



Phoenician Creation Myth

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Phoenician culture had had thoroughly been Hellenized by the Roman period; Philo of Byblos (ca. 64 – 141 CE) and Marinus of Tyre (70~130 CE) are the only two known authors of this later period who held to Phoenician traditions.

1. Philo of Byblos describes creation

“. . . a dark and stormy air, or a dark air and a turbid chaos, resembling Erebus; and these were at first unbounded, and for a long series of ages had no limit. But after a time this wind became enamored of its own first principles, and an intimate union took place between them, a connection which was called Desire [*pothos*]: and this was the beginning of the creation of all things. But it [i.e. the Desire] had no consciousness of its own creation: however, from its embrace with the wind was generated Môt, which some call watery slime, and others putrescence of watery secretion. And from this sprang all the seed of creation, and the generation of the universe. And first there were certain animals without sensation, from which intelligent animals were produced, and these were called 'Zopher-Sêmin,' i.e. 'beholders of the heavens;' and they were made in the shape of an egg, and from Môt shone forth the sun, and the moon, and the lesser and the greater stars. And when the air began to send forth light, by the conflagration of land and sea, winds were produced, and clouds, and very great downpours, and effusions of the heavenly waters. And when these were thus separated, and carried, through the heat of the sun, out of their proper places, and all met again in the air, and came into collision, there ensued thunderings and lightnings; and through the rattle of the thunder, the intelligent animals, above mentioned, were woke up, and, startled by the noise, began to move about both in the sea and on the land, alike such as were male and such as were female. All these things were found in the cosmogony of Taaut [cf Thoth], and in his Commentaries, and were drawn from his conjectures, and from the proofs which his intellect discovered, and which he made clear to us. . . ."

"From the wind, Colpia, and his wife Bahu [Heb. {...}], which is by interpretation 'Night,' were born Æon and Protogonus, mortal men so named; of whom one, viz. Æon, discovered that life might be sustained by the fruits of trees. Their immediate descendants were called Genos and Genea, who lived in Phoenicia, and in time of drought stretched forth their hands to heaven towards

the sun; for him they regarded as the sole Lord of Heaven, and called him Baal-samin, which means 'Lord of Heaven' in the Phoenician tongue, and is equivalent to Zeus in Greek. And from Genos, son of Æon and Protogonus, were begotten mortal children, called Phôs, and Pyr, and Phlox [i.e. Light, Fire, and Flame]. These persons invented the method of producing fire by rubbing 2 pieces of wood together, and taught men to employ it. They begat sons of surprising size and stature, whose names were given to the mountains whereof they had obtained possession, viz. Casius, and Libanus, and Antilibanus, and Brathy. From them were produced Memrumus and Hypsuranius, who took their names from their mothers, women in those days yielding themselves without shame to any man whom they happened to meet. Hypsuranius lived at Tyre, and invented the art of building huts with reeds and rushes and the papyrus plant. He quarreled with his brother, Usôus, who was the first to make clothing for the body out of the skins of the wild beasts which he slew. On one occasion, when there was a great storm of rain and wind, the trees in the neighborhood of Tyre so rubbed against each other that they took fire, and the whole forest was burnt; whereupon Usôus took a tree, and having cleared it of its boughs, was the first to venture on the sea in a boat. He also consecrated 2 pillars to Fire and Wind, and worshipped them, and poured upon them the blood of the animals which he took by hunting. And when the two brothers were dead, those who remained alive consecrated rods to their memory, and continued to worship the pillars, and to hold a festival in their honor year by year. . . . ”

In case that sounded good to you, here is the opinion of classicist Robert Fitzgerald: “The literary value of Philo's work was exceedingly small. His style is complicated and confused; his matter, for the most part, worthless, and his mixture of Greek, Phoenician, and Egyptian etymologies absurd.” But other historians give him more credit, and syncretism is the Phoenician way.