

DRACO THE DRAGON

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The embarrassment of dragons

“Everyone *knows* it. Scientists have proven it dozens of times. Dragons are mythological; they never existed, leastwise, not while man roamed the earth. True, the ancient Chinese, Indians, Europeans, Amerindians, Africans, Australians, and others believed dragons existed in their time. They described dragons, told tales of killing them, and of the pestilences coming from dragons. But today we are much wiser and know that such ancient lore is nothing but myth. We are *humanists*, the measure of all things! We don’t need God. God is just a crutch for the feeble-minded, the weak. Today we know infinitely more than those grunting cave men. They and their dragon-infested Bible: bah!”

“Hey!” a voice responds. “We’re not humanists. We believe in God, and we, too, know that dragons are mythological. Ignorant, superstitious men introduced the dragons into the Bible. We now have the correct interpretation for those problematic words. They’re not dragons but jackals. We’re *Bible critics*, the measure of all things! We find out what God really *meant* to say but could not say plainly because of the cave-man mentality he had to address in His Word!”

Now, that the author of this article totally disagrees with both the above statements let that be understood from the start. If that means being labeled feeble-minded, so be it. We think better of the ancients. Having studied their technology, we find them to be very clever and inventive, and we suspect that they could think circles around the aforementioned humanist and critical geniuses of today. We know the ancients were more honorable than we today (2 Tim. 3:13), and so we believe that they really did have dragons in those days. Some tales were embellished over time, but that’s true even of science today. The world has just as many myths today as it had 3000 years ago. Can we help if the humanists and Bible critics have swallowed every myth we have today while rejecting the Truth as myth? Having said that, we need to prove our point for we are, after all, challenging the established belief system.

Dragons throughout history

The word *dragon* is used throughout Europe to describe a type of animal known around the world. The *Authorized Bible* mentions dragons

35 times. Of these, all are in the Old Testament except for 13 occurrences in the Revelation. Here are the properties which the *Authorized Bible* assigns to the dragons: they are venomous (De. 32:33); they may be found on land (Is. 34:13) or in the sea (Ps. 74:13); they live in dens (Jer. 9:11); they snuff the wind (Jer. 14:6); they wail (Mic. 1:8); they can live in a waste wilderness (Mal. 1:3); Satan is called a dragon with seven heads (Re. 12:4); and finally, a serpent is a dragon (Re. 20:2).

The modern versions avoid dragons like the plague they are. The NASV translates the Hebrew word as a serpent in Deu. 32:33, but then translates the same word as a “jackal” in Isa. 34:13. In Psa. 74:13 the translating committee felt it safe to translate the Hebrew as “sea serpent” but in Jer. 9:11; 14:6; Mic. 1:8, and Mal. 1:3, it’s back to a “jackal” again. For some reason, the committee decided that it’s all right to use “dragon” in Revelation. Perhaps this is because most believe it to be “merely” figurative. The NIV translators disagree with those of the NASV when they say Deu. 32:33 refers to serpents. They agree with the NASV in its use of jackals. In Psa. 74:13, the NIV changes the NASV’s sea serpent to a “monster in the waters.” The NKJV translators saw serpents in Deu. 32:33 and jackals elsewhere. In Ps. 74:13 they, however, see “sea serpents” instead of either a “sea serpent” or “monster in the waters.”

It makes sense to consistently translate one noun in Hebrew to the same noun in English, although that is not always the possible. Of all the versions and translations, however, the Authorized Bible is the most consistent here. Indeed, since the new versions do not use “dragon” anywhere in the Old Testament, it suddenly shows up in Revelation 12 without any cross-reference to the Old Testament. Not until Revelation 20 do the new versions reveal that the dragon is Satan.

Are the translating committees right in avoiding dragons? Certainly, no one can mistake a sea serpent for a jackal. Stories of dragons abound around the world. The memoirs of Alexander the Great tell of seeing a dragon kept in a cave in India. The creature hissed frightfully and was over 100 feet long. Chinese history tells of using dragon eggs for medicine and of a family which raised and trained dragons to pull the emperor’s chariot on special occasions. The Italian naturalist, Ulysses Androvanus, documented the death of a dragon in painstaking detail because they had become so rare. He tells of a peasant, named Baptiste, who met the dragon on May 13, 1572 near Bologna and clubbed it to death with his staff. Reports of dragons were common through about the tenth century. As for the dragons in the seas, both the Vikings and the Chinese formed their ships in their image. So dragons, although now apparently extinct, were still fairly common 1,000 years ago. The evidence for their existence is overwhelming. For example, how did the Chinese

know of dragon eggs? In examining the tales around the world it is clear that dragons and dinosaurs are, if not the same, at least related. So the critics err by relegating dragons to mythology.¹

Draco

The constellation of Draco the dragon has long been associated with the serpent which tempted Eve. To the Babylonians the constellation represented the Great Dragon they worshipped with Bel (Baal). The Babylonians saw in the constellation a dragon and a snail, and also, the constellation as a whole was the serpent *Sir*.

The constellation Draco is referred to in the Scripture. In both Job 26:13 and in Isaiah 27:1, it is called “the crooked serpent.”² The ancient Arabs called it *Al Tinnim*, and *Al Thuban*, which names Ptolemy translated into Greek as “the dragon.” This agrees with the Authorized Version which translates the Hebrew word, *tannim* as dragon.

The names of most the stars in the constellation also support the dragon title. Referring to the star map on the next page and starting at Draco’s tail, the stars’ names and their meanings are:

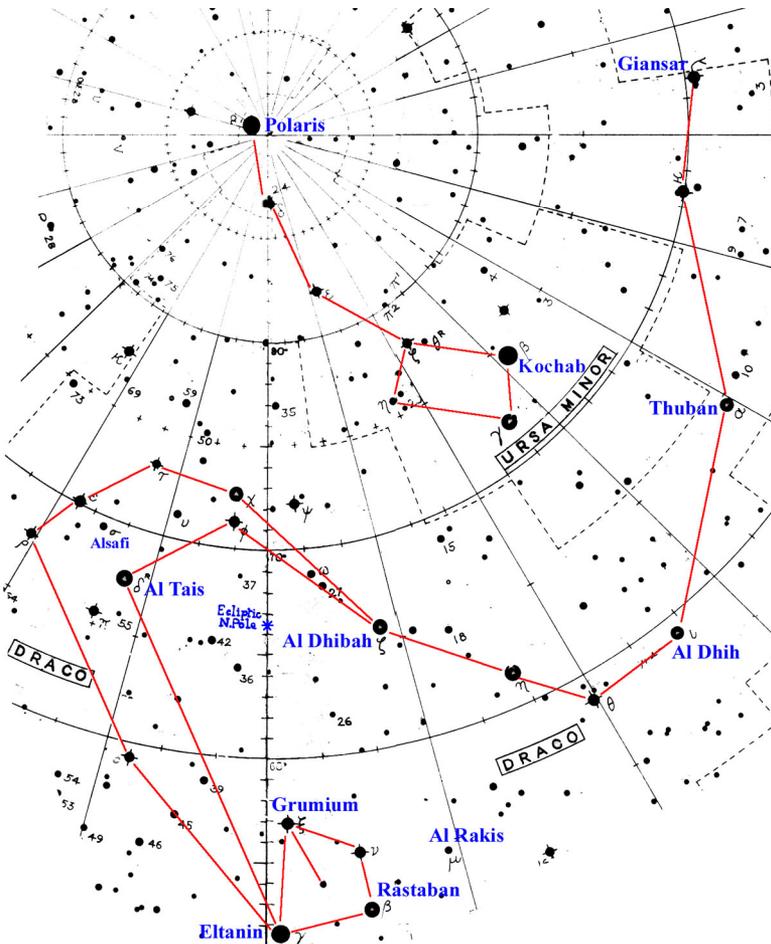
- Giansar** = poison place, punished enemy
- Thuban** = dragon; Arabic: serpent
- Al Dhih** = hyena, wolf, originally called
Al Dib = the reptile
- Al Dhibah** = reptile, hyena, made accursed
- Al Tais** = the goat
- Eltanin** = the dragon; the star is also called
Ras Elatanin = dragon’s head
- Rastaban** = dragon’s head, also called
Al Waid = the one to be destroyed; mother camel
- Grumium** = dragon’s jaw, deceiver, subtle
- Al Rakis** = the dancer, trotting camel; the bound or caught

Most of the names are Arabic, translated from the Greek names in Ptolemy’s star list. A few, such as Thuban, the brightest star in the con-

¹ Most of the historical accounts in the paragraph are based on evidence presented and documented in *The Great Dinosaur Mystery* videotape, (Mesa Arizona: Films for Christ).

² *Job 26:13* — By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent.

Isa. 27:1 — In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea

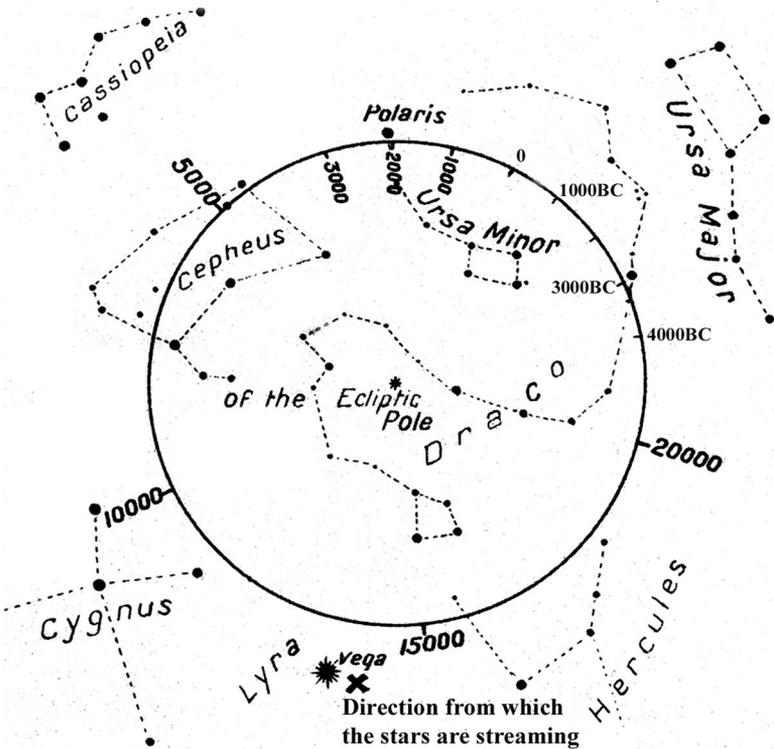


stellation, still reflect their Semitic origin, *viz.* Eltanin, Rastaban, and Dhibah. The names beginning with “Al” are Arabic.

Thuban

Thuban and Al Tannin are the Arabic designations for the entire constellation. These were translations of Ptolemy’s $\Delta\rho\alpha\kappa\omega\nu$, *Drakon*, from which was derived the Latin, *Draco*. The Egyptians called the constellation *Tanem*, the Hebrews called it *Tannin*, and in Aramaic its name is *Tannin*. Among the Arab names inscribed on the Borgian sky globe, over the stars β and γ atop the head of Draco, are the words *Alghavil Altannin*.

Assemani translates these words as the Poisonous Dragon. This inscription stemmed from the belief of early astrologers that when a comet was located in the head of the dragon, that poison was scattered all over the world. In China Draco was Tsi Kung, which seems to be a variant of Thuban, translated as the palace of the heavenly emperor, but the Chinese constellation of a dragon was among the stars of Libra.



About 3000 B.C., roughly at the time of the Flood, Thuban was the pole star. One of the motions of the heaven is called the precession of the equinoxes, where the north pole turns counter-clockwise about a point in Draco. It takes roughly 26,000 years to make one revolution about the ecliptic pole. Roughly speaking, the Ecliptic North Pole is the point in the sky to which points the sun's north pole. Technically, it is the pole of the path the sun traces about the earth throughout the course of the year. So the placement of Draco in the sky is focused on the sun, and spiritually, the dragon is associated with the worship of the sun.

In the figure on the previous page, the entire scene is reminiscent of Lucifer's boast recorded in Isaiah 14:12—"For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most high." This is especially seen in that the constellation of Ursa Minor (the little dipper) was associated by the ancients with a throne, and with a little flock or congregation, and the star we now call Polaris was called *Unosoura*, meaning high-rising one. There is also a very ancient name for Polaris placing it at the end of a tail. The Greeks took it for a dog's tail, others for a tail or train of light. It makes little sense to think of the little dipper as a bright tail, because its stars are faint, but the title could be a reference to the tail of Draco. Unfortunately, not enough ancient history of the constellation survives to be certain of this. Nevertheless, Polaris is called the *Polus* of Lucan³ (pole of light) by both Hipparchus and Euclid. The Finns called Polaris *Taehti*, the Star at the Top of the Heavenly Mountain.

Of camels and jackals

Having seen the spiritual significance of the crooked serpent, let us now look at what some other peoples have seen in the constellation. For instance, there is a star on the large chart of Draco, called, Alsafi, that has not yet been mentioned. The name, given by nomadic Bedouin Arabs, is a corruption of *Athafiy*, according to Allen, referring to the cooking tripods of their open-air kitchens. Indeed, the nomadic desert tribes had a totally unique set of constellations, and star names. Thus, in Draco, instead of the head of a dragon, they saw a ring of mother camels (formed by the stars γ , ξ , ν , and β on p. 54) surrounding a baby camel (the faint star at the end of the mouth in the figure), with another mother camel, Al Rakis (μ), running to join them. The camels were seen protecting the baby from a line of charging hyenas (Al Dhiah, θ , η , and ζ).

When in the eighteenth century the Jesuits—who were formed to counter the influence of the English Bible so to destroy the power of Great Britain—founded higher criticism, their goal was to make the English Bible seem un scholarly.⁴ Since the English Bible speaks of dragons, and everyone “knows” that only ignorant, uneducated, simpleton troglodytes believe in such “myths,” the “original” Hebrew and Greek must have

³ For more insight into this name, see: G. D. Bouw, 2001. “The Morning Stars,” *B. A.* 11(97):69

⁴ Gipp, S. C., 1987. *An Understandable History of the Bible*, (Macedonia, Ohio: Bible Believers Baptist Bookstore).

meant something different, something that escaped the translators because they didn't have at their disposal the latest manuscripts and scholarship. So to seem more scholarly, the critical "scholars" took the Arabic nomads' story and applied the line of hyenas, or jackals, to the whole constellation. On that basis, the dragon became a jackal, for it could not become a camel because that is too obvious a nonsense. From that time forward, all Bible dictionaries have insisted that jackal is the correct translation and meaning of the Hebrew "original," even though the historical evidence flies in the face of that conclusion. The "scholars" had this going for them, though, that the evidence lies deeply hidden in the constellations, where few people would even think to look, or be interested in researching, let alone having access to the meaning of names in multiple languages. So the Hebrew words based on *tan* have been jackals ever since.

Of whales and dragons

The Hebrew word for whale used in the Scripture is the word *tan*. Of it, Strong's Concordance says:

"8565, ... from an unused root probably meaning to *elongate*; a *monster* (as preternaturally formed), i.e. a *sea-serpent* (or other huge marine animal); also a *jackal* (or other hideous land animal): — dragon, whale. Compare 8577."

According to Strong, *tan* is translated both as dragon and whale by the translators of the King James Bible. Yet a search through the concordance reveals not a single incidence of *tan* (8565) being translated as dragon. It is always translated as "whale" in the Authorized Bible.

The word translated exclusively as dragon is Strong's number 8568, of which he wrote "probably feminine of 8565; a female jackal—dragon." Note that the female monsters of 8565 are now assuredly jackals. No allowance is made for any of the monsters listed in the "masculine" case of this word (8565) *tannah* to have a mate. Note carefully, however, the words "probable" and "probably" in Strong's definitions so far; for according to the dictionaries *prior* to those of the higher critics, *tan* was a whale and *tannah* a dragon. The word *tannah* is used once in the A.V., in Mal. 1:3, where it appears as dragon.

The third word involved in the dragon controversy is *tannin*, the Hebrew name of the constellation Draco itself. Numbered 8577 in Strong's Concordance, Strong wrote of it: "intensive from the same as 8565; a marine or land *monster*, i.e. a *sea-serpent* or jackal: —dragon, sea-monster,

serpent, whale.” The range of meanings assigned this word by the A.V. translators corresponds to the range of meanings we discovered for the constellation Draco throughout the Fertile Crescent, the Mid-East and Europe. Only the Arab nomads introduced the concept of jackals into the constellation, but then, they also saw jackals in the constellations Ursa Major, Ursa Minor, and Boötes.⁵

Strong’s definitions are his own. In checking with a Hebrew scholar with some fifty years of reading and speaking Hebrew, we find that “...the root is *tanah* meaning to shriek or wail. Serpents are called shriekers from the horrid whining or hissing noise they make. Jim Hanson thinks the dragons were the original dinosaurs. ... Now, I do not know whether Jim has dated them, though some think this is a ‘Golden Legend,’ deriving from the myth of Perseus slaying of the sea monster at Arsuf or Joppa, both cities in the neighborhood of Lydda, but his contention is that these legends about dragons are really validated by the skeletal remains of the so-called dinosaurs. ...

“These are the type of connections that are laughed at by contemporary scientists as they laughed at the citation of Biblical cities such as Ur of the Chaldees, or Troy of Homer as mythical, only to have archeologists decades later actually find the remains of these cities exactly where they were supposed to be.”⁶

Conclusion

The modern conjecture, that the dragons in the Bible are merely jackals, evidently stems from some Arab names applied to some stars in the constellations of Draco. The names are variants of *dhih*, meaning hyena or jackal in Arabic. Even at that, the nomadic Arabs may have misunderstood, or in isolation evolved, the name “Al Dib,” the reptile, into *al dhih*, the jackal. Because Draco has stars named Thuban (a derivative of *tannin*) and Eltanin, and because the constellation is called Al Tin-nin and Al Thuban in Arabic, and Etanim, Aben, Taben, and Etabin in Armenian, and because the Babylonian and Egyptian and Hebrew designations for the constellation agree to this, and because the existence of dragons was still commonly reported and documented well into the Middle Ages, we conclude that to change the Hebrew meaning and root of *tannin* from dragon (shrieker) to jackal (elongate) is without foundation and so is not only baseless, but by obscuring the identity of the enemy of our souls and our God, is also blasphemy.

⁵ Allen, R. H., 1899. *Star-Names and Their Meanings*, (G. E. Strechert) reprinted in 1963 by Dover Publications under the title *Star Names: Their Lore and Meaning*.

⁶ Lifschultz, David, 2001. Private communication.