***Ruaḥ ’Elohim* in Genesis 1:2 in Light of Phoenician Cosmogonies: A Tradition’s History**

*Abstract*: Genesis 1 has been the subject of many comparative studies, focusing especially on its similarity to *Enuma Elish*. However, verse 2 in this chapter, which has no parallels in Mesopotamian cosmogonies whatsoever, deserves a separate discussion. The closest parallel to this verse is found in the Phoenician world. While several scholars, such as Gunkel, Eissfeldt, Moscati, and Koch, have noted briefly this similarity, they have not collected and analyzed all the testimonies and fragments preserved from the Phoenician world. The present study attempts to review the entire corpus of extant Phoenician sources within the context of the ancient Near East (especially Egyptian) coupled with an understanding of the Greco-Roman world in which the Phoenician traditions were preserved, in order to trace the tradition’s history of the primordial wind (רוח) through the cosmogonies of the Phoenician world and Gen 1:2. This analysis may have important ramifications for the widespread discussions of pneumatology in the literatures of the Second Temple and early Christianity.

*Key Words*: Genesis, Philo of Byblos, Enuma Elish, Spirit of God

The first chapter of Genesis has been the subject of numerous comparative studies, many of which specifically address the separation of the upper and lower waters and the creation of the great sea beasts on the fifth day. Such studies cast these elements of the account as a polemic against Near Eastern narratives which tell of a struggle between a chief god and the primordial waters and which subsequently describe the creation of the world from those same waters, such as the epic of Enuma Elish.[[1]](#footnote-2) Despite this extensive scholarly attention, the second verse of Genesis 1, “the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while רוח אלהים (a wind from God) swept over the face of the waters,” deserves its own analysis; this verse bears no relation to the act of creation described in Enuma Elish and is in fact quite unique in Ancient Near Eastern literature. The verse describes an act of *creatio ex materia*, that is, creation from a primordial matter – an earth that already existed, described as a dark and formless void, with “רוח אלהים sweeping over the face of the waters” for some undisclosed reason.

Some scholars have sought parallels for this verse in Enuma Elish,[[2]](#footnote-3) others have sought these in Egyptian cosmogony.[[3]](#footnote-4) It seems, however, that the closest tradition to Gen 1:2 was preserved in the Phoenician world – that is, the cities of the Lebanese coast such as Tyre, Sidon, and Byblos, civilizations which had greater affinities to the ancient Israelites in terms of language, culture, and location.

Posing a challenge to this line of inquiry is the fact that hardly a piece of textual evidence of the literature and mythology from these Phoenician cities has survived. Some information has come down to us in the form of Phoenician inscriptions, but the bulk of the evidence is to be found in the writings of Greco-Roman authors who preserved Greek reformulations of this literature.[[4]](#footnote-5) In order to discover the ancient traditions embedded in this material, we must mine the ancient sources through comparative and internal analyses, just as scholars scour the writings of Josephus for more ancient of the Biblical and early Second Temple periods.

The primary testimony to the Phoenician tradition of theרוח in Creation was briefly discussed some years ago by scholars such as Gunkel and Eissfeldt. Nevertheless, a comprehensive treatment of the remaining accounts from the Phoenician world and other relevant sources from the ancient period is still a desideratum in the scholarship.[[5]](#footnote-6) From the title of his 1947 article in *JBL*, Sabatino Moscati apparently intended to focus on theרוח in Genesis and the Phoenician tradition. He did not, however, mention a single Phoenician source.[[6]](#footnote-7) His primary concern was interpreting the Hebrew phrase רוח אלהים in light of other Biblical sources, an issue which has elicited the attention of a number of scholars and traditional Biblical interpreters, as I will address shortly. Klaus Koch cites a broader collection of Phoenician sources, but his discussion is focused on the later development of the concept of time in post-Biblical literature.[[7]](#footnote-8) The current study attempts to review the entire corpus of extant Phoenician sources within the context of the ancient Near East coupled with an understanding of the Greco-Roman world in which the Phoenician traditions were preserved, in order to trace the tradition’s history of the primordial wind (רוח) through the cosmogonies of the Phoenician world and Gen 1:2. This analysis may have important ramifications for the widespread discussions of pneumatology in the literatures of the Second Temple and early Christianity, a point I will briefly address below.

**II. The Testimony of Philo of Byblos**

A significant amount of information about Phoenician religion and mythology is provided by a native Phoenician figure writing in Greek by the name of Philo of Byblos, born in the second half of the first century C.E.[[8]](#footnote-9) While his accounts have not been preserved in their entirety, we know them from relatively long excerpts appearing in the writings of Eusebius. According to Philo’s own account, he was preserving an ancient text that had been transcribed by a Phoenician named Sanchuniathon (FGrH 790 F 2 = Eusebius *PE* 1.9.30–1.10.2):

τὴν τῶν ὅλων ἀρχὴν ὑποτίθεται ἀέρα ζοφώδη καὶ πνευματώδη ἢ πνοὴν ἀέρος ζοφώδους καὶ χάος θολερὸν ἐρεβῶδες· ταῦτα δὲ εἶναι ἄπειρα καὶ διὰ πολὺν αἰῶνα μὴ ἔχειν πέρας. “ὅτε δέ”, φησίν, “ἠράσθη τὸ πνεῦμα τῶν ἰδίων ἀρχῶν, καὶ ἐγένετο σύγκρασις, ἡ πλοκὴ ἐκείνη ἐκλήθη Πόθος· αὕτη δὲ ἀρχὴ κτίσεως ἀπάντων· αὐτὸ δὲ οὐκ ἐγίνωσκε τὴν αὑτοῦ κτίσιν. καὶ ἐκ τῆς αὐτοῦ συμπλοκῆς τοῦ πνεύματος ἐγένετο Μώτ. τοῦτό τινές φασιν ἰλύν, οἱ δὲ ὑδατώδους μίξεως σῆψιν. καὶ ἐκ ταύτης ἐγένετο πᾶσα σπορὰ κτίσεως καὶ γένεσις τῶν ὅλων. ἦν δέ τινα ζῶια οὐκ ἔχοντα αἴσθησιν, ἐξ ὧν ἐγένετο ζῶια νοερά· καὶ ἐκλήθη Ζοφασημίν, τοῦτ᾽ ἔστιν οὐρανοῦ κατόπται. καὶ ἀνεπλάσθη ὁμοίως ὠιοῦ σχήματι. καὶ ἐξέλαμψε Μώτ, ἥλιός τε καὶ σελήνη ἀστέρες τε καὶ ἄστρα μεγάλα”.

He posits as the source of all things a dark and windy (πνευματώδη) air or a gust of dark air and a muddy and gloomy chaos. These things were limitless and, for ages, had no boundary. He says, “But when the wind conceived an erotic desire for its own sources and a mixing together took place, that intertwining was called Desire (Πόθος). And this was the source for the creation of all things. It itself was not aware of its own creation. And from his entwining with the wind Mot came into being. Some say that this is mud, others the putrefaction of the liquid mixture. And from this mixture came all the sowing of creation and the birth of all things. There were animals with no sensation, from which came animals with intelligence. And they were called Zophasemin, which means observers of the heavens (οὐρανοῦ κατόπται). And they had the shape of an egg. And Mot shone forth and the sun and the moon and the stars and the luminous bodies and the great stars.”[[9]](#footnote-10)

Like that of Genesis, this cosmogony begins with a dark air. While similar motifs can be found in other stories from the ancient world, the story of the *wind* as the first matter, which produced all of Creation in an act of autoeroticism, is quite unique among the cosmogony traditions of the ancient Near East. Despite writing in Greek, Philo records a number of Semitic words, testifying to concepts known to us from western Semitic mythology. The Ζοφασημίν are mentioned here following the appearance of the celestial lights, apparently a reference to a Semitic term *צופי שמים* or “observers of the heavens” portraying the appearance of light after the primordial darkness[[10]](#footnote-11); likewise the term Mot (Μώτ), which seems to be related to the Semitic word for death, though it is not identical here with the god of the underworld as in Ugaritic mythology.[[11]](#footnote-12)

Following the cosmogony cited above, Philo lists a series of pairs who were the first inventors. This genre of *technogony* (paralleling the list of inventors in Genesis 4) is rather unique in the ancient Near East, and seems to be characteristic of the earliest Levantine traditions, though our primary focus is on the cosmogony reflected in the beginning of the list of pairs by Philo of Byblos.[[12]](#footnote-13) This seems to be either a separate cosmogonic tradition of the primordial wind or a variant version of the same tradition (FGrH 790 F 2 = Eusebius *PE* 1.10.7):

εἶτά φησι γεγενῆσθαι ἐκ τοῦ Κολπία ἀνέμου καὶ γυναικὸς Βάαυ (τοῦτο δὲ νύκτα ἑρμηνεύει) Αἰῶνα καὶ Πρωτόγονον θνητοὺς ἄνδρας οὕτω καλουμένους· εὑρεῖν δὲ τὸν Αἰῶνα τὴν ἀπὸ δένδρων τροφήν. ἐκ τούτων τοὺς γενομένους κληθῆναι Γένος καὶ Γενεάν, καὶ οἰκῆσαι τὴν Φοινίκην· αὐχμῶν δὲ γενομένων, τὰς χεῖρας ὀρέγειν εἰς οὐρανὸν πρὸς τὸν ἥλιον· “τοῦτον γάρ”, φησίν, “θεὸν ἐνόμιζον μόνον οὐρανοῦ κύριον Βεελσάμην καλοῦντες, ὅ ἐστι παρὰ Φοίνιξι κύριος οὐρανοῦ...”

And then he says that from the Kolpia[[13]](#footnote-14) wind and his wife Baau, which he interprets as being the night, were born Aion (Eternity) and Protogonos (First-Born), who were mortal men called by these names. Aion discovered the food that grows on trees. Those born to these two he calls Genos and Generation, and they settled Phoenicia. But when there were droughts, they stretched their arms toward the heaven, to the sun. ‘For the latter,’ he says, ‘they held to be the only god, the lord of heaven, calling him Beelsamen, which in Phoenician means lord of heaven, or Zeus among the Greeks.’[[14]](#footnote-15)

Philo here describes the primordial wind as a personal figure, following Euhemeristic ideas.[[15]](#footnote-16) Alongside it appears the name Baau (Βάαυ), which Philo interprets as darkness. As many readers have noticed, the concept is close to the Biblical one of תהו ובהו or “formless void,” but the term does not seem to have originated in the biblical literature; rather, both sources have inherited an ancient cosmogonic tradition belonging to the western Semitic world.[[16]](#footnote-17)

**III. The Primordial Wind in Greek Philosophy**

Despite the numerous affinities between the traditions mentioned by Philo and Genesis, the late date of the former has led generations of scholars to regard his testimony with some suspicion.[[17]](#footnote-18) Albert Baumgarten suggests that Philo’s narrative was an attempt to adapt ancient ideas to the world of Greek philosophy and science, where the concept of πνεῦμα (wind/breath) as a fundamental element in the cosmos is also found, especially in Stoic and Neo-Platonic thought, which dominated in the time of Philo of Byblos.[[18]](#footnote-19)

Anaximenes, a pre-Socratic philosopher of the sixth century B.C.E., had already described the air or the wind (πνεῦμα in Greek, similar to the wind described by Philo of Byblos that desired for its own sources), and his description was preserved in citations by various authors (F 2 DK = Aëtius 1.3.4):

Ἀναξιμένης Εὐρυστράτου Μιλήσιος ἀρχὴν τῶν ὄντων ἀέρα ἀπεφήνατο· ἐκ γὰρ τούτου πάντα γίγνεσθαι καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν πάλιν ἀναλύεσθαι. “οἶον ἡ ψυχή, φησίν, ἡ ἡμετέρα ἀὴρ οὖσα συγκρατεῖ ἡμᾶς, καὶ ὅλον τὸν κόσμον πνεῦμα καὶ ἀὴρ περιέχει” (λέγεται δὲ συνωνύμως ἀὴρ καὶ πνεῦμα).

Anaximenes son ofEurystratus of Miletus asserted that the principle of beings is air. For it is out of this that all things come about and it is into this that they are dissolved in turn. He says, “Just as our soul, which is air, dominates us, so too wind (πνεῦμα) and air surround the whole world” (‘air’ and ‘wind’ are being used synonymously) […][[19]](#footnote-20)

Anaximenes’ wind is an unlimited primordial matter that can take on various forms and thus transform into all the elements of nature (by a process of either refraction or condensation).[[20]](#footnote-21) Stoic philosophy, which developed during the Hellenistic period and spread throughout the Roman world, also gave the term πνεῦμα (wind/breath) a fundamental role in its explanations for the physical world. The Stoics, and particularly Chrysippus of Soli, the third head of that school, conceived of the *pneuma* as the active unifying principle which provides matter with qualities or form, as the human soul activates an inanimate body.[[21]](#footnote-22)

We cannot rule out the possibility that Philo of Byblos chose the cosmogony he did because it suited philosophical or literary ideas circulating at the time, and of which he was certainly aware. For example, it is possible that the metaphor of the Desire (Πόθος)—used by Philo to express the longing of the wind for its own sources—was related to Hesiod’s *Eros* (*Theogony* 120-22).[[22]](#footnote-23) There is, however, no clear evidence of the influence of Stoic ideas on Philo’s cosmogony. The account lacks features that are central to Stoic explanations of the genesis of the cosmos and its cycles, such as the “creative fire” (πῦρ τεχνικόν), the destruction of the world in conflagration (ἐκπύρωσις) and its reconstruction (διακόσμησις).[[23]](#footnote-24) The excerpt from Philo, cited above gives the impression of being influenced by a mythological narrative far more than a philosophical or scientific explanation of the origin of the world. Furthermore, if we wish to compare Philo’s cosmogony to that of the Stoics, we cannot ignore the Phoenician or Cilician origin of several of the heads of the Stoic school, such as Zeno of Citium, considered the founder of Stoicism; Zeno was even known as “the Phoenician” due to his Cypriot origin and it may be that Stoic thought contains some holdovers from Phoenician mythology.[[24]](#footnote-25)

**IV. Additional Phoenician Testimonies**

In addition to Philo, the central elements of the mythological narrative of the wind exist in two additional Phoenician cosmogonies that are largely absent from commentaries on Genesis. Both are mentioned by the philosopher Damascius, who was active in the late fifth and early sixth centuries C.E. Damascius was the last head of the Platonic academy in Athens but, as evident from his name, was originally from a Syrian milieu, and preserved a significant number of later versions of ancient Near Eastern traditions.[[25]](#footnote-26) One cosmogony Damascius ascribed to the Phoenician writer Mochos (FGrH 784 F 4 = Damascius *de Princ*. 125 c [I p. 323 Ruelle]):[[26]](#footnote-27)

[…] τὴν Φοινίκων εὑρίσκομεν κατὰ Μῶχον μυθολογίαν, Αἰθὴρ ἦν τὸ πρῶτον καὶ ᾽Αὴρ αἱ δύο αὗται ἀρχαί, ἐξ ὧν γεννᾶται Οὐλωμὸς ὁ νοητὸς θεός, αὐτὸ (οἶμαι) τὸ ἄκρον τοῦ νοητοῦ. ἐξ οὗ ἑαυτῶι συνελθόντος γεννηθῆναί φασι Χουσωρὸν ἀνοιγέα πρῶτον, εἶτα ὠόν· τοῦτο μὲν (οἶμαι) τὸν νοητὸν νοῦν λέγοντες, τὸν δὲ ἀνοιγέα Χουσωρὸν τὴν νοητὴν δύναμιν ἅτε τὴν ἀδιάκριτον φύσιν, εἰ μὴ ἄρα μετὰ τὰς δύο ἀρχὰς τὸ μὲν ἄκρον ἐστὶν ῎Ανεμος ὁ εἷς, τὸ δὲ μέσον οἱ δύο ἄνεμοι Λίψ τε καὶ Νότος· ποιοῦσι γάρ πως καὶ τούτους πρὸ τοῦ Οὐλωμοῦ. ὁ δὲ Οὐλωμὸς αὐτὸς ὁ νοητὸς εἴη νοῦς, ὁ δὲ ἀνοιγεὺς Χουσωρὸς ἡ μετὰ τὸ νοητὸν πρώτη τάξις, τὸ δὲ ὠὸν οὐρανός· λέγεται γὰρ ἐξ αὐτοῦ ῥαγέντος εἰς δύο γενέσθαι Οὐρανὸς καὶ Γῆ, τῶν διχοτομημάτων ἑκάτερον.

[…] I found the mythology of the Phoenicians, according to Mochos, to be as such: at the beginning there was Aether and Air, two principles themselves, from whom Oulomos (Οὐλωμός) was born, the intelligible god, himself, I think, the peak of the intelligible. From him, they say, mating with himself, was born first Chousoron (Χουσωρόν), the opener, then an egg; the latter, I think, they call the intelligible intellect, and the opener Chousoron they call the intelligible force, as it was the first to differentiate undifferentiated nature. Unless after these two principles the highest is the one Wind, while the middle are the two winds Lips and Notos - for they make even these somehow precede Oulomos. As for Oulomos, he would be the intelligible intellect himself, and the opener Chousoros would be the first order after the intelligible, and the egg would be the sky; for they say that Ouranos (Sky) and Ge (Earth) were born from the egg as it broke in two, each one from one of the two halves.[[27]](#footnote-28)

The tradition brought by Mochos provides further details absent from Philo’s account that seem to belong to the ancient world, and so he does not rely on Philo. Mochos uses the term Oulomos, which was not a Greek word, but rather a Greek adaptation of the Phoenician עלֹם *ulom*, meaning, like its Biblical cognate עולם, “eternity,” “days of yore,” or, more generally, “time,” and seems here to refer to the everlasting god, a phrase also found in the Bible (אל עולם, Gen 21:33).[[28]](#footnote-29) Another ancient concept preserved in this tradition is Χουσωρόν, known to us from Ugaritic origins as Kothar, the Ugaritic craft-god.[[29]](#footnote-30) Since references to Kothar grew increasingly rare as the first millennium C.E. progressed, there is no doubt that Mochos has preserved echoes of an ancient tradition, and is not simply relating concepts from the Hellenistic world.[[30]](#footnote-31) According to Mochos, the air or the wind is the fundamental element of the world, from which all being was formed. This cosmogony, a story of the formation of the world, is also a theogony, a story of the formation of the gods, similar to many other cosmogonic traditions from the ancient world. After the wind came Oulomos, that is, the everlasting god, followed by Χουσωρόν / Kothar, the craft-god. Philo, too, knew of a story that posited an everlasting god as the second being to come into existence, but he translated the name into Greek as Αἰών (identical in meaning to the Biblical עולם), and portrayed him as a mortal, including the name in the list of the first human inventors after the wind.

The second cosmogony was described by Damascius as a Sidonian tradition, cited in the name of Eudemos (FGrH 784 F 4 = Damascius *de Princ*. 125 c [I p. 323 Ruelle]):

Σιδώνιοι δὲ κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν συγγραφέα (scil. Εὐδημον) πρὸ πάντων Χρόνον ὑποτίθενται καὶ Πόθον καὶ ᾽Ομίχλην. Πόθου δὲ καὶ ᾽Ομίχλης μιγέντων ὡς δυεῖν ἀρχῶν ᾽Αέρα γενέσθαι καὶ Αὐραν, ᾽Αέρα μὲν <τὸ> ἄκρατον τοῦ νοητοῦ παραδηλοῦντες, Αὐραν δὲ τὸ ἐξ αὐτοῦ κινούμενον τοῦ νοητοῦ ζωτικὸν προτύπωμα. πάλιν δὲ ἐκ τούτων ἀμφοῖν ὠιόν γεννηθῆναι, κατὰ τὸν νοῦν (οἶμαι) τὸν νοητόν.

The Sidonians, according to the same writer (*scil.* Eudemos) set before everything Time, Desire, and Mist, and they say that from the union of Desire and Mist, as dual principles, emerged Air and Breeze, implying that Air is the unmixed part of the intelligible, whereas Breeze, moving out of it (i.e., of Air), is the vital pattern (prototype) of the intelligible. And they say that, in turn, from these two an egg was born, corresponding, I think, to the intelligible intellect.[[31]](#footnote-32)

Here, too, the wind is described as the primordial creative force, but here it is preceded by Χρόνος (Time), who seems to be the everlasting god, in contrast to the traditions previously discussed where the wind was preexistent and the everlasting god was only formed afterwards.[[32]](#footnote-33) The last figure in the lineage, as in the other Phoenician traditions, is a cosmic egg from which the universe was created.[[33]](#footnote-34)

These three elements – the wind, the eternal god *ulom* / El-Olam, and the cosmic egg – seem to have been part of the ancient Phoenician cosmogonic narrative. These ideas are also found in Philo’s writings and the other Phoenician sources, and they have no relation to Stoic thought whatsoever. It seems that all these sources reflect a systematic cosmogony describing the ancient beings from the formation of the world, first among them the wind that desired itself and out of which, according to Philo of Byblos, were formed all other things in existence.

This Phoenician tradition continued to circulate long into the ancient period, well after Philo’s time, as we see from the similarities between it and the Gnostic tradition preserved in various forms by the Church Fathers of the early centuries C.E. The version most similar to Philo of Byblos’s story is found in the fourth century writings of Philastrius, Bishop of Brescia; it describes the wind as a sexual being who was able to produce offspring through mating with the darkness (Philastrius 33 [Migne]):[[34]](#footnote-35)

Ante erant solum tenebrae et profundum et aqua, atque terrae divisio facta est in medio, et spiritus separavit haec elementa. Tunc ergo tenebrae irruentes in spiritum genuerunt quatuor Aeonas, et isti quatuor genueruntalios quatuor Aeonas. Hoc autem dextra atquesinistra lux, inquiunt, sunt. Et quemdam etiam concubuisse cum illa muliere et virtute dicunt, de qua nati sunt dii, et homines, et angeli, et septem spiritus daemoniorum.

At first there was only darkness, the deep, and water, and from these was formed a separation of earth in the middle, and the wind (spiritus) divided these elements. At that time, the darkness hastened to the wind and gave birth to four eons (Aeonas), and these gave birth to four additional eons (Aeonas). Furthermore, according to his words, in this way were born right and left, light and dark. They also report that someone lay with that female being from whom were born gods, men, angels, and seven evil spirits.

Since we are dealing with a relatively late text, the author was certainly aware of Jewish and Christian traditions such as the Biblical text of Genesis. However, in light of the clear similarities to Phoenician mythology, which could not have originated from exegesis of the Biblical text alone, it seems that the Gnostic text is based in part on the same Phoenician tradition we have been discussing.[[35]](#footnote-36) As in the Phoenician tradition, creation is initiated by the wind. Here the sexual character of the wind is portrayed with clearer, even striking, imagery, and here, as in the Phoenician narrative, one of the wind’s children is Aeon, that is, time or the eternal god (Αἰών / El-olam). In all the Phoenician traditions addressed above, the wind possesses creative and reproductive power and serves as the primordial element initiating the process of creation. The last text, along with similar Gnostic sources attest to the fact that the Phoenician traditions were widespread and continued to resonate throughout the ancient period.[[36]](#footnote-37)

**V. Between Phoenicia and Egypt**

In some respects, this Phoenician tradition is similar to Egyptian cosmogonies,[[37]](#footnote-38) the most salient parallel being the motif of the cosmic egg found in many Egyptian texts.[[38]](#footnote-39) The primordial matter’s autoeroticism is also found in early Egyptian sources. In traditions from Heliopolis, accounts of the first god’s act of masturbation which formed the world are particularly common.[[39]](#footnote-40) For example, an incantation from the Pyramid Texts includes a detailed description of Atum pleasuring himself, producing Shu and Tefnut, representing air and moisture or the atmosphere, respectively (P 475 = PT 527).[[40]](#footnote-41) Spell 77 from the Coffin Texts describes this tale through the words of Shu, reminding Atum of how he gave birth to him with the help of his hand and his mouth.[[41]](#footnote-42) This tradition continues to appear for a long period of time, and is attested in later Egyptian sources. For example, the Bremner-Rhind Papyrus, a magical anthology compiled at the beginning of the Ptolemaic period, casts Atum himself as the narrator of the story (pBM 10188, 26, 24-27, 2). He tells of how, when he was alone, he copulated with his hand as a husband with his wife; he spilled his seed into his mouth and gave birth with his spit to two offspring, the god Shu, representing air, and Tefnut, representing moisture or the atmosphere – an account somewhat reminiscent of the element of wind in Philo’s text.[[42]](#footnote-43) From these elements were formed the rest of the gods and the elements of the world.

As in the Phoenician narrative, the Egyptian version of tale includes a primordial figure who desires itself. Here, however, the longing for one’s source is given concrete, even course, expression. In the writings of Philo and Mochos, by contrast, the strikingly mythological description of the Egyptian narrative is presented in more abstract language; the wind’s self-copulation is not described in the same unabashedly physical terms as in the tale of the god Atum’s masturbation. In the same vein, while the wind is the prime mover in the Phoenician story, in the Egyptian story Shu and Tefnut, representing air and moisture, emerge in the second stage of creation.[[43]](#footnote-44) The transfer of the wind that desires itself to the first stage in the cosmogony softens and purifies (that is to say, spiritualizes) the strikingly physical myth. In any case, affinities with Egyptian mythological motifs can also strengthen the argument that the tradition in Philo of Byblos – despite the later date of its textual sources – is closer to the ancient Phoenician mythology than to concepts from Stoic philosophy. It is reasonable to assume that such a tradition about the primordial wind initiating the creation of the world was also known in the Phoenician world at the same time as the formation (in oral or written form) of the Biblical narrative.

**VI. *Ruaḥ ’Elohim* in Genesis 1:2 and in Second Temple Literature**

What, then, are the ramifications for Gen 1:2, “רוח אלהים swept over the face of the waters”? Several traditional commentators and modern scholars have addressed the questions of whether to interpret רוח as “wind” or “spirit” and whether to understand אלהים as an adjective denoting greatness (as in 1 Sam 14:15, where חרדת אלהים means “a great panic”) or as a noun, which would translate as “a wind from God and of God.”[[44]](#footnote-45)

All these meanings are attested in Biblical Hebrew and can all serve as possible interpretations of the phrase in Gen 1:2. On the one hand, the רוח here is not an independent being as in the Phoenician tradition; from the context, it is clear that the רוח is related to the אלהים of the previous verse. On the other hand, the description in Genesis may not be entirely divorced from the aforementioned mythological traditions that circulated in the Levant and which bear similarities to it. It may be that the phrase ורוח אלהים מרחפת על פני המים does more than paint a pastoral picture of time before Creation; otherwise, it is unclear why the רוח is mentioned at all. Moreover, the רוח does not reappear in the following verses. The portrait in Genesis may conceal the memory of the primeval wind known from the mythological sources as a supernatural creative power. Echoes of this idea reverberate in the Biblical Creation story, though it seems the biblical author seeks to silence them.

This phenomenon can be compared to the specific mention of the sea creatures (התנינִם הגדלים) by the same Priestly author in the context of the creations of the fifth day (Gen 1:21). By listing them with all the other creatures (which are referred to more generally, according to their kind) the author probably meant to emphasize that these התנינִם הגדלים were created like all others: they were not mythical creatures, nor divine beings that could engage in the kind of combat against God that was well-attested in mythological traditions prevalent among the Israelites. As Zakovitch and Shinʼan, following Cassuto, have demonstrated, “the verse ‘God created the great sea dragons’ was not a trivial detail but a sharp riposte aimed at overthrowing, in one swift parry, an entire complex of mythological beliefs.”[[45]](#footnote-46) The same may have occurred in regard to the wind in Gen 1:2. The Phoenician sources that we mentioned above provide more than sufficient evidence to argue that the unique mention of the wind in Genesis is not a trivial detail but rather the tip of an iceberg that tries to hide competing traditions about Creation.

The רוח אלהים of Gen 1:2, as in the Phoenician sources mentioned above, is neither the violent wind of the ancient Near East’s storm gods nor that of Yhwh who overpowers the sea and defeats His enemies; it is also not the natural wind described as smashing (as in 1 Kgs 19:11 and Ps 48:8), splitting (Ezek 13:11), or destroying (e.g., Jer 51:1).[[46]](#footnote-47) This wind, in this context, can be related to the arousal of the life force before the creation. In many senses, it resembles the רוח that blows the spirit of life into human beings, as in the vision of the dry bones: “[…] I will cause breath (רוח) to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you” (Ezek 37:5-6); or the רוח that vivifies the world in the Psalms: “When you send forth your spirit (רוח), they are created, and you renew the face of the ground” (Ps 104:30); or the forests of the natural world, as in Isaiah: “until a spirit (רוח) from on high is poured out on us, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest” (Isa 32:15). The use of the passive tense in the last verse is interesting, and alludes to the tradition of the רוח as an independent force that does not necessarily emerge from God.[[47]](#footnote-48)

In contrast to the descriptions of destructive winds (e.g. Exod 15:10, Isa 11:15 and 27:8, Ps 11:6 and 18:16), the verb רח"ף used in Gen 1:2 implies gliding over and gently caressing the water. The extra-Biblical mythological sources, especially Philo of Byblos, even describe the movement of the wind as erotic. The sexual motif was common in the mythological traditions, and an echo of it remains in the Gnostic texts, though it has been mostly expurgated from the Bible. The movement of the wind above the water in Genesis, however, preserves something of the life-giving power found in mythology. There is room to assume that the sexual motif was part of the mythological heritage of the Genesis story, though the Biblical narrator sought to conceal it. Some have suggested that we should understand רח"ף according to its Syrian cognate, meaning “incubate,” which would even preserve a remnant of the tradition of the cosmic egg found in the Phoenician narratives.[[48]](#footnote-49) However, it appears that the meaning of מרחף here is “hovering,” as in its Ugaritic cognate.[[49]](#footnote-50) In this sense, the meaning of the verb in Genesis is closer to that in the verse, “As an eagle stirs up its nest, and hovers over its young” (Deut 32:11), which describes an eagle caring for its eaglets.[[50]](#footnote-51) Genesis, then, portrays the creative wind hovering over and gently touching the waters, after which the act of Creation begins. It seems that, while alluding to mythological traditions, the Biblical author succeeded in conveying a different and novel message, through the demythologization and blurring of the ancient mythologies. Notwithstanding the Phoenician tradition’s own softening of its cruder precursor, the רוח of the Biblical story undergoes an additional level of purification. As in the case of the Phoenician tradition the רוח in Genesis is a primordial element; but the lack of clarity regarding its role in the Biblical context highlights the role of divine speech as the primary progenitor of Creation. This idea is part of a separate tradition that is starkly different from the story of the wind.

 Post-Biblical literature from the Second Temple period has also preserved an echo of the supernatural and independent nature of the primeval רוח, though every text uses this motif in its own way. While a proper analysis of the various meanings of רוח in the literature of the Second Temple and the New Testament is beyond the purview of the current study, it is worth mentioning here some sources from Second Temple literature that seem to preserve echoes of the mythological and divine nature of the primeval wind.

The Book of Jubilees, for example, in its rewriting of the first verses of the Creation narrative, changes ורוח אלהים מרחפת על פני המים into a story of the creation of the angels. Alongside the heavens and the earth, the darkness and the water, Jubilees (2:2-3) inserts a long list of angels, as can be seen below. The Hebrew version is known to us from Qumran Scroll 4Q216 4QJuba col. V 4-10):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **בראשית א 1—3** | **4QJuba V 4-10 (יובלים ב 2–3)** |
| 1 בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ 2 וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל-פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל-פְּנֵי הַמָּיִם 3 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אוֹר וַיְהִי-אוֹר. | כי ביום הראשון ברא את השמ]ים העליונים ואת האר[ץ] [ואת המים ואת כל הרוחות המשרתים לפניו מלאכי ]הפנים ומלאכי הקו[דש] ומ[לאכי רוחות האש ומלאכי הרוחות הנושבי]ם [ו] ומלאכי רוחות ה[עננים] לער[פל ולטל ומלאכי הרוחות לשלג ולברד ולק]רח ומלאכי הקולו[ת] ולמלאכי הרוחות [לברקים ומלאכי הרוחות לקור ול]חום ולחרף ולקיץ [ולכל] רוחות בריותיו [אשר בשמים ואשר עשה באר]ץ ובכל את התהו[מות]. מאפלה ושחר ו[אור וערב אשר הכין בד]עתו |
| **1**In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, **2**the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. **3**Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. | For on the first day he created the heaven]s that are above the ear[th,] [the waters, and all the spirits who serve before him: the angels] of the presence, and the angels of ho[liness;], and the a[ngels of the spirits of fire; the angels of the wind that blo[w, the angels of the spirits of the [clouds], of dark[ness, dew, and the angels of the spirits of snow and fro]st; the angels of the sound[s;] the angels of the [storm]-winds; the angels of the spirits of cold and] heat, of winter and summer, [and of all] the spirits of his creatures [which he made in the heavens, which he made on the ear]th, and in every (place;) the dept[hs,] darkness, dawn, [light, and evening which he prepared through] his [know]ledge.[[51]](#footnote-52)       |

It is possible that the interpretation of רוח as angels was influenced by associative reasoning based on Psalm 104: “You make the winds (רוחות) yourmessengers, fire and flame yourministers. You set the earth on its foundations, so that it shall never be shaken” (Ps 4-5). However, the author of Jubilees immediately testifies to the unique nature of the רוח of Creation, through a detailed description of the various angels, including the angels of wind, that were created at that time.[[52]](#footnote-53) This is no ordinary meteorological or even cosmic element but rather a wide-ranging group of divine beings that are not identical with God. As in the Phoenician tradition, it seems that here the רוח takes on a personal form.

The Book of Enoch dedicates an elaborate description to the winds among the heavenly luminaries. The narrator describes twelve gates from which the winds emerge; some bring blessing, rain, and fertility, others are “sent forth to bring destruction to all the earth and the waters that are upon it” (1 Enoch 66:4). In some respects, the winds here resemble the mythological entities in that they seem to be not so much God’s agents as independent and active cosmic beings. The description in Enoch, which can now be seen in the Aramaic evidence in the Qumran Scrolls, goes on to describe the four directions, referred to in the Aramaic text as ארבע רוחי שמיא (4Q210 frag. 1 II, 14-15; cf. 4Q209 frags. 23, 3-4; cf. Dan. 7:2). The first רוח (direction / wind) is referred to as קדם (prior, ancient, or east) “because it is first”; the southern רוח is called דרום (south) “because the Great one dwells (דאר) there, and in it dwells forever.”[[53]](#footnote-54) The text goes on to describe the convergence of the stars and heavenly bodies in the other winds / directions (רוח). It seems, then, that the extensive mythology of the realm of the winds in Enoch did not appear out of a vacuum; rather, it was preceded by a long mythic tradition from the western Semitic world.[[54]](#footnote-55)

The Community Rule clearly relates to the concept of the רוח as a primary element in the world, upon which other elements are based: “And He created the רוחות of light and darkness, upon which He founded all of Creation” (1QS III 25). In making the רוח a primary element in the Creation, the Community Rule resembles the Phoenician cosmogony as well as Greek philosophical ideas. At the same time, in the Community Rule, the רוח loses its cosmic and mythological import, being transformed into a spiritual principle relating to matters of ethics and social justice.[[55]](#footnote-56) This text points to various uses of the concept of רוח as its meaning developed across ancient literature, both Jewish and Christian, though it is clear that the growing involvement in pneumatology was essentially based on mythological and philosophical concepts related to the first wind of the pre- and extra-Biblical pagan world.[[56]](#footnote-57)

\*

We may conclude this survey with a few basic conclusions related to the Genesis narrative, as well as to the literature of surrounding cultures, and the development of the idea in later literature. (1) Despite the late date of the Phoenician sources, there is reason to assume that their story of the primeval wind preserves an ancient mythological tradition. (2) There is a clear similarity between the Phoenician story and various concepts and models from Egyptian mythology, such as the tradition of Atum and the motif of the cosmic egg. It is possible that these Egyptian concepts were part of the cultural environment in which the Phoenician story developed, if in a milder form, and underwent an additional level of spiritualization in the Biblical story. (3) Since the wind of God that hovered over the waters in Gen 1:2 has no clear role in its context, it appears that it preserves an echo of the myths of the primeval wind that were prevalent in the Levant. In the tradition recorded by Philo of Byblos, the primeval wind desired its own source and thus began the process of Creation, but in its current Biblical form the story has a polemic nature describing only the wind’s hovering over the water. In addition, if this suggestion is correct, the whole discussion can support the idea that the Priestly author of Genesis 1–2:4a is aware of Phoenician and Levantine mythology, which fits the knowledge of Ezekiel to Phoenician traditions (cf. esp. Ezek 26–28). (4) The centrality of the wind as a primordial element finds a parallel in the writings of Greek philosophers, where it is articulated in scientific and philosophical terms. This idea is already evident in sayings attributed to the schools of Miletus from the sixth century B.C.E. and can be traced in a variant and more expanded form in the Stoicism of the Hellenistic and Roman periods. It is impossible to ignore the fact that these ideas about the wind that circulated around the eastern Mediterranean were part of a shared cultural heritage, although used in a different way by each thinker in turn. (5) Ideas about the primeval wind and the mythological nature of the realm of the winds were extensively developed in Jewish literature of the Second Temple period and beyond, as well as in early Christian literature. We cannot understand the development of these pneumatological ideas without taking into account the ancient background of such stories as these that were common in the ancient Levant. The tradition of the divine wind/spirit in the late Second Temple literature onward was based not only on the literature of the Hebrew Bible and Greek philosophy, but also on mythological traditions that were part of the Phoenician world and apparently other regions in the ancient Levant and eastern Mediterranean.

1. To mention only a few from the recent scholarship: Eckart Frahm, “Counter-Texts, Commentaries, and Adaptations: Politically Motivated Responses to the Babylonian Epic of Creation in Mesopotamia, the Biblical World, and Elsewhere,” *Orient: Reports of the Society for Near Eastern Studies in Japan* 45 (2010) 3–33, esp. 14-17; Christopher B. Hays, *Hidden Riches: A Sourcebook for the Comparative Study of the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014) 61-73. For a thoughtful and in-depth approach to the relation between Enuma Elish and the Biblical literature, see Victor Hurowitz, “The Genesis of Genesis: Is the Creation Story Babylonian?”, *Bible Review* 21 (2005) 36–48; Noga Ayali-Darshan, *Treading on the Back of the Sea: The Combat Between the Storm-god and the Sea in Ancient Near Eastern Literature*, The Biblical Encyclopaedia Library 33 (Bialik Institute: Jerusalem, 2016) 151–252 (Hebrew). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Several scholars have previously claimed that this verse resembles the scene in Enuma Elish describing Marduk playing with his winds on the back of Tiamat, that is, the primordial water; see, for example, John H. Walton, *Genesis*, Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013) 15, n. 27. Others mentioned the wind in which Marduk defeated Tiamat; see, for example, Sabatino Moscati, “The Wind in Biblical and Phoenician Cosmogony,” *JBL* 66 (1947) 305-310, esp. 309. Frahm has suggested recently that the vague term *mummu* mentioned in the first lines of Enuma Elish is related to the wind, but has not provided satisfactory evidence; see Eckart Frahm, “Creation and the Divine Spirit in Babel and Bible: Reflections on *mummu* in Enūma eliš I 4 and *rûaḥ* in Genesis 1: 2,” in *Literature as Politics, Politics as Literature: Essays on the Ancient Near East in Honor of Peter Machinist* (ed. D.S. Vanderhooft and A. Winitzer; Winona Lake: Eisenbruns, 2013) 97-116. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Scholars usually compare the Hermopolitan traditions of Amun as creator with the tradition about the wind in Genesis, since Amun also represented breath or spirit. See for example Archibald H. Sayce, “The Egyptian Background of Genesis I,” in *Studies Presented to F. Ll. Griffith* (ed. N. Griffith and S. R. K. Glanville; London: Oxford University Press, 1932) 419–23; Rudolf Kilian, “Gen. 1:2 und die Urgötter von Hermopolis,” *VT* 16 (1966) 420-38; James K. Hoffmeier, “Some Thoughts on Genesis 1 and 2 and Egyptian Cosmology,” *JANES* 15 (1983) 39–49; John D. Currid, “An Examination of the Egyptian Background of the Genesis Cosmogony,” *Biblische Zeitschrift* 35 (1991) 18–40; Gordon H. Johnston, “Genesis l and Ancient Egyptian Creation Myths,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 165 (2008) 178-94. These cosmogonic traditions do not contain any narrative about a primeval wind comparable to Genesis, however. Compare, though, the fragmentary text no. 4 mentioned in M. Smith, *On the Primaeval Ocean: Carlsberg Papyri 5*, CNI 26 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2002) 194. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. For a brief description see, for example, Richard J. Clifford, “Phoenician Religion,” *BASOR* 279 (1990) 55–64. For a review of the relevant Greek sources, see Gideon Bohak, “The Egyptian and Phoenician Religions in Classical Literature,” in *Ancient Gods: Polytheism in Eretz Israel and Neighboring Countries from the Second Millennium BCE to the Islamic Period*, Between Bible and Mishna (ed. M. Kister et al.; Yad ben Zvi: Jerusalem, 2008) 102-128, esp. 123-27 (Hebrew). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. See especially Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis*, tr. by M.E. Biddle (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997; 3rd German edition, 1910) 106; William F. Albright, “Contributions to Biblical Archaeology and Philology,” *JBL* 43 (1924) 363–93, esp. 366–69; Otto Eissfeldt, “Phönikische und griechische Kosmogonie,” in O. Eissfeldt, *Kleine Schriften* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1966) 3:501–512 (=*Éléments Orientaux dans la Religion Grecque Ancienne*, Paris, 1960, pp. 1–15); Otto Eissfeldt, “Das Chaos in der biblischen und in der phönizischen Kosmogonie,” in O. Eissfeldt, *Kleine Schriften* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1963) 2:258–262 (=*Forschungen und Fortschritte* 16 *Berlin* [1940], 1–3). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Sabatino Moscati, “The Wind in Biblical and Phoenician Cosmogony,” *JBL* (1947) 305-310. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Klaus Koch, “Wind und Zeit als Konstituenten des Kosmos in phönikischer Mythologie und spätalttestamentlichen Texten,” in *Mesopotamica, Ugaritica, Biblica: Festschrift für Kurt Bergerhof zur Vollendung seines 70. Lebensjahres am 7. Mai 1992,* AOAT 232 (ed. M. Dietrich and O. Loretz; Neukirchener: Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1993) 59–91. The evidence for his proposal in pp. 84-90 regarding the history of the term עולם is unsatisfactory. We should also mention the extensive collection of sources appearing in the commentaries to Philo of Byblos, although their focus is obviously not on the biblical text. See especially Albert I. Baumgarten, *The Phoenician History of Philo of Byblos: A Commentary*, EPRO 89 (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 94–139; Harold W. Attridge and Robert A. Oden, *Philo of Byblos, The Phoenician History: Introduction, Critical Text, Translation, Notes* (Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America,1981) 76–77; Anthony Kaldellis and Carolina López Ruiz, “Philon (790),” in *Brill’s New Jacoby* (Brill, 2009) [online: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1873-5363\_bnj\_a790> ; accessed 2018]. cf. also Hans-Peter Müller, “Der Welt- und Kulturentstehungsmythos des Philon Byblios und die biblische Urgeschichte,” *ZAW* 112 (2000), 161–179, esp. 169-171. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. See the commentaries mentioned in the previous note. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. The English translation follows Kaldellis and López Ruiz, “Philon (790).” [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Baumgarten, *Philo of Byblos*, 114–115; Attridge and Oden, *Philo of Byblos*, 77. Many scholars compared this expression with the Aramaic term עירין (angels), which is usually translated into Greek as ἄγγελος. See Dan 4:10, 14, 20; 1 Enoch 1:5; 10:9; 12:2 (cf. Heb ציר Prov 13:17). See, for example, Mark S. Smith, *God in Translation: Deities in Cross-Cultural Discourse in the Biblical World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010) 258. There seems to be no connection between the terms, however. It should be noted that the term may be Semitic, but not Biblical, and therefore could not have been borrowed by Philo from Biblical material. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Baumgarten, *Philo of Byblos*, 111–113; Attridge and Oden, *Philo of Byblos*, 76–77. For another proposal see Martin L. West, “Ab ovo: Orpheus, Sanchuniathon, and the Origins of the Ionian World,” *Classical Quarterly* 44 (1994) 289–307, esp. 298–99. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. See Guy Darshan, *After the Flood: Stories of Origins in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Mediterranean Literature*, The Biblical Encyclopaedia Library 35 (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2018) 137–67 [Hebrew], with the bibliography mentioned there. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Albright has suggested that the phrase ΚΟΛΠΙΑ ΑΝΕΜΟΥ (“Kolpia wind”) is a corrupted form of ΚΟΔΜ(Α) ΑΝΕΜΟΥ (“Kodma wind”). We can strengthen this suggestion by referring to the Aramaic Enochic text from Qumran: [וקרין לקדימא קדים] בדי הוא קדמיא (“[The East wind they call Qadim] because it is the first”) (4Q210 frag. 1 ii, 14-15 cf. 4Q209 frags. 23, 3; cf. 1 Enoch 77:1). The name קדים is documented in several places in this scroll (4Q210 frag. 1 ii 1, 4–6). For the Qumranic text see Józef Tadeusz Milik and Matthew Black, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976) 284–88; Henryk Drawnel, *The Aramaic Astronomical Book from Qumran: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 190–93, 221–223; George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, chapters 37-82*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012) 482–86. For other solutions to the word *kolpia* see Baumgarten, *Philo of Byblos*, 143–45; Attridge and Oden, *Philo of Byblos*, 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. The English translation follows Kaldellis and López Ruiz, “Philon (790).” [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. For updated studies of Euhemerism see, *inter alia*, Nickolas P. Roubekas, “What is Euhemerism? A Brief History of Research and Some Persisting Questions,” *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* 43 (2014) 30-37; Nickolas P. Roubekas, *An Ancient Theory of Religion: Euhemerism from Antiquity to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. See e.g. Jan N. Bremmer, *Greek Religion and Culture, the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Leiden: Brill, 2008) 6. For another approach see James Barr, “Philo of Byblos and his ‘Phoenician History’,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 57 (1974) 17-68, esp. 60. For Βάαυ in general see the survey by Attridge and Oden, *Philo of Byblos*, 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Among the recent studies, see Mark J. Edwards, “Philo or Sanchuniathon? A Phoenicean Cosmogony,” *Classical Quarterly* 41.1 (1991) 213-20. Cf. Mark S. Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1*, Minneapolis 2010, 228–229, n. 92: “the direction of borrowing if any, is unclear, given the elaborations in both sets of material.” [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Baumgarten, *Philo of Byblos*, 94–139: “The cosmogony thus represents the impact of Greek rationalism on native Phoenician speculation. Philo’s cosmogony is a product of a native Phoenician tradition brought up to date and into harmony with the best science of the day – Greek science” (p. 123). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. The English translation follows André Laks and Glenn W. Most, *Early Greek Philosophy*, LCL 525 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016) 2:362-363. For this text, see also Daniel W. Graham, *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy: The Complete Fragments and Selected Testimonies of the Major Presocratics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 1: 76–77, 90. For a general description of the wind in Greek literature of the Archaic period, see Daniela Coppola, *Anemoi: morfologia dei venti nell'immaginario della Grecia arcaica* (Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II. Pubblicazioni del Dipartimento di Discipline Storiche, 24; Napoli: Liguori Editore, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Geoffrey S. Kirk, John E. Raven, and Malcolm Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts* (2nd ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 143–162; Daniel W. Graham, *Explaining the Cosmos: The Ionian Tradition of Scientific Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006) 45–84. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. For the significance of the πνεῦμα in the Stoic philosophy, see Samuel Sambursky, *Physics of the Stoics* (London: Routledge, 1959) 1–48; Michael Lapidge, “Stoic Cosmology,” in *The Stoics* (ed. J. M. Rist; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) 161–86; David Sedley, “Stoic Physics and Metaphysics,” in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* (ed. K. Algra et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 353-411, esp. 389; Peter Barker, “Stoic Contributions to Early Modern Science,” in *Atoms, Pneuma, and Tranquillity: Epicurean and Stoic Themes in European Thought* (ed. M.J. Osler; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 135–54; Tuen Tieleman, “The Spirit of Stoicism,” in *The Holy Spirit, Inspiration, and the Cultures of Antiquity: Multidisciplinary Perspectives* (ed. J. Frey and J. Levison; Ekstasis 5; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 39–62. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. However, the notion of “Desire” appears in another Phoenician cosmogony. See the Eudemos tradition below. For the role of *Eros* in the Hesiodic cosmogony and other Greek literature, compare esp. Aristophanes, *Av*. 696; Plato *Sym*. 195b; Aristotle *Met*. 1.984b23. See also Martin L. West, ed., *Theogony* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1966) 195–96; Bruce S. Thornton, *Eros: The Myth of Ancient Greek Sexuality* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997); Claude Calame, *The Poetics of Eros in Ancient Greece* (trans. J. Lloyd; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) 178-81; Menelaos Christopoulos, “Dark winged *nyx* and the Bright winged *eros* in Aristophanes’ “orphic” Cosmogony,” in *Light and Darkness in Ancient Greek Myth and Religion* (ed. M. Christopoulos, E.D. Karakantza and O. Levaniouk; Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010) 207–220; Glenn W. Most, “Eros in Hesiod,” in *Erôs in Ancient Greece* (ed. E. Sanders et al.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) 163-74. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. See, for example, Michael J. White, “Stoic Natural Philosophy (Physics and Cosmology),” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (ed. B. Inwood; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 24-152, esp. 133-38; Andrew Gregory, *Ancient Greek Cosmogony* (Duckworth: London, 2008) 187–202. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. For a similar method see West, “Ab ovo,” 305–307; Martin L. West, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971). For the Phoenician origin of Zeno see David Sedley, “The School from Zeno to Arius Didymus,” *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (ed. B. Inwood; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 7-32, esp. 8-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. Damascius is especially well-known to scholars of the ancient Near East for his preservation of traditions resembling Enuma Elish. See Stephanie Dalley and A. T. Reyes, “Mesopotamian Contact and Influence in the Greek World,” in *The Legacy of Mesopotamia* (S. Dalley, ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 85-124; Philippe Talon, “Enūma Eliš and the Transmission of Babylonian Cosmology to the West,” in *Mythology and Mythologies: Methodological Approaches to Intercultural Influences. Proceedings of the Second Annual Symposium of the Assyrian and Babylonian Intellectual Heritage Project. Held in Paris, France, October 4-7, 1999*, The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project (ed. R.M. Whiting; Helsinki, 2001) 265–77. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. The name Mochus is probably a variant form of a Phoenician name Moloch (מלך) with a Greek ending. For the texts see: Attridge and Oden, *Philo of Byblos*, 102–104; Carolina López-Ruiz, “Laitos (-Mochos) (784)”, in *Brill’s New Jacoby* (ed. I. Worthington; Leiden: Brill, 2009) [online: http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1873-5363\_bnj\_a784; accessed 2018]. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. The English text follows López-Ruiz, “Philon (790).” [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. On El-olam, see, for example, Frank M. Cross, *Canaanite myth and Hebrew epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997) 50; Albert de Pury, “El-olam,” *DDD*, 288-91. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. Albright has suggested that the epithet “the opener” may show an Egyptian influence, in the form of a Semitic interpretation of Ptah. See William F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, London 1968, 196. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. For the late texts mentioning Kothar see John P. Brown, “Kothar, Kinyras, and Kythereia,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 10.2 (1965) 197-219. See also Mark S. Smith, “Kothar wa-Hasis the Ugaritic Craftsman God,” Ph.D diss., Yale 1985, 13–15, 473–476; Dennis Pardee, “Koshar,” *DDD*, 490–491. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. The English text follows López-Ruiz, “Philon (790).” [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. An Orphic fragment (Kern, *Orphicorum fragmenta* 37 = Scholia of Apollonius Rhodios 3.26) preserves a similar tradition to Eudemus, describing Chronos as father of Eros and the winds. For the relationship to the Phoenician tradition see West, *Orphic Poems*, 200-201; West, “Ab ovo,” 289–307. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. For another opinion see Samuel E. Loewenstamm (“Philon mi-Geval,” *Praqim* 2 [1971], 315–27, esp. 324 [Hebrew]) who suggested that the description of the cosmic egg in Philo is an interpolation, not being part of the original cosmogony. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. Baumgarten, *Philo of Byblos*, 126 mentions this text following W. Bousset, *Die Hauptprobleme der Gnosis* (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments 10; Vandenhöck & Ruprecht: Göttingen, 1907) 103–110. For the other versions compare Ps. Tertullian, *Adversus omnes haereses* 1.6; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 25.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. Compare the discussion of Baumgarten, *Philo of Byblos*, 124-28. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. A similar combination of motifs – winds, primeval water and Aeon – appears also in the scene of the birth of Beirut in Nonnus’s *Dionysiaca*, which I did not analyze here because of its very late date (Nonnus *D*. 41. 172– 84). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. For a similar conclusion see West, *Orphic Poems*, 199-201. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. For the “cosmic egg” motif in Egyptian sources, see, among others, Siegfried Morenz, *Egyptian Religion* (London: Methuen & co, 1973 [repr. 2004]) 177–79. For other civilizations see Anna‐Britta Hellbom, “The Creation Egg,” *Ethnos* 28.1 (1963) 63-105; David A. Leeming, “Cosmic Egg,” *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion* (New York: Springer, 2014) 397-98. For a discussion about the Egyptian impact on Phoenician cosmogonies, especially in regard to the “cosmic-egg” motif, see José Nunes Carreira, “Hermopolitan Traditions in Philo Byblius Phoenician History,” *Cadmo* 1 (1991) 31–44. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. For Egyptian cosmogonies see, for example, Leonard H. Lesko, “Ancient Egyptian Cosmogonies and Cosmology,” in *Religion in Ancient Egypt* (ed. B. E. Shafer et al.; Ithaca: Cornel University Press, 1991) 88-122. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. “Atum is the one who came into being as one who came (with penis) extended in Heliopolis. He put his penis in his fist so that he might make orgasm with it, and the two twins were born, Shu and Tefnut.” The translation follows James P. Allen, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, Writings from the Ancient World 23 (ed. P. Der Manuelian; Society of Biblical Literature: Atlanta, 2005) 164.  See also Currid, “An Examination,” 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. “I am this soul of Shu which is in the flame of the fiery blast which Atum kindled with his own hand. He created orgasm and fluid (?) fell from his mouth. He spat me out as Shu together with Tefenet, who came forth after me [...].” English translation: Faulkner, *Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts*, 1:80. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. “I am the one who acted as husband with my fist: I copulated with my hand, I let fall into my own mouth, I sneezed Shu and spat Tefnut” (*COS* 1.9). See also lines 28, 27-29,1: “After I had made excitation with my fist, I came into mine hand, and seed fell from my mouth; I spat out Shu and expectorated Tefenut.” The translation follows Raymond O. Faulkner, “The Bremner-Rhind Papyrus: IV,” *JEA* 24 (1938) 41–53, esp. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. The change of order in the cosmogony, however, also appears among the Phoenician traditions as shown in the writings of Eudemus, where Chronos, representing the eternal god (עלם), takes the first place. In this context, it is interesting to note that in the Azatiwada inscription the epithet עלם (eternal) is attached to the Sun deity: ואל קן ארץ ושמש עלם (“and El, creator of the earth,and Shemesh, the eternal,” *KAI* 26 A III 18–19; *COS* 2.31). It is tempting to ask whether it presents a Phoenician identification of שמש עלם and Atum (-Re), who was regarded from an early point as a solar deity. See West, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient*, 35–36. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. For various opinions, see the surveys by Heinz-Josef Fabry, “*rûaḥ*,” *TWAT*, 7:385-425, esp. 405–07; William H. McClellan, “The Meaning of Ruaḥ ʾElohim in Genesis 1, 2,” *Biblica* 15 (1934) 517-27; Robert Luyster, “Wind and Water: Cosmogonic Symbolism in the Old Testament,” *ZAW* 93 (1981) 1-10; Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Continental Commentary* (tr. J.J. Scullion; Fortress: Minneapolis, 1994) 106-110. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. Y. Zakovitch, and A. Shinʼan, *From Gods to God: How the Bible Debunked, Suppressed, or Changed Ancient Myths and Legends* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2012), 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. In contrast to Luyster, “Wind and Water,” 1-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
47. For Isa 32:15, compare John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986) 587-88; Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39: A Continental Commentary* (tr. T.H. Trapp; Minneapolis, Fortress, 2002) 260–61; J. J. M. Roberts, *First Isaiah: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015) 416-17. See also Ps 33:6 ובדבר יהוה שמים נעשו וברוח פיו כל צבאם. Although רוח פיו here parallels God’s words, it can also refer to the traditions about the primordial wind. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. See especially Gunkel, *Genesis*, 106. Cf. Michael Sokoloff, *A Syriac Lexicon: A Translation from the Latin, Correction, Expansion, and Update of C. Brockelmann’s Brockelmann's Lexicon Syriacum* **(**Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009**)** 1458. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. See Gregorio del Olmo Lete and Joaquín Sanmatín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*, Handbook of Oriental Studies 67 (Brill: Leiden, 2003) 739. Cf. also Smith, The Priestly Vision, 231, n. 111; Ellen van Wolde, “Separation and Creation in Genesis 1 and Psalm 104, A Continuation of the Discussion of the Verb ברא,” *VT* 67 (2017), 611–647, at 632. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. See Rashi *ad*. *loc*.; Jack R. Lundbom, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013) 880–81. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
51. The Qumranic text follows Cana Werman, *The Book of Jubilees: Introduction, Translation, and Interpretation,* Between Bible and Mishna (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2015) 81, 101 [Hebrew]. The English translation follows (*mutatis mutandis*) J. C. VanderKam and J. T. Milik, “4QJubileesa,” in *Qumran Cave 4.VIII: Parabiblical Texts, Part 1* (ed. H.W. Attridge et al.; DJD 13; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994) 13-14. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
52. Compare Werman, *The Book of Jubilees*, 152–53. For other occurrences of “winds” as synonymous with “angels” in the Dead Sea Scrolls, see, *inter alia*, 1QHa 9:12-15; 1QM 13:11-12 and Eibert Tigchelaar, “Historical Origins of the Early Christian Concept of the Holy Spirit: Perspectives from the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in Frey and Levison, *The Holy Spirit, Inspiration, and the Cultures of Antiquity*,167-240. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
53. See n. 13 above. See also Menahem Kister, “Tohu wa-Bohu, Primordial Elements and Creatio ex Nihilo,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 14 (2007) 229-56, esp. 235 on 1 Enoch 18:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
54. Compare Drawnel, *The Aramaic Astronomical Book*, 330–33. The commentators of Enoch usually emphasize the relationship to Babylonian astronomical works. See, for instance, Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*, 470–71, 483–84; Klaus Koch, “The Astral Laws as The Basis of Time, Universal History, and the Eschatological Turn in the Astronomical Book and the Animal Apocalypse of 1 Enoch,” in *The Early Enoch Literature* (ed. J.J. Collins and G. Boccaccini; Leiden: Brill, 2007) 119-38, esp. 119–128. See also the recent survey of Annette Yoshiko Reed, “Writing Jewish Astronomy in the Early Hellenistic Age: The Enochic Astronomical Book as Aramaic Wisdom and Archival Impulse,” *DSD* 24 (2017) 1-37. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
55. #  For the winds in this text, see, for instance, Arnold A. Anderson, “The Use of ‘Ruah’ in 1QS, 1QH, and 1QM,” *JSS* 7 (1962) 293–303; Géza G. Xeravits, ed., *Dualism in Qumran* (London: T&T Clark, 2010); Bernard J. Bannin, “The Spirit ‘within’ the Sectarian Dead Sea Scrolls,” Ph.D. diss (Regent University, 2010), esp. 54-57; Mladen Popović, “Anthropology, Pneumatology and Demonology in Early Judaism: The Two Spirits Treatise (1QS 3: 13–4: 26) and Other Texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Dust of the Ground and Breath of Life* (Gen 2:7); the Problem of a Dualistic Anthropology in Early Judaism and Christianity (J. van Ruiten and G.H. van Kooten, ed.; Leiden: Brill, 2016) 58-98; Eibert Tigchelaar, “Historical Origins of the Early Christian Concept of the Holy Spirit: Perspectives from the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in Frey and Levison, *The Holy Spirit*,167-240.

 [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
56. These ideas continued to resonate even later in rabbinic literature, as in the famous scene described in Genesis Rabbah (2:4 and the parallels in t. Ḥag. 2:6; y. Ḥag. 2:1, 9a; b. Ḥag. 15a) on Simeon ben Zoma. As Menahem Kister demonstrates (private communication) the wind in ben Zoma’s words has an active role in separating the water, thereby preserving a remnant of the creative nature of the wind from the mythological traditions. Compare Kister, “Tohu wa-Bohu,” 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)