabled me to confirm this point.

² John Skinner, *Genesis*, ICC (Edinburgh, 1910), 223. This volume is to be exempted from the late Professor Held's interpretation of ICC as "International Criminal Commentary."

³ I have never read this work, but that is no reason not to talk about it. I apologize for not footnoting it anyway, as if I *had* read it, in accordance with normal scholarly practice.

Jews to eat pizza out, an obvious violation of ׀ַגְּבִינֹת ׀ַכֹּר" ׀, and therefore deleted it.

Since this compelling argument nowhere violates the accepted canons of biblical criticism, it may be considered proved. Thus Gunkel's observations, even though they are written in Gothic script, are basically correct.⁴

A Sneak Peek at AJS '91

Intrepid reporting gives *Journal* readers some advance titles from the 1991 Association for Jewish Studies convention:

Medieval Philosophy and the Holocaust: A Feminist Perspective
The Rainbow Coalition and Moorish Spain
The AJS: "It's My Party and I'll Whine If I Want To"
Miami Beach and Palm Springs: The American Sinai
John Strugnell: A Torquemada for the 90s?
Layla and the Bavli: Talmudic Proof that Clapton *is* God!
Tune In, Turn On, Drop Out: Mysticism and Hallucinogenics
The Lithuanian-Moabite Dialect Isogloss
Maimonides' "Guide of the Perplexed": *Another* New Approach

Debbie Feuerberg

(With thanks to Donna LeClerc and Aryeh Cohen. The author has graciously donated her fee for this article to provide a memorial plaque for the table Rob Eisen used to sit at in the Brandeis Judaica Reading Room.)

Position Announcement

The Near Eastern and Judaic Studies department of Brandeis University announces that, pending an upcoming hiring thaw, a tenure-track position in Northwest Semitics is scheduled to be filled for the 1992-1993 academic year.

The successful applicant will be expected to teach Biblical Hebrew, Aramaic, Ugaritic, Amharic, Moabite, Amorite, Eblaite, Elamite, Mandaean, Sabaeen, Chaldaean, Epigraphic South Arabic, Proto-Semitic and Afro-Asiatic on the graduate and undergraduate levels. In addition, the candidate should expect to occasionally have to teach a class in the *Iliad*, the *Aeneid*, *Beowulf* and *Catch-22* to a large group of incoming freshmen whose greatest previous intellectual challenge has been remembering what time "The Simpsons" comes on.

Applicants of African-American, Hispanic, Native American, Native Hawaiian, Inuit or female extraction are particularly encouraged to apply, especially if their fathers once taught in the department.

(M.C.)

⁴ I would like to thank the Bertucci Foundation, without whom this research would not have been necessary.

Mysticism and Eschatology in *The Cat in the Hat* and the Deuteronomic *Cat in the Hat Comes Back* by Dr. Seuss

by Shaul Magid

The Cat in the Hat (CH) and *The Cat in the Hat Comes Back* (CHCB) have become classics in children's literature. We have reason to believe, however, that these documents were originally esoteric theological works, written under a state of extreme creative and religious persecution during the Johnson administration. We will attempt a Straussian reading of these two texts in order to shed light on their theological, eschatological and mystical implications.

Perhaps the first comment on these texts should address their progressive nature. CH takes place completely indoors; the outside environment is only seen from a window. CHCB, however, takes place completely outdoors; the inside of the house is never seen or referred to. We believe this distinction represents a progression from a cultural view of religion (inside a man-made dwelling) to a naturalistic view of religion (outside the house). Furthermore, CH takes place during a rain storm, while CHCB takes place during a snow storm. Rain is traditionally symbolic of sustenance in this world while snow often represents purity and the entrance into the messianic era. Hence, CH depicts the pre-messianic world, one of man-made culture and the separation of man from his environment. CHCB, however, represents the unity of man and nature, the pure pristine state of *unio mystica* that is the culmination of the mystical experience.

Let us now move directly to the texts themselves. CH is essentially a rational treatise, the Cat representing the Godhead, who is at once *Middat HaRachamim* and *Middat HaDin*. The

nature of the Providence in this rational text is one of simultaneous chaos and confusion. The revelatory experience of Sally and her brother takes the form of the all powerful Cat, using, destroying and fixing all of the material objects in the house. Although the fish (who represents the pure rational human will) constantly tries to intervene and destroy the religious experience of Sally and her brother, the Cat overcomes this purely rational temptation by constantly introducing new elements into the narrative. After failing dramatically:

Then he [Cat] fell on his head!
He came down with a bump,
From up there on the ball.
And Sally and I, we saw all the things
fall

the Cat is immediately challenged by the rational intellect (fish):

"Now look what you did!
Said the fish to the cat.
Now look at this house,
Look at this, look at that!"

The Cat's solution to this cosmological crisis is to introduce a plurality in the Godhead in the form of Thing one and Thing two. These two products of the emanation of the Cat (notice the physical resemblance between Thing one, Thing two and the Cat) now proceed to create a second level of chaos, this time using kites, which signify a progressive move to the outdoors (nature) which will yield to a naturalism in CHCB.

CH is clearly a critique of mysticism. In desperation (and yielding to the will of the intellect [fish]), Sally and her brother trap

Thing one and Thing two and force them to create order out of the chaos they created. The creation of order is beyond the capacities of Thing One and Thing Two and is completed by the Cat himself. The author is clearly a positivist, taking the myth of God in the Cat and having him create order by using a man-made machine. The mother coming home symbolizes the restoration of consciousness, the supremacy of the intellect (the fish is smiling) and the renewed hope in the coming of the future redemption (the children return to their places gazing out of the window).

The deuteronomic sequel CHCB is of a completely different nature. It is clearly indicative of a spiritualist, mystical critique of the rationalist CH. Besides the snow and the mystical unity of Sally and her brother with nature, CHCB introduces a whole mystical system of a radical plurality in the Godhead in the breakdown of Thing one and Thing two into infinite "Things." The revelation in CHCB is significantly more sophisticated than its rational

predecessor. Chaos is created not through material objects but through colors. The colors, which threaten the pristine quality of the white snow, endanger the mystical unfolding of the unification of man and God. The "Things," serving as channels through which God's mercy is revealed, purify the snow and return under the hat of the Cat. At the moment of salvation, "the whitening of our sins like snow," the plurality of the Godhead ("Things") disappears under the *Keter* (crown) of the Divine Being. CHCB is a significant contribution to the eschatological dialogue. As well, we see how our author offers a scathing critique of rationalism and positivism. The fish (intellect) plays a minor role and the creation of order is not accomplished by the use of technology but by the direct intervention of the emanation of God. Dr. Seuss' work is post-modernism at its finest. He lures the reader into a critique of western society and offers a mystical eschatological vision of the future.

Shaul Magid is the author of "What Color is an Egg?", an extended meditation on the theory of Platonic forms inspired by Dr. Seuss's "Green Eggs and Ham," to be published this spring by Yale University Press.

Association for Jocular Studies Midwest Caucus

The Midwesterners Soon/Hopefully In Academic Careers (MSHIAC) will have its bi-weekly meeting on Feb. 30th at 2:00 PM in Usdan Cafeteria. The topic for discussion will be "Impaired vehicular habits of the *Arctous Erous homo sapiens*." Membership in MSHIAC is open to all who can:

- Pronounce "Chicago"
- Explain on which side of the road one passes another car
- In one sentence or less, explain how one makes a left turn into oncoming traffic
- Explain the proper use of headlights
- Identify the correct generic name for "cola"
- Explain what you do when: you get to a toll booth; someone smiles at you; someone asks you for directions or the time
- Explain what a freeway is
- Discuss the origins of Bozo.

Deep dish pizza and beer are served at all meetings.

Cuneiform Corner

For years scholars have puzzled over why the laws of the Code of Hammurabi are never referred to in actual court cases or any other real-life situation. Now, however (in a toilet tank at the University of Pennsylvania Museum), a collection of letters with a suspicious resemblance to laws from the Code has been discovered. Each letter begins with a common salutation formula, "To Ibbi-Sin, the great, the all-powerful ... "; the editors have thought it best to translate this simply as "Dear Ibbi-Sin." Unusually for letters, each contains a colophon identifying it as being from the series "He who seeks knowledge of the whole land of Sumer and Akkad." For this publication, we have chosen the freer translation, "The Mesopotamian Enquirer." Herewith, a sampling of letters from the series

M.C.

DEAR IBBI-SIN,

My former employer brought a charge of murder against me, but of course couldn't prove it. What should I do?

UPSET IN URUK

Dear Upset,

Put him to death.

DEAR IBBI-SIN,

I'm not the snooty kind, but I can't help noticing that my neighbor is harboring a fugitive slave in his house. What do you recommend?

IRRITATED IN ISIN

Dear Irritated,

He ought to be put to death.

DEAR IBBI-SIN,

I'm a contractor. Unfortunately, one of the houses I built recently wasn't strong enough and it collapsed, killing the owner's son. I feel terrible. How can I make it up to him?

UNEASY IN UR

Dear Uneasy,

Why not put *your* son to death?

DEAR IBBI-SIN,

Imagine my surprise when I woke up in the middle of the night and discovered that someone was making a breach in the wall of my house! Can't anything be done about this sort of thing?

LIGHT SLEEPER IN LARSA

Dear Light,

Put him to death in front of the breach and wall him in.

DEAR IBBI-SIN,

I'm a šugitum-priestess. I've borne children to my husband and been good to him for many years. Now suddenly he wants to leave me for a naritum-priestess! I've tried to reason with him but he acts as if he's possessed. He won't even return my dowry, let alone half of our field, orchard and goods. What can I do?

NETTLED IN NIPPUR

Dear Nettled,

Your husband seriously needs professional help. I suggest he see an asû or an āšipu at once. If that doesn't work, put the bum to death.

IBBI-SIN

FROM THE NON-FICTION FILE**Smoke Gets in Your Eyes**

The tobacco lobby has missed a bet by not using Psalm 80:5 in their advertising. According to the Reverend Charles Augustus Briggs and the International Critical Commentary, it's to be translated, "How long dost Thou smoke during the prayer of thy people?"

Contributed in memory of the good old days when Joel Lehman was a Bible grad student instead of a Harvard lawyer. Joel was well-known for his creative paper topics, including "You Go Yahweh and I'll Go Mine," and "Jeremiah was a Deuteronomic Bullfrog."

(*Marc Brettler*)

All's Jake

J. Meg. 4:1 (end) discusses Ezra's regulation that women should talk with each other $\text{וְיַדְבֹּרְנָה$. In the Neusner translation, *The Talmud of the Land of Israel* (vol. 19, p. 149), this is taken to mean $\text{וּבְיַת הַבְּנַיִם}$, "in the synagogue," a strange place for Ezra to encourage conversation. But as the *Shulhan Arukh* (*Even Ha-Ezer* 22:13) makes clear, it really means וּבְיַת הַסֵּוֹט , "in the outhouse." We hope Prof. Neusner doesn't often get them confused....

(*Ruth Langer*)

Hipness on High

According to two of the greatest Jewish minds of the 20th century (or their translators), God is:

"a happening" (A. J. Heschel, *The Prophets*, vol. 2, p. 57);

"with it" (Martin Buber, *The Prophetic Faith*, p. 48).

(*Michael Carasik*)

They're No Dummies

Officially anointed by NEJS faculty members or similarly authoritative sources as "not stupid" (in alphabetical order):

Joseph Albo
Mitchell Dahood
God
Moses Maimonides
Plotinus

(*Aryeh Cohen*)

Epigraphy for Dollars

Dr. Philemon Pledge of the Southern North Carolina Theological Seminary, after years of analysis, has finally concluded that the Gezer inscription is not an agricultural calendar but merely a set of bowling scores. The break-through in Dr. Pledge's work, stymied for years because the numbers did not work out correctly, came when he realized that bowlers in the Amphictyonic League would have used twelve pins instead of ten.

(*M. C.*)

THE JOCLAR BOOKSHELF

UNTO YOUR SEED FOREVER: Genesis 12-50 and the Disfunctional Jewish Family. By Dr. Leo Busghetti.

Capitalizing on the insight that your parents are really responsible for whatever is wrong with you, Dr. Busghetti traces the problems of today's Jewish family back to Abraham, Isaac, and especially Jacob. Numerous topics are discussed, including The Sacrificial Instinct, Wife-Sister Syndrome, Pottage Training, etc.

(*M. C.*)

In our next issue:

BEN SOMMER on Academic Bicoastalism
JULIAN UNGAR on Schizophrumkeit