

ԱՐՄԵՆ ՅՈՎԱԿԻՄՅԱՆ

Բանասիրական գիտ. թեկնածու

ՀԱՅՈՑ ԱՄՊՐՈՂԱՅԻՆ ԱՍՏՈՒ ԱՌԱՊԵԼԻ ԱՌԹԻՒ՝

Յօդուածն անդրադարձ է Հայոց ամպրոպի աստուածութեանը: Դիտարկուած են սակաւ արծարծուած հանգամանքներ եւ մի շարք նմանութիւններ Յովհաննու յայտնութեան եւ Յոբի գրքի որոշ դրուագների հետ:

ARMEN HOVAKIMYAN

PhD in Philology

ON THE ARMENIAN MYTH OF THE THUNDER GOD

Among the myths of the Armenian pagan pantheon, the figure of the thunder god occupies a singular and much-studied position². For convenience, the deity is designated here as the thunder god, a term encompassing not only thunder and lightning, but also all forms of precipitation—rain, hail, and snow—as well as related atmospheric phenomena, including clouds, overcast skies, mist, and the rainbow. The designation “thunder god” is employed here as a functional category rather than as a native theonym. Across the sources, scholars attribute to this figure a wide range of functions, variously portraying him as a god of war and battle, a bestower of victory, and, in some interpretations, even a solar divinity. He is known primarily as Vahagn, while the name Tigran appears only rarely in the sources. He also bears the epithet

¹* Ստացուել է՝ 6.12.2025, գրախօսուել է՝ 6.01.2026: Էլ. հասցե՝ ahov1969@rambler.ru: Խմբագիր՝ Գեորգ Սարեան:

² Certain aspects of this deity have been discussed previously See **Գ. Մադոյեան**, Դրուագներ Հայոց պատմութեան եւ բանահիւսութեան (ըստ հին եւ միջնադարեան աղբիւրների), **G. Madoyean**, Episodes of Armenian History and Folklore (According to Ancient and Medieval Sources), Book A., Yerevan, 2017, pp. 99–115.

Vishapaqagh (“Dragon-Slayer”), in reference to his battles against dragons and his ultimate victory over them³.

Anania Shirakatsi (seventh century) preserves another tradition concerning Vahagn. According to this account, Vahagn steals straw from Barsham, who in Armenian myth is regarded as the progenitor of the Assyrians. As Vahagn carries the straw away—piled high upon a cart—it gradually scatters along his path. In the worldview of the ancient Armenians, this scattering was mythologically interpreted as the formation of a celestial trail, which came to be known as the “Path of the Straw-Thief,” an archaic Armenian designation for the Milky Way⁴.

The most renowned tradition concerning Vahagn, however, is the Goghtan song known as “The Birth of Vahagn.” It was performed by the *gusans*—epic singers from the Armenian province of Goghtn—and has been preserved in the *History* of Movses Khorenatsi. In this song, the *gusans* depict the birth and advent of the thunder god:

Heaven was in travail, earth was in travail, the purple sea was also in travail; in the sea travail also gripped the red reed. From the tube of the reed came forth smoke, from the tube of the reed came forth flame. From the flame a redheaded young boy⁵ ran out. He had fire for hair, and had flame for beard, and his eyes were suns⁶.

Movses Khorenatsi brings his narrative to a close at this point, leaving a number of intriguing questions unresolved. Regrettably, the supplementary information preserved in other sources often generates more confusion than clarity with regard to certain aspects of the myth. Encouragingly, however, Armenologists have succeeded in elucidating several issues through careful analysis of the available material. In cases where medieval authors provide no substantive information about

³ For this title attributed to the deity, see the testimony of the 5th-century historian Agathangeghos (in Armenian: *Agathangelos, History of the Armenians*, Yerevan, 1981, p. 102.

⁴ Անանիա Շիրակացի, Տիեզերագիտություն և տոմար (Anania Shirakatsi, *Cosmology and Calendar*), Yerevan, 1940, p. 37.

⁵ Note. In Classical Armenian, the forms *eghegn-ik* (“little reed”) and *patanek-ik* (“young boy”) contain the diminutive-affectionate suffix *-ik*. The use of this suffix suggests that the poet is not referring to an ordinary reed or youth, but rather to a very small and delicate reed and to a tender, almost childlike figure. This morphological nuance introduces an additional layer of emotional and symbolic resonance into the imagery of the ancient text.

⁶ **Moses Khorenats’i**, *History of the Armenians*, trans. and commentary by Robert W. Thomson (London: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 123; cf. also the revised edition (Ann Arbor, MI: Caravan Books, 2006), p. 119.

Vahagn, scholars have been compelled to turn to comparative mythology for clarification. As a result, the characteristics typically attributed to thunder gods have been sufficiently clarified through comparative analysis.

Certain features, while not essential for outlining the general profile of a thunder god, nevertheless prove indispensable for understanding the distinctly Armenian conception of Vahagn. Yet when this question is examined specifically in relation to Vahagn, the well-known dream of Azhdahak—the mythic forefather of the Mars (Medes), or king of dragons, as recorded by Moses of Chorene (I.26–27)—may be interpreted in a different light⁷.

If Azhdahak’s dream is examined with the attention it warrants, it becomes evident that these details carry substantial interpretive weight. They may be easily overlooked in a cursory reading, yet prove crucial when considered in light of Vahagn’s position within the family. For this reason, we consider it appropriate to present the passage in full, thereby enabling the reader to follow our analysis more readily.

“My friends,” he (Azhdahak) said, “it happened to me today that I was in an unknown land near to a mountain that rose high from the earth and whose peak appeared enveloped in thick ice. One would have said that it was in the land of the Armenians. As I gazed for a long time at the mountain, a woman dressed in purple and wrapped in a veil the colour of the sky appeared sitting at the summit of that great height. Her eyes were beautiful, her stature tall, her cheeks red, and she was seized with the pains of childbirth. As I looked for a long time in amazement at this sight, the woman suddenly gave birth to three heroes, fully formed in stature and form. The first was mounted on a lion and flew to the west; the second on a leopard looked to the north; but the third rode a monstrous dragon and launched an attack on our empire.

“In the midst of such confused visions it seemed to me that I was standing on the roof of my royal palace, and I saw the surface of this pavilion adorned with beautiful and many-colored awnings; the gods who crowned me were present in a wonderful spectacle, and I, with you, was honoring them with sacrifices and incense. Suddenly I looked up and saw the man who was riding the dragon, flying with eagle’s wings, bearing down; he was already close by, intending to destroy the gods. But I Azhdahak, interposing myself, received this attack upon myself and came to grips with the

⁷ Ibid. p. 111 and ff.

wonderful hero. First we both hacked each other's body with lances, causing streams of blood to flow; the surface of the palace that shines like the sun we made a sea of blood. Thus, and later with other arms, we fought for several hours"⁸.

Upon closer examination, numerous similarities with the Birth of Vahagn become apparent. The “purple sea” is here transformed into a “woman dressed in purple,” a shift that, in popular belief, is explained by the notion that the sky assumes this hue before a thunderstorm. Nor are the descriptors “blue” and “cheeks red” in Azhdahak's dream coincidental: the former evokes the image of the sky, while the latter resonates with the motif of the “red reed” in the song of Vahagn's birth. It should be recalled here that, unlike the expression “cheeks red,” a “red reed” does not exist in nature; the color red in this context therefore does not denote a literal hue, but rather symbolizes fire and flame.

Another similarity—explicit in the original Armenian text—emerges in the shared vocabulary employed in the two passages, a feature rendered inconsistently in the translation of Robert Thomson. At times, he uses the word “travail” (for example, “Heaven was in travail, earth was in travail, the purple sea was also in travail; in the sea travail also gripped”), while in the account of Azhdahak's dream he opts for the phrase “pains of childbirth.” Yet in the Armenian original, all these instances derive from the same root, *erkn-/erkunq*, and convey an identical semantic field. In the Song of the Birth of Vahagn, heaven, earth, the purple sea, and the red reed are all described as being “in travail”; in Azhdahak's dream, likewise, the woman dressed in purple and veiled in the color of the sky is seized by the very same laboring pain.

To grasp the connection between Azhdahak's dream and the birth of the thunder god, it is essential to take into account the description of the “beautiful” and “numerous” fountains adorning the roof of Azhdahak's palace. The passage, as translated by Robert Thomson, reads: «In the midst of such confused visions it seemed to me that I was standing on the roof of my royal palace, and I saw the surface of this pavilion adorned with beautiful and many-colored awnings». In Thomson's translation, the Armenian word *shatrvan* is rendered as “awnings,” corresponding to the first definition given in the Classical Armenian dictionary. However, in a narrative concerning a deity associated with rain and thunder, the

⁸ **Moses Khorenats'i**, *ibid.*, 112–113. The quotation is reproduced verbatim, without editorial intervention.

dictionary's second meaning—"water-spout, fountain"⁹—appears far more appropriate. Under this interpretation, the roof would not be adorned with multiple awnings but with fountains. It is therefore entirely reasonable that this is precisely the reading adopted in the modern Armenian translations of Bishop Khoren Stepane and Stepanos Malkhasyants, whose mastery of Classical Armenian—unencumbered by excessive caution—far surpasses anything that can reasonably be attributed to Thomson in this domain¹⁰.

It is noteworthy that the hero of the dream sets out for battle immediately after his birth—a detail that closely parallels the Song of Vahagn, in which the newly born hero hastens forth to slay the dragons. Particular attention should be paid to the phrase “we both hacked each other's body with lances,” for it provides compelling support for the theory advanced by the Armenian scholar of literature and folklore Manuk Abeghyan, who maintained that Vahagn was originally a thunder god¹¹. In this scene, the two figures are depicted as locked in a spear-fight, shedding each other's blood—a vivid metaphor for lightning and the coming rains—culminating in the line, “The surface of the palace that shines like the sun we made a sea of blood,” a poetic image that once again evokes the motif of rainfall.

One further point of interest concerns the phrase “sunward face” (արեգակնաւնու երես). Both Khoren Stepane and Stepanos Malkhasyants appear to have regarded this expression as obscure in their translations, whereas Robert Thomson rendered it as “the surface of the palace that shines like the sun.” The actual meaning, however, is “the face of the palace was like the sun.” As will be shown below, this expression is by no means accidental¹².

In light of the broader textual and semantic context, it appears likely that the passage preserves a textual corruption. It is highly probable that the expression in

⁹ Հայր Մկրտիչ Արեղեան, Գրիգոր Ճելալեան, Առձեռն բառարան հայկազնեան լեզուի (Fr. Mkrtich Avgeryan, fr. Grigor Chelalyan (in Handy Dictionary of Armenian), Venice, 1865, p. 631, cp. Rev. Matthias bedrossian, New Dictionary Armenian-English, Venice, 1875–1879, p. 544.

¹⁰ See **Movses Khorenatsi**, Hystory of Armenia, translated into modern Armenian and explained by bishop Khoren Stepane (in Armenian – **Մովսէս Խորենացի**, Հայոց պատմութիւն (աշխարհաբար թարգմանեց եւ լուսարանեց Խորէն եպս. Ստեփանէ), 2nd edition, S. Peterburg, 1898, p. 62, cp. **Movses Khorenatsi**, Hystory of Armenia, translation, Introduction and notes by Stepanos Malkhasyants (in Armenian - **Մովսէս Խորենացի**, Պատմութիւն Հայոց (թարգմ., Ներածութիւնը եւ ծանօթագրութիւններն Ստեփան Մալխասեանցի), Yerevan, 1968, p. 113.

¹¹ **M. Abeghyan**, Works, (in Armenian – **Մ. Աբեղեան**, vol. A, Yerevan, 1966, p. 138.

¹² See Modern Armenian translations: Stepane, note 150 and Malkhasyan, note 57.

the dream originally alluded to the thunder god, whom scholars have identified with Vahagn¹³. In contrast, Movses Khorenatsi's narrative clearly identifies Tigran as the opponent of Azhdahak.

Is it not conceivable that the hero who subdues the dragon in the dream was Tigran, rather than Vahagn? In this regard, it is important to recall that three heroes were born, and that it was the youngest among them who set out to engage Azhdahak in battle.

It may further be proposed that the reference to “an unknown land near to a mountain that rose high from the earth and whose peak appeared enveloped in thick ice. One would have said that it was in the land of the Armenians” should be understood as an allusion to the sacred mountain of the Armenians—Mount Ararat (Masis). According to the testimony of Movses Khorenatsi, it was only after his victory that Tigran settled the Mar people (Marq) at the foot of Mount Ararat. In mythology and popular imagination, moreover, Azhdahak's supposed palace was believed to have stood precisely at the location where the king of the Mars appeared in the dream.

Now, setting aside for a moment the passage discussed above, let us return to the idea associated with the birth of Vahagn: the hero rushes immediately to confront the dragons that threaten to ravage Armenia upon his birth. A question thus naturally arises: against whom would Vahagn have waged battle if the supreme dragon, Azhdahak, had already been slain? Movses Khorenatsi recounts the battle between Tigran and Azhdahak in the following manner: “So I praise my noble champion, the lancer well proportioned in all his limbs and perfect in the beauty of his frame, for he was vigorous and adept in' everything, and in strength he had no equal. But why do I prolong my account? When the battle was joined, with his lance he split Azhdahak's iron armor like water; the point of the lance ran right through him, and as he drew it back again he brought out with his weapon half of his lungs. The combat was magnificent, for heroes were facing heroes, and not straightway did they tum their backs to each other. Therefore the struggle was drawn out over long hours. But the death of Azhdahak brought it to an end. And this feat, added to his good fortune, increased Tigran's glory”¹⁴. As may be observed, Tigran's name is mentioned only at the end—suggesting that the slaying of Azhdahak serves to augment his glory retrospectively. Undoubtedly, the victory was worthy of reverence; yet this does not necessarily imply that the valiant warrior was, in fact, the king

¹³ See M. Abeghean, Works, (in Armenian - Մ. Աբեղեան, vol. A, Yerevan, 1966, pp. 74–75.

¹⁴ See Moses Khorenats'i, p. 115.

himself. It is entirely possible that the deed was performed by one of his sons, while the glory would nonetheless have been attributed—at least in part—to the king. For, in the end, all triumphs—regardless of their true origin—were ultimately ascribed to the ruler. Yet, if we interpret the episode as rendered by Moses Khorenatsi through a mythological lens, the figure of the “noble champion, the lancer” may well be understood as evoking a divine archetype—namely Vahagn, the thunder-god, whose spear is nothing other than lightning itself, embodied. Indeed, the phrase “with his lance he split Azhdahak’s iron armor like water; the point of the lance ran right through him” is not only striking in its poetic force, but also vividly echoes the imagery of thunder and lightning—suggesting the divine wrath of the storm concentrated in the slayer’s spear. And yet, Khorenatsi himself delivers a decisive conclusion that leaves no room for doubt or conjecture regarding the identity of the vanquisher: “So too there are many called Tigran, but only one descended from Hayk, who killed Azhdahak and led into captivity his house and Anoysh the mother of dragons...”¹⁵. Should greater significance be attributed to these words, or rather to those referring to Vahagn? “Then they would say in their song that he fought with dragons and overcame them”—and yet the dragons had already been vanquished. It is therefore not without reason that Manuk Abeghyan hesitates to confer the laurels of victory upon Tigran: “In Tigran’s place, there must originally have stood the thunder-god.”¹⁶.

It should be noted that the name Tigran means “one who fights with a lance, or by means of a pike (weapon).” This name belongs to one of the most ancient primordial ancestors of both the Armenian people and humanity as a whole—Armen, Nemra, and Teg/Tig-Armen (Togarmah), where teg and tig in Armenian denote a “pike” or spear-like weapon. From the form Tigran derive the names of the Tigris River and of the animal known as tigr/tiger. Taking into account the appearance of this name-figure in its most archaic stratum, it seems more accurate to assume that, among the Armenians, the original bearer of dominion over thunder and lightning was the patriarch Tigran, the lance-wielding warrior, whereas only at a later stage was this storm-power transferred to Vahagn¹⁷. In this case, the dream of Azhdahak,

¹⁵ Moses Khorenats’i, p. 119.

¹⁶ M. Abeghean, *ibid.*, p. 138.

¹⁷ For the etymology of the name *Tigran*, see Hr. Acharean, *Dictionary of Armenian Proper Names* (in Armenian), vol. 5, p. 146, Yerevan, 1946; cf. “The Names of Torgom, Patriarch of the Armenians” (in Armenian - Հայոց Թորգոմ նստապետի անունները), *Etchmiadzin*, 2020, no. 4, pp.

as recorded by Movses Khorenatsi—both in its vivid imagery and in the very name of the hero—aligns closely with the mythological figure of the thunder god.

In traditional belief systems, thunder and lightning were understood as manifestations of a celestial conflict between benevolent and malevolent forces. In antiquity, when human life was wholly subject to the caprices of nature, atmospheric phenomena such as rain, snow, and hail were perceived as both life-giving and destructive. The sun itself embodied this duality: it could bestow warmth and nourish crops, yet also scorch the earth and lay waste to harvests, thereby depriving communities of sustenance and livelihood. The passage under consideration offers remarkably vivid illustrations of how such perceptions contributed to the formation of folk belief. Within this worldview, the god of thunder was envisioned as riding a dragon, while the god of the sun was depicted as a heroic figure mounted upon a lion.

That is to say, if Vahagn is understood to be the youngest, and the sequence of the heroes is assumed to remain intact, it may be inferred that Bab—the eldest son of Tigran—serves as a symbolic representation of the solar deity within this context. Deities mounted upon mythical or real animals constitute a prominent category within archaic religious systems. Undoubtedly, Tiran—the second-born hero, depicted as mounted upon a leopard—likewise embodies certain supernatural forces.

* * *

In the preceding discussion, we examined Vahagn the Dragon-Slayer and noted that the dream of Azhdahak, as recounted in Chapter 26 (27) of Book I of Movses Khorenatsi's History, portrays the birth of a thunder deity—a vision that, in many respects, parallels the imagery of Vahagn's own birth in Chapter 31 (32).

In the poetic lines depicting the scene of Vahagn's birth, particular attention must also be paid to the use of color imagery employed by the ancient poet. Although the passage contains only a few words that explicitly denote color, numerous other terms contribute to the vividness of the imagery, rendering chromatic richness a central element in shaping the reader's imagination. Thus, when the text states, "Heaven was in travail," the imagination, in conjuring the image of the infinite and boundless sky, inevitably evokes the color blue. In this way, a chromatic

sequence is established—blue, purple, red—“Heaven was in travail, earth was in travail, the purple sea was also in travail; in the sea, travail also gripped the red reed.”

It is noteworthy that the same colors also appear in Azhdahak’s dream—albeit in a different sequence: a woman dressed in purple, veiled in the color of the sky, with red cheeks. We may therefore justifiably assume that this particular chromatic arrangement is not the result of mere coincidence. Indeed, such an assertion would remain within the realm of conjecture were it not for the well-attested association of the colors blue, purple, and red with the symbolic frameworks of ancient belief systems. The unity of these colors becomes especially evident within the Christian tradition. In his interpretation of manuscript miniature arches, Nerses Shnorhali writes: “The first arch is painted in four colors: blue, purple, red, and white. This arch represents the four elements. The purple columns symbolize the throne founded upon light, which transcends the elements”¹⁸.

In the Bible, the fixed sequence of the colors blue, purple, and red recurs repeatedly, and it is precisely this consistency of order that compels the conclusion that these colors are not mentioned arbitrarily. The earliest instance of the sequential enumeration of blue, purple, and red appears in the Book of Exodus: “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering. And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass, And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats’ hair...” (25:1–4)¹⁹. Later Christian commentators generally do not ascribe particular significance either to the aforementioned colors or to their fixed sequence. Rather, they simply observe that fabrics of these colors

¹⁸ «Մեկնությունը խորանաց», աշխատասիրություններ Վ. Ղազարեանի, Էջմիածին, 2004, էջ 361 (in Armenian-Meknutjunq khoranats” (Commentaries on the Arches), compiled V. Ghazaryan, Etchmiatsin, 2004, p. 361. cp. also: “The first arch is painted in four colors—blue, purple, scarlet, and white—and is fashioned in accordance with the four elements.” («Արդ առաջին խորանն Ռ. դեղօքն՝ կապուտակ, ծիրանի, կարմիր եւ սպիտակ: Չառաջին խորանին բերէ գնանություն ի տիպ չորս տարկրացա») (Stepanos Sjunetsi) p. 256: see variant reading: “Now, in this arch appear four hues of color—red and green, black and blue and distinct of all purple ” («Արդ եւ ի խորանս յայտսիկ չորք երանգ գունոց՝ կարմիր եւ կանաչ, սևա եւ կապոյտ, եւ մի առանձինն ծիրանի՝ զստ ի չորիցա») (Nerses Shnorhali) p. 275 etc. See also the compilers explanations: “The Symbolic and Aesthetic Role of Color in the Commentaries on the Arches” («Գոյնի խորհրդարանական եւ գեղագիտական դերը խորանների մեկնություններում»), p. 204–216:

¹⁹ Cp. Book of Exodus: 26: 1, 31, 36, 28: 5, 6, 8, 15, 33,35: 6, 23, 25, 35, 36: 8, 35, 37, 38: 18, 23, 39: 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 24, 29 etc. In the provided examples, the order of colors is consistently maintained.

are to be regarded as prescribed by divine command²⁰. Thus, the interpretations of Armenian medieval authors display greater depth, insofar as they regard these colors as symbolic representations of the four elements—Earth, Air, Fire, and Water. Taking into account both the Song of Vahagn’s Birth and the depiction of Azhdahak’s dream, it becomes evident that, among the Armenians, the colors blue, purple, and red possess deep pre-Christian roots and already appear in the earliest narratives concerning the advent of the thunder god. In discussions of Vahagn’s birth, the motifs of fire, flame, and smoke are likewise of particular significance. It is noteworthy that in other religious traditions as well, deities often manifest amid fire and flames or within a cloud of smoke. As the Russian theologian rightly observes, “The cloud and the fire are biblical symbols of divine revelation”—a statement that finds clear resonance in the imagery surrounding the thunder god’s theophany²¹. Such or similar conceptions existed not only in the lands west of Armenia, but also in the East. It is related of Zoroaster that he withdrew to a mountain, where he communed with the deity; the mountain was enveloped in fire, while Zoroaster himself emerged unscathed from the flames²². Thus, the depiction of a deity or a divinely chosen figure emerging from the flames may

²⁰ «And blue, and purple, and scarlet.—The colours intended are probably a dark blue produced from indigo, which was the only blue known to the Egyptians» (Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers), «Blue, and purple, and scarlet - i. e. the material dyed with these colors » (Barnes’ Notes on the Bible), «here you must not understand the mere colours, which could not be offered, but some materials proper for the work, and of the colours here mentioned» (Matthew Poole’s Commentary): see <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/exodus/25-4.htm>.

²¹ **С Александр Мень**, Исагогика (in Russian- Aleksandr Men, Isagogics), Moscow, 2000, p.198, 203; ср. “And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel” (Exodus 24:17), “On the day the tabernacle, the tent of the covenant law, was set up, the cloud covered it. From evening till morning the cloud above the tabernacle looked like fire. That is how it continued to be; the cloud covered it, and at night it looked like fire.” (Numbers 9:15–17); “But be assured today that the Lord your God is the one who goes across ahead of you like a devouring fire. He will destroy them; he will subdue them before you. And you will drive them out and annihilate them quickly, as the Lord has promised you.” (Deuteronomy 9:3): “Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently.” (Exodus 19:18), “You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain while it blazed with fire to the very heavens, with black clouds and deep darkness.” (Deuteronomy 4:11), “You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm.” (Hebrews 12:18) etc.

²² The Thirty-sixth, or Borysthenitic, Discourse which Dio [Chrysostom] delivered in his Native Land, § 40. “For the Persians say that Zoroaster, because of a passion for wisdom and justice, deserted his fellows and dwelt by himself on a certain mountain; and they say that thereupon the mountain caught fire, a mighty flame descending from the sky above, and that it burned unceasingly”.

likewise be regarded as native to Armenian mythology. This conclusion is not based on the assumption that, if conceptions of fire, flame, and smoke existed both east and west of Armenia, they must therefore also have been present within Armenia itself. Rather, it is supported by accounts transmitted by the elders, who related that: “The place to which he [Zoroaster] retired, according to the Persic writers, was in the region called Adarbain; where in aftertimes was the greatest Puratheion in Asia. This region was in Armenia: and some make him to have been born in the same country, upon one of the Gordiaean mountains”²³. Emphasizing that this information, as reported by Jacob Bryant, does not originate from Armenian “partisan” sources but from foreign accounts, we may further note that it is remarkable in several respects:

a) Zoroaster is said to have been of Armenian origin, descending from the land of Armenia;

b) it is therefore conceivable that the foundational concepts of his religious doctrine were first formulated in his native land;

c) and—perhaps most significantly—it was believed that the gods resided in Armenia, and that Zoroaster, at the end of his life, returned to his homeland to commune with them.

Returning to the narrative of the Goghtan song, it should be noted that it also allows us to infer that, within the framework of Armenian pagan beliefs, the reed held a particular significance. In the graceful lines of the song, the sky, the earth, and the sea are evoked—vast and boundless immensities—yet alongside them appears a plant, humbler than all: not simply a reed, but a mere “little reed” (տղեղնիկ). As a counterargument to the symbolic interpretation, one might point to a theoretical hypothesis rooted in the laws of physics: it is a well-known natural phenomenon that, before a thunderstorm, negative electric charges accumulate at the tip of the reed—projecting above the flat terrain—thereby attracting lightning. According to Abeghyan, “in the myths of various ancient peoples, and especially in those of the Indians, the celestial fire is associated with plants. That is, just as fire on earth originates from wood, it was believed that lightning in the sky is also born from wood. Thus, lightning is often imagined as various plants, and many plants have been considered embodiments of lightning, as in ancient times, they were used to create sacred fire through friction. An example of such plants is the thorn or thornbush, which, in Armenian tradition, is regarded as an embodiment of

²³ See **Jacob Bryant**, *ibid.*, vol. II, p. 118.

fire and a powerful ‘protective amulet’ against evil spirits. And in our incantations or ‘protective prayers,’ it is considered to be paired with fire. Many other plants in Armenian tradition are considered embodiments of lightning, but *whether the reed is one of them remains uncertain, as we lack information on the matter* (our italics.-G.A.)²⁴. By contrast, Manuk Abeghyan is fully aware that “in a Germanic myth, the reed appears as a bolt of lightning emerging from the hand of the god Odin, who was originally a thunder deity and is often compared to Indra”²⁵. In Eastern belief systems, fire, flame, and the reed are consistently interwoven, and the most enduring echoes of this symbolic triad are preserved in the Book of Obadiah: “And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the Lord hath spoken it”²⁶ (Obadiah 1:18); “And in the time of their visitation they shall shine, and run to and fro like sparks among the stubble.”²⁷ (The Wisdom of Solomon 3:7); “Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.”²⁸ (Isaiah, 5:24)...

These biblical passages, in which fire, flame, and stubble (rendered as “reed” in Armenian translations) appear together, take on a distinct connotation in the Armenian version. This shift in meaning arises, for instance, from the translation of *stubble* as *reed* and *sparks* as *lightning*—both of which resonate strongly with the imagery associated with the birth of the thunder god. Given the presence of such biblical parallels, it would be methodologically unsound to assert that expressions such as Tovma Artsruni’s “you the reed, we the consuming fire,” “Striking those impious ones like a

²⁴ M. Abeghyan, *ibid.*, pp. 79–80.

²⁵ M. Abeghyan, *ibid.* p. 80.

²⁶ In Armenian translation: «Եւ եղիցի տունն Յակովբոյ հուր, և տունն Յովսէփոյ բոց. և տունն Եսաւայ եղէզն» (And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau reed).

²⁷ In Armenian translation: «Իբրևա կայծակն ընդ եղէզն ընթասցին» (they will move as lightning darts through the reed).

²⁸ In Armenian translation: «ողպէս վառի եղէզն ի կայծականց հրոյ» (As the reed is devoured by the flame of lightning).

spark among reeds”²⁹, or Grigor Narekatsi’s “like a reed set ablaze by sparks of fire”³⁰ derive solely from native tradition and are entirely uninfluenced by external sources.

It is difficult to sustain the assertion of Manuk Abeghyan: “There are many other plants in Armenian tradition that are considered embodiments of lightning, but whether the reed is one of them remains uncertain, as we lack information on the matter” (our italics.—G.A.). But why, in fact, do we “lack information” suggesting that, in ancient Armenian tradition, the reed, flame, and fire (or lightning) were interconnected—when one of the clearest examples lies directly before us? Should we not discern this from the Song of Vahagn’s Birth itself? Can it be a mere coincidence that the reed (mentioned once) and the reed pipe (mentioned twice), together with references to flame and smoke, all appear within this mythic context? Certainly not. What is more, the cultic significance of the reed becomes evident when we consider other passages from the History of Movses Khorenatsi. The following two examples illustrate this point.

A. «They closed the doors of the temples of the idols, and they hid the images that were on the altars and columns by covering them with reeds»³¹.

B. «But when the wagon drivers saw the human bones, eaten by wild beasts and scattered by the edge of the ditch, they asked and discovered that they were those of their own lords. Gathering them into the wagons under reeds, they brought them and buried them in the same pits»³².

These examples demonstrate that, in one instance, pagan images are concealed beneath reeds, while in the other, the bones of the deceased are covered with them. In both cases, the reed performs a ritual function—conveying reverence, sanctity, or a sense of sacred awe. Notably, the first passage refers explicitly to a site of worship, where every action is grounded in established religious practice. The second concerns the relics of the deceased, which are reverently covered with reeds—an act likewise imbued with ritual significance. What is being covered in both cases is not perishable foodstuffs requiring preservation, but rather cultic images and human remains—objects no longer sub-

²⁹ **Thomas Artsruni**, *History of the House of the Artsrunik*’ (in Armenian - Թովմա Արծրունի, Պատմություն տանն Արծրունեաց), Translation and Commentary by R. W. Thomson. pp. 244, 364.

³⁰ **Grigor Narekatsi** (of Narek), *Book of Laments* 62:1.

³¹ **Moses Khorenats’i**, *ibid.*, p. 168.

³² **Moses Khorenats’i**, *ibid.*, p. 285.

ject to physical decay³³. And would it not have been easier to cover the images with woven fabric, or with some other broad-leaved and more readily available plant? Was there truly nothing growing in Armenia besides reeds? Or was it, rather, a reed covering that was required—prescribed by long-standing tradition? Undoubtedly, the matter lies in the particular reverence accorded to the reed, and we may confidently assert that it occupied a distinct place and bore symbolic significance within the religious worldview of ancient Armenians.

It is now widely accepted that both Testaments drew extensively upon the civilizations of the Ancient Near East, adapting earlier images and concepts as needed. Yet even when outward forms were transformed, the inner essence often remained intact. Samuel of Ani recounts a remarkable event that occurred in the city of Urhay (Edessa) in the year 1186. The scene he describes strikingly evokes one of the most iconic images in Christianity: the Virgin Mary cradling the newborn child. The historian relates that ‘during the night, a radiant light appeared in the sky and descended into the water-well where the burial shroud of Christ was kept. Fearing what might have occurred, the Christians lowered a non-Christian into the well by ropes to investigate. But when they pulled him out of the well, he declared, “I am a Christian”. Everyone gathered around him and asked, “What did you see?” “I saw in the well a woman clothed in purple, seated upon the throne of light, and in her arms a luminous child”³⁴. Might the woman clothed in purple, who was “seated upon the throne of light” in the well, be identified with the “woman dressed in purple and wrapped in a veil the color of the sky, who appeared sitting at the summit of that great height” in Azhdahak’s dream? Could she not be the very same Mother, clad in purple? Furthermore, might the “throne of light,” understood in Christian theology as the divine throne, have been transposed in pagan imagination to the summit of the highest mountain?

³³ In contrast to the above examples, in the account of **Ghazar Parpetsi** (Matenagirk‘ Hayots‘ [“Armenian Classical Authors”], in Armenian), vol. II (Antelias, Lebanon, 2003), 2347, the reed is employed explicitly as a means of counteracting stench: “And as for the army of Syunik, because of the abominable stench of their lord’s entrails spilled upon the ground, they covered them with reeds and, taking the remains, went to his relatives and retainers in the land of Syuniq.” Cf. **Stepanos Orbelean**, History of Syuniq (in Armenian: *Patmut‘iwn nahangin Sisakan*; Tiflis, 1911), 69: “And his servants covered his spilled entrails with reeds and, having taken them, laid them in the tomb of their forefathers”.

³⁴ See “Սամուէլ Անեցի եւ շարունակողներ, Ժամանակագրութիւն Ադամից մինչև 1776 թ.”, (in Armenian- Samuel of Ani and Continuator, Chronicle from Adam to 1776, ed. by K. Matevosyan,) Yerevan, 2014, p. 227.

A reconsideration of the commentary of Nerses Shnorhali appears to support such a reading: “The first arch is painted in four colors: blue, purple, red, and white. The first arch is created in the likeness of the four elements. The purple columns symbolize the throne established upon light, which is free from the elements”. The throne—here rendered in purple and associated with immaterial light—is deliberately situated beyond the realm of the four elements, thus suggesting a transcendent, divine reality. Yet when filtered through a pre-Christian cosmology, that same throne might be envisioned as residing atop the highest peak—the sacred mountain of the gods. The symbolic continuity, then, unfolds along a vertical axis: from the heavenly throne of Christian theology to the mountain summit of pagan myth.

In our view, when interpreted as symbolic visions, the imagery found in Azhdahak’s dream and in the vision recorded by Samuel of Ani (Samuel Anetsi) diverges only in the number of divine infants: in one case, three; in the other, a single child. Yet even this numerical difference may ultimately be illusory, for the one may itself signify the unity of three—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Let us now return once more to the words of Manuk Abeghyan—“the thorn or thornbush, which, in Armenian tradition, is regarded as an embodiment of fire and a powerful protective amulet against evil spirits,” and “the reed emerges as lightning from the hand of the god Odin”—and attempt to envision the god of lightning and thunder. Perhaps the thorn and the reed were always meant to accompany him; for, as we have already seen, the ancients firmly believed in an intimate connection between lightning and the reed. And if, in pagan conceptions, the reed appeared in the thunder-god’s hand as a sign of his power, one might ask: where might the thorn have been placed, so that its presence, too, would manifest divine authority? It is plausible that the thorn—or perhaps, once again, the reed—encircled the god’s head in the form of a diadem, much as Jacob Bryant describes the deity of the river: “But river Gods were generally represented as aged persons, with their heads crowned with sedge and reeds”³⁵. From the combined weight of the examples discussed above, one may infer that the god of thunder—whose power appeared almost boundless to the ancient imagination—was envisioned by pagans as clothed in purple, adorned not with gold or silver ornaments, but crowned with a wreath of thorns,

³⁵ See **Jacob Bryant**, *ibid.*, p. 386, cp. *Classical Manual*; or, a *Mythological, Historical, and Geographical Commentary on Pope’s Homer, Dryden’s Aeneid of Virgil; With a Copious Index*. London, 1827, p. 506.

and holding in his hand a reed or reed-like staff. Inevitably, one is reminded of the words of the Evangelist: “And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!” (Matt. 27:28–29).

When this passage is read alongside the testimony of the other Evangelists—“And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head” (Gospel of Mark 15:17), and “And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe” (Gospel of John 19:2)—the suspicion deepens that what we encounter here may indeed be the vestige of a pagan deity: a figure marked by a crown of thorns, a reed held in the right hand, and a crimson or purple robe draped over his body.

Let us recall that, in this context, the unbelievers intended to mock Jesus, and it was precisely for this purpose that the crown of thorns, the reed, and the royal robe were introduced. Even if we momentarily accept that the crown and the reed symbolized mock kingship—icons of a supposed or usurped authority—one must still ask why the robe was introduced, a garment traditionally reserved for persons of high status. Might it not be that the mockery itself unintentionally resurrected an archetype older than the act of scorn itself? In other words, why were the crown and the scepter in this scene false—mere instruments of derision—while the garment itself was real, genuinely royal? Could a figure clothed in purple, crowned with thorns, and holding a reed truly have appeared ridiculous to a pagan Roman? To a Roman soldier whose pantheon honored Saturn³⁶—a chief deity—depicted not in regal splendor but crowned with grasses and wielding a sickle³⁷ in place of a scepter? Such imagery did not diminish Saturn’s dignity; on the contrary, it affirmed his divine

³⁶ This example is cited for a specific purpose. In pagan tradition, Janus corresponds to Noah in Christianity. According to an ancient tradition, Saturn (Sabatius Saga, Hayk) was the grandson of Janus and became the first king of the land of Ararat—Armenia, where he confronted Jupiter Belus, the second king of Babylon. It is generally held that Saturn passed from the Phoenician or Armenian pantheon into the Latin tradition and, accordingly, that his principal attributes must display substantial—if not complete—correspondence with the deities of those cultures. For a detailed discussion, see “Episodes from Postdiluvian History Relating to the Haykian Myth” (in Armenian - «Հայկեան անասպելին անընչուող դրուագներ յեսոյրհեղեղեան պատմութիւնից»), *Etchmiadzin* (2012), no. 7, 71–87.

³⁷ See **Plutarch**, *Quaestiones Romanae*, Frank Cole Babbitt, Ed., 42: Why do they use the temple of Saturn as the public treasury and also as a place of storage for records of contracts? Is it because the opinion and tradition prevailed that when Saturn was king there was no greed or injustice among

identity. Or should we believe that a crown not forged of gold would have appeared absurd to members of an ancient civilization for whom the laurel wreath—simple, verdant, and unadorned—was itself the supreme emblem of triumph and authority? And if the laurel³⁸, or even a crown of oak or olive leaves, conveyed reverence and victory, why would a wreath of thorns, bound about the brow, signify only derision? Might it not, even in its roughness, evoke echoes of older, sacred prototypes—vestiges of power drawn from earth, sky, and suffering alike?

And if, according to the Gospel interpretation of Hovhannes Tzortzoretsi (c. 1270s–1338), “the taking of the reed symbolizes the lifting of our weakness,”³⁹ or, in the understanding of Nerses Shnorhali, “the reed signifies the vileness of speech,”⁴⁰ then, for the pagan, by contrast, the reed was a symbol of divinity—specifically of the storm god within the Armenian tradition—and could bear no negative connotation whatsoever. It was not the case that the thorn and the reed served merely as false symbols of crown and scepter while the purple robe alone remained a true mark of royalty—that is, of the divine. Rather, all three elements—the thorn, the reed, and the purple—were, in the pagan imagination, authentic emblems of godhood.

Bringing together the observations outlined above, we may conclude that, within the ancient Armenian belief system, the colors blue, purple, and red were closely associated with the cult of the storm god. It appears likely that this deity was adorned with a crown or bore a scepter fashioned from a reed, a detail indicating the particular reverence accorded to this plant within his worship. Storm gods were thus envisioned as wearing purple garments and bearing vegetal regalia—especially of

men, but good faith and justice? Or is it because the god was the discoverer of crops and the pioneer in husbandry? For this is what his sickle signifies and not as Antimachus, following Hesiod, has written.

Here with sickle in hand was wrought the form of rough Cronus Maiming his sire at his side, who is Uranus, offspring of Acmon.

³⁸ See “laurel” (in Russian - «ЛАВР» in «Словарь античности»). Dictionary of Antiquity. Translated from German and edited by M. I. Gasparov. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1989, where is mentioned: «Лавр был завезен в Европу, видимо, из Малой Азии» (The laurel is believed to have been introduced into Europe from Asia Minor), From this, one may infer that the attributes ascribed to it were likewise adopted by Europeans from the indigenous populations of Asia Minor.

³⁹ **Hovhannes Tzortzoretsi** (in Armenian - Commentary on Gospel of Mattew, ed. S. Stamboltsyan, Etchmiadzin, 2008, p. 695.

⁴⁰ Թուղթ Ընդհանրական Ներսէսի Կաթողիկոսի Հայոց առ համօրէն Հայաստան ազինս, որոց տեսչութիւն հաւատացաւ նմա ի Տեառնէ (The Encyclical of Nerses, Catholicos of the Armenians) (in Armenian - «Մատենագիրք Հայոց» “Armenian Classical Authors”, Vol. 22, Antelias Lebanon, 2022, p. 51.

reed—which symbolized their power. Traces of this imagery may be discerned in later religious traditions, where such symbols retained their sacred resonance, though often reframed within new theological contexts.

* * *

In his commentary on the passage describing Azhdahak’s dream, Robert Thomson, provides the following explanatory footnote: “230. For a woman in purple, cf. Rev. 17:4; for a woman and mountain, cf. Rev. 17:9; for a woman in travail, cf. Rev. 12:2; for the lion as first offspring, cf. Dan. 7:4; for the leopard, cf. Dan. 7:6; for the dragon (vishap: see I 30 n. 255), cf. Rev. 12:3. But more important are the old Indo-European parallels; see Watkins, BSL 1975, p. 21.” It should be emphasized here that the motifs of the “woman in purple” and the “woman and mountain” rank among the most prominent features of the thunder deity’s iconography. Alongside the examples noted by Thomson, we shall also present additional instances that display similarly close affinities with the Armenian myth of the thunder god.

For example, Revelation 1:12–14 reads: “And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow (cp. peak appeared enveloped in thick ice); **and his eyes were as a flame of fire**”. The phrase “his eyes were as a flame of fire,” in our view, is conceptually akin to the expression “*and his eyes were suns*”; both employ the same poetic imagery. A similar observation may be made with respect to Revelation 2:18–19: “And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath **his eyes like unto a flame of fire**, and his feet are like fine brass. I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.” Once again, the description “eyes like unto a flame of fire” echoes the poetic imagery of “his eyes were suns,” with both expressions symbolizing a radiant, piercing gaze. In Revelation 6:1, thunder is mentioned explicitly and directly: “And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.”

Book of Revelation 8:7 states: “The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of

trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up”. The imagery of “hail and fire mingled with blood” evokes the bloodshed described in Azhdahak’s battle, which—when taken together with the sounding of the trumpet and the storm-related elements—symbolically aligns with motifs of thunder and precipitation. In our view, the phrase “a third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up” corresponds directly to the imagery discussed earlier concerning the ignition of grasses and thorns.

In various passages of the Book of Revelation, one may further discern allusions to flashes of lightning and torrents of rain that bear a notable affinity to the imagery of Vahagn’s birth and to the visions associated with Azhdahak. Accordingly, we shall present several selected excerpts below, solely in order to underscore the parallels and points of reference we have identified.

Revelation 8:8

And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the *sea became blood*;

Revelation 9:17

And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of *fire*, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths *issued fire and smoke* and brimstone (cp. From the tube of the reed came forth smoke, from the tube of the reed came forth flame).

Revelation 10:1–4

And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a *rainbow was upon his head*, and his *face was as it were the sun (cp. above the face of the palace was like the sun)*, and his feet as pillars of fire: And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven *thunders* uttered their voices. And when the seven *thunders* had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven *thunders* uttered, and write them not.

Revelation 11:1–2

And there was given me a *reed like unto a rod*: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

Revelation 11:6

These have power to shut heaven, that *it rain not* in the days of their prophecy: and have power over *waters to turn them to blood*, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

If the passage is viewed through the belief system of a pagan individual, it becomes evident that the authority over the coming or withholding of rain would naturally be associated with the deity of thunder and rain.

Revelation 11:19

*And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were **lightnings**, and voices, and **thunderings**, and an earthquake, and **great hail**.*

Revelation 12:1–2

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

Revelation 12:3–4

*And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a **great red dragon**, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: **and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.***

Revelation 17:3–4

So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was *arrayed in purple and scarlet colour*, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication...

Revelation 21:15

And he that talked with me had a golden *reed* to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.

* * *

As may be observed, the biblical passages discussed above, which describe the soldiers' mockery of Jesus, display a close affinity—on the level of imagery and motifs—with ancient Armenian pagan conceptions of the thunder god as recorded by

Movses Khorenatsi. Beyond these biblical scenes, the colors and images found in the Book of Revelation attributed to John the Evangelist appear to correspond even more closely to the symbolic world associated with the thunder deity. This naturally raises the question of whether Khorenatsi, in presenting the Birth of Vahagn and the Dream of Azhdahak, may have been influenced by biblical passages concerning the thunder god.

In our view, the answer to this question is unequivocally negative. It is of little consequence to which century Khorenatsi is assigned by critics whose arguments have already been refuted. Regardless of the period to which the Armenian historian is dated, it is evident that the Song of the Birth of Vahagn and the Dream of Azhdahak were transmitted by Khorenatsi verbatim from a pre-Christian source—whether oral or written—and were not composed ad hoc through the exercise of a vivid imagination or mere familiarity with biblical material. This conclusion is further supported by Khorenatsi’s own explicit remarks, which make clear that he is reproducing an ancient tradition rather than offering his own formulation, especially in his account of Vahagn’s birth, where he expressly states that these are not his own words but, as he himself puts it, “so say the myths of our land”. The passages concerning Vahagn preserved by Khorenatsi constitute a direct reflection of the prehistorical religious beliefs of pagan Armenia regarding the thunder god. They are indigenous in origin and, in essence, free from external literary influence.

That said, providing a strictly scientific explanation for the similarities observed between these traditions is by no means a simple task. Apart from the explanation of “divine providence,” which may be readily acceptable to believers, it is worth recalling—at least in our opinion—the centuries-old tradition of the Armenian Apostolic Church, according to which John the Theologian, the Evangelist, spent a certain period in Armenia and preached there.

In connection with the visits of apostles and disciples to Armenia, it is appropriate to recall several testimonies. For instance, the July 1900 issue of the periodical *Ekeghetsi Hayastaneats* (“The Armenian Church”), under the heading “Visits of Other Apostles and Disciples”, states:

“In addition to the Armenian Enlightener Apostles, other apostles and disciples of Christ are also mentioned who, having come to Armenia, preached there for a certain time, but later departed and were martyred in other lands. The first among them is considered to be St. Thomas. Another is regarded as Simon the Canaanite, who bore the epithet the Zealot. Next comes St. Peter, and St. John the Evange-

list, who traveled as far as the land of the Parthians, naturally passing through and preaching along the routes of Armenia. Then follow St. Andrew and Matthias. Also mentioned is Judas of the Seventy, who is sometimes confused with Judas the brother of James. Next is the centurion Longinus (or Ghunkianos), who pierced Christ's side with a spear upon the cross and afterwards came to the faith ...⁴¹

Worthy of mention as well is the testimony of Grigor Tatevatsi (1346–1409) in his *Book of Questions*, where the “Illuminating Doctor of the Church” states explicitly: “Once again we say that the Armenians have three apostles: Thaddeus, Bartholomew, and Judas of James.” These remarks are cited here solely for the sake of information, so that circumstances well known to Armenian believers may likewise be made accessible to the non-Armenian reader.

Of particular relevance to our discussion, however, is the following point. According to certain scholars of ecclesiastical history, in addition to his place of exile on the island of Patmos and his activity in Ephesus, John also preached in India and in the land of the Parthians—regions that he would necessarily have reached by passing through Armenia. In this regard, Mkrtych Vardapet Avgerian writes: “It is no small consolation for the Armenian nation ... to have, in addition to the apostles Bartholomew and Thaddeus, the Theologian Evangelist John.”⁴² It should be recalled that Mkrtych Avgerian was among the foremost authorities on hagiographical traditions and testimonies, having examined not only Armenian sources but also major European works; from this perspective, his words may be regarded as particularly weighty.

The close affinity between Armenian, Persian, and Indian mythological traditions—especially the fact that the thunder god in all three cultures exhibits strikingly similar attributes and modes of worship—has been examined by M. Abeghyan⁴³. Consequently, if we exclude the possibility that images associated with the thunder god traveled from west to east, and particularly into Armenia, it may be more fruitful to pursue further research by considering the transmission of tradition in the opposite direction: from east to west.

⁴¹ Ekeghetsi Hayastanyats (Armenian Church periodical), July 1900, 113.

⁴² Մկրտիչ վրդ. Աւգերեան, Լիակատար վարք եւ վկայաբանութիւն սրբոց, «Պատկազան եւ բարեխօս սուրբեր»։ Գիրք Գ.։ Սուրբ Յովհաննէս առաքեալ, Սբ. Էջմիածին, 2021, էջ 15 (Rev. Mkrtych Avgerian, Complete Conduct and Testimony of the Saints, vol. X., Venice, 1814, p. 323, cf. “Guardian and Intercessory Saints.” Book C.: Saint John the Apostle, Holy Etchmiadzin, 2021, p. 15).

⁴³ Մ. Աբեղեան, Երկեր, Երևան, 1968, հտ. Գ., էջ 47–52 (M. Abeghyan, *Yerker (Works)*. Vol. 3. Yerevan, 1968. pp. 47–52).

* * *

The Book of Job stands as one of the most enigmatic and, from a literary standpoint, most profound compositions within the biblical canon. A substantial body of scholarship has argued that the narrative of Job—together with its underlying philosophical concerns—emerges from broader Ancient Near Eastern traditions, with particular affinities to Mesopotamian and, in some interpretations, Egyptian literary archetypes.

The prevailing scholarly consensus posits that the Book of Job is rooted in an ancient Near Eastern literary tradition concerning the ‘righteous sufferer,’ a motif with clear Mesopotamian antecedents. Of particular significance is *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*, frequently designated as the ‘Babylonian Job.’ Dating to the second millennium BCE, this composition recounts the tribulations of a high-ranking official who suffers profound affliction and marginalization despite his unwavering piety. Another notable precursor is the poem known as the ‘Sumerian Job’ (*Man and His God*), which articulates a human lament and supplication in the face of inexplicable suffering⁴⁴.

Samuel Noah Kramer, a preeminent authority on these traditions, provided compelling evidence to demonstrate that the motif of the ‘righteous sufferer’ was well-established centuries before the crystallization of Jewish literary culture. Beyond Mesopotamian parallels, scholarship has also identified significant Egyptian influences within the Book of Job. Notable affinities are observed with ancient Egyptian wisdom literature—most specifically *The Dispute Between a Man and His Ba* (or *Dialogue of a Man with His Soul*). This text explores the profound existential crisis of life’s meaning, the burden of suffering, and the longing for death, themes that bear a striking resemblance to the despairing monologues of Job⁴⁵. It is, therefore, inherently logical that the author of *How to Read the Bible* elucidates how Israelite wisdom literature—the Book of Job being a preeminent example—was sustained by the collective cultural milieu of the Ancient Near East. The text of Job itself yields significant internal evidence suggesting a non-Israelite origin. Most salient is the geographical setting: Job resides in the land of Uz, a locale that is explicitly outside the borders of Israel. This is further corroborated by onomastic evidence, as the names of Job and his companions lack Hebrew etymologies. Furthermore, the divine nomenclature employed in the poetic sections is highly revealing; the author consistently utilizes *Elohim* or *Shaddai*—general

⁴⁴ See Samuel Noah Kramer, “The ‘Sumerian Job’” 1956.

⁴⁵ See James Allen, *The Debate between a Man and His Soul*, 2011.

Semitic appellations for the Divine—rather than the tetragrammaton (*Yahweh*), the specific national name of the God of Israel. Such evidence strongly indicates that the narrative was adapted from an external, perhaps more universal, literary source.

At this juncture, it must be emphasized that in tracing the genealogy of a literary work, onomastic data serve as exceptionally vital criteria, if not definitive evidence. It can be posited that the land of Ausitis (Uz) is not merely the homeland of Job, but the cradle of the narrative itself, insofar as it localizes the events within a specific cultural geography. Consequently, these geographical and personal identifiers assume critical significance.

A pertinent example is found in Job 32:2: ‘Then Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram [Aram], burned with anger...’ While the prevailing exegetical tradition associates ‘Aram’ with the Arameans, Armenian historiographical tradition identifies Aram as one of the preeminent patriarchs of the Armenian nation. This ethnonym, alongside such designations as Japhethite, Togarmahite, and Ashkenazian, is consistently invoked by early Armenian chroniclers to define the Armenian identity. As Movses Khorenatsi explicitly records: ‘Arshak, king of Greater Armenia, and all the princes of the Aramian [Armenian] race’ (*History of the Armenians*, III, 29).

Equally deserving of scholarly attention is the epithet attributed to one of Job’s interlocutors. In the Classical Armenian translation (*Grabar*), Job 20:1 reads: ‘Again Zophar the *Minite* [Մինուցի] said...’—a designation that bears a striking resemblance to the toponym mentioned in Jeremiah 51:27: ‘Summon against her the kingdoms of Ararat, *Minni*, and Ashkenaz; appoint a marshal against her; bring up horses like bristling locusts.’

This parallel is highly significant, as it situates the ethnonym *Minni* within a specific geo-political constellation traditionally localized in the Armenian Highlands (specifically the region of Mannai/Minni). The recurrence of this name in both the Book of Job and the prophetic literature of the Old Testament reinforces the hypothesis that the onomastic and geographical framework of the Joban narrative reflects a cultural milieu intrinsically linked to the Armenian Plateau, rather than to the territorial boundaries of ancient Israel.

Nevertheless, the proximity of the ‘Minite’ Zophar’s homeland to the Araratian realm is frequently contested in contemporary scholarship, with a tendency to localize the land of the Mini within the Arabian Peninsula. The validity of

such a recontextualization remains highly debatable. In our estimation, the climatic conditions inherent to Arabia are profoundly incongruous—if not entirely antithetical—to the imagery articulated in Job 6:16–18. It is improbable that such metaphors could have been conceived by an author habituated to an environment where summer temperatures soar between +40–60°C and winters remain a mild +15–20°C. In such a landscape, the phenomena of snow and ice would be largely alien, rendering these images conceptually unintelligible both to the author and his immediate audience.

Consequently, we contend that the cultural and geographical milieu necessitated by the following lines must be sought in different latitudes:

*Those that were darkened by ice, upon whom the snow lay, when they melted at the coming of heat, they vanished and were gone; so I too was abandoned by all, I perished and was left destitute.*⁴⁶

This passage, with its vivid evocation of frost, perennial snow, and the seasonal cycles of thawing, presupposes a topographical setting far removed from the hyper-arid climate of Arabia, pointing instead toward a region characterized by harsh winters and dramatic seasonal shifts.

From a geographical perspective, it is equally significant that the Book of Job identifies its protagonist as an ‘Easterner’: *‘And that man was the greatest of all the people of the East’* (Job 1:3). This designation necessitates an inquiry into which territories were classified as ‘Eastern’ within the Biblical and, more broadly, the Ancient Near Eastern tradition. In this context, it is noteworthy that in classical and biblical sources, the Araratian land of Armenia was characterized by a fluid cartographic identity, situated sometimes to the North and at other times to the East, depending on the vantage point of the narrator⁴⁶. Similarly, scholarly consensus remains divided concerning the precise geographical localization of Uz, Job’s homeland. It is pertinent to recall that, within the spectrum of proposed identifications, Uz has occasionally been equated with Armenia. This correlation suggests that an Armenian substratum within the Joban narrative is not merely a conceptual possibility but a thesis that warrants rigorous analytical scrutiny. Such an investigation may

⁴⁶ We have previously had occasion to address the shifting conceptualization of the Armenian-Araratian land within biblical and ancient traditions, where it is situated alternately in the North or the East, depending on the vantage point of the source. For a detailed analysis regarding English biblical commentaries on the “noblest of the northern races,” see: “Etchmiadzin” Monthly, 2012, XII, pp. 77–89 (in Armenian).

reveal deeply embedded cultural and historical traces that link the origins of this biblical masterpiece to the Armenian Highlands⁴⁷.

As previously observed, the divine nomenclature in the Book of Job is characterized by a broad Semitic resonance, rather than an exclusively Israelite one. While it is a scholarly axiom that monotheism constitutes the foundational pillar of Judaism—subsequently inherited by Christianity—one must ask whether the Deity in Job aligns with this monotheistic paradigm. The evidence is affirmative and compelling. A preeminent illustration of this divine sovereignty is found in Job 9:5–8, which depicts the Almighty treading upon the waves of the sea as if upon solid ground. This powerful theophanic image serves as a conceptual precursor to the later Gospel accounts of Jesus walking upon the waters, underscoring a continuous tradition of divine dominion over the chaotic elements of nature: «... ‘He who walks upon the surface of the sea as upon solid ground»⁴⁸.

We may now proceed to examine the specific attributes ascribed to the God of Job, to determine whether the text reflects a strictly monotheistic principle or a more complex theological synthesis. It can be argued, without exhaustive deliberation, that even a preliminary analysis reveals that numerous characteristics attributed to the Deity in this narrative are distinctly characteristic of a Thunder God. Within this framework, we encounter a composite divinity whose domain encompasses the full spectrum of meteorological phenomena: rain, snow, hail, lightning, the rainbow, as well as clouds and mist. Consequently, such attributes suggest that the Joban conception of the Divine is not purely monotheistic in the conventional sense, but rather preserves archaic, elemental features typically associated with ancient Near Eastern and Indo-European thunder deities.

We present below the specific passages from the Book of Job which, in our estimation, maintain an intrinsic affinity with the aforementioned elemental forces. A critical methodological caveat must be emphasized here: our analysis utilizes the Classical Armenian (Grabar) text, as meticulously edited by Hovhannes Zohrapian (Venice, 1805). It is noteworthy that certain terms, such as the ‘Dragon’ (*Vishap*) in Job 7:12, are rendered as ‘whale’ or ‘sea monster’ in other canonical translations.

⁴⁷ See <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/job/1-1.htm> Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible.

⁴⁸ Cf. Matthew 14:22–33, Mark 6:45–52, and John 6:16–21. These New Testament accounts of Jesus walking on the sea function as a thematic and theological resonance of the imagery found in Job 9:8, where the subduing of the chaotic waters is presented as a singular prerogative of the Divine.

Nevertheless, even when accounting for such translational variances, the proximity of the Divine Being depicted in Job to the archetype of the Thunder God remains striking—particularly when viewed through the prism of the Armenian tradition of Torgom-Tigran-Vahagn. This figure, characterized by his combat with the spear and javelin, finds a profound resonance in the Joban imagery, suggesting that the Armenian biblical tradition has preserved archaic layers of a thunder-deity’s attributes that are less conspicuous in other versions.

A compelling divergence is observed in Job 4:10, where the Classical Armenian text introduces a distinct mythological nuance absent in literal translations. The Zohrapian version reads: *‘The strength of the lion, the roar of the lioness, and the majesty of the dragons [vishaps]—were extinguished.’* In contrast, most literal or interlinear translations employ the term ‘lion’ for all three instances⁴⁹. The deliberate insertion of the *Vishap* (Dragon) into this triad of power is profoundly revealing. Within the Armenian tradition, the *Vishap* is not merely a beast but a cosmic adversary, often the direct opponent of the Thunder God (Vahagn/Tigran). In other words, while the Classical Armenian (Grabar) translation exhibits certain strategic divergences from the literal source text, these very departures serve to realign the narrative imagery with the traditional attributes of a Thunder Deity.

The characterization of the Deity in the Book of Job reaches a high point of descriptive intensity in chapter 9 (vv. 8–17). «Yet, I shall beseech the Lord and call upon the Master of all. He who performs great and unsearchable deeds, glorious and wondrous things without number. He who grants rain upon the earth and sends waters beneath the heavens. He who exalts the humble to the heights and raises those who were lost. He frustrates the devices of the crafty, so that their hands achieve no success. He ensnares the wise in their own cunning and turns the counsel of the multifaceted into folly. In the daytime, they meet with darkness, and at noon, they grope as in the night. They shall perish by war, but the poor shall be saved from the hand of the Mighty. Thus the weak shall have hope, and the mouth of the unrighteous shall be stopped».

As we observe, the ‘Master of All,’ who exalts the humble and restores the lost, performs His most significant and manifest deeds by shedding rain upon the earth and sending waters beneath the heavens. These actions are not merely incidental; they are the definitive attributes of the *Storm God* archetype. Consequently, the entity depicted here is not a detached monotheistic abstraction, but a dynamic force

⁴⁹ See <https://biblehub.com/interlinear/job/4-10.htm>.

characterized by the verse: *‘He who grants rain upon the earth and sends waters beneath the heavens.’*

In ancient mythological traditions, arrows frequently serve as metaphors for lightning bolts launched by a thunder deity. Within the specific context of our ‘storm-god’ hypothesis, it is worth noting that while the text mentions ‘arrows,’ the imagery would be even more consistently aligned with the Armenian tradition if it referred to a lance or a spear. In the Armenian mythological milieu—particularly in the heroic representations of figures like Vahagn or Tigran—the spear (*նիզուկ*) and the javelin are the quintessential instruments for piercing the cosmic serpent or the storm-clouds. Thus, while the biblical idiom uses ‘arrows,’ the underlying functional symbolism remains that of a celestial projectile striking from the heavens, a motif that resonates deeply with the martial attributes of the Armenian thunder-deity. The theme of divine weaponry reemerges with intensified vigor in Job 20:23–24, where the instruments of affliction are explicitly martial: *‘Every distress shall come upon him... He [God] shall cast upon him the fury of His wrath; He shall rain down pangs upon him. He shall not escape the hand of iron; the bow of bronze shall pierce him, and the arrow shall pass through his body.’* The same motif is reiterated in Job 30:13, where the vulnerability of the sufferer is set against the relentless precision of the Divine Archer: *‘He stripped me of my garment; He pierced me with His arrows; He approached me as He willed.’* Conversely, in Job 16:10–14, we observe a significant linguistic shift where the Deity is depicted utilizing the *javelin* (*ուղկ*), thereby drawing the description even closer to the classical attributes of a *Storm God*. The passage reads:

“In His wrath, He pursued and overthrew me; He gnashed His teeth upon me. The arrows of His legions played over me; with the *javelin*, He glared upon me. Swiftly, He struck me to my knees; at once, they raided upon me. For the Lord delivered me into the hands of the unrighteous and cast me among the impious. While I was at peace, He shattered me; seizing me by my hair, He plucked it out. He set me up as a guard, and His *javelins* encompassed me.”

“A profound departure from other translations is also evident in Job 7:12, where the Classical Armenian text explicitly invokes a central mythological symbol of the storm cycle. The verse reads: ‘Am I the sea, or a *dragon*, that You have set a guard over me?’

In Job 22:14–15, the characterization of the Divine once again draws upon meteorological phenomena, specifically *clouds* and *mist* (*վէշ*), to define the boundaries between the celestial and terrestrial realms. The text states: “And thou sayest: ‘How doth the Mighty One know? Doth He judge through the *mist*? *Clouds* are His

covering, and He is not seen; and He walketh within the circuit of the heavens.” In Job 26:2–14, we encounter a sophisticated theological duality. On one hand, the Almighty is depicted through a strictly monotheistic lens as the cosmic Architect who ‘suspends the earth upon nothing,’ demonstrating absolute sovereignty over the void. Yet, simultaneously, this same Deity manifests a distinct *storm-born character*, gathering the waters within His thick clouds without them bursting.

The Classical Armenian translator has profoundly enriched this pericope by the deliberate selection of terms such as ‘mist’, ‘dragon’ (վիշապ), and ‘thunder’.

“To whom would you draw near, or whom would you seek to aid? Is it not Him whose power is immense and whose arm is mighty? With whom would you take counsel, if not with Him who possesses all wisdom? Whom would you follow, if not Him whose strength is great? To whom have you uttered words, and whose breath has come forth from you?

Shall the giants⁵⁰ be born from beneath the waters and their neighbors? Hell is naked before Him, and destruction hath no covering. He stretched out the North over nothingness; He hung the earth upon nothing. *He bindeth the waters in His clouds*, yet the *mist* beneath Him is not rent. He holdeth the face of His throne, and over it, He spreadeth His *mist*.

He hath set a command upon the face of the waters, unto the boundary where light meeteth darkness. The pillars of heaven trembled and were terrified at His rebuke. By His power, He stilled the sea; by His wisdom, the *vast expanse* was spread out. The *bolts of heaven* shuddered before Him; by His command, He slew the *rebel dragon* (վիշապն սպստանը).

Behold, these are but parts of His ways. Yet even now, let us hear but a *drop* of His words. But the power of His *thunder*, who can comprehend when He shall bring it forth?” The atmospheric manifestation of the Deity reaches its auditory and physical zenith in Job 37:4–16. Here, we directly encounter the Voice of the Mighty, which is explicitly identified as *thunder* (դրնոն). The text provides a meticulous description of meteorological agency: God commands the snow to fall upon the earth, showers the

⁵⁰ It is pertinent to note a distinct parallel within Armenian epic tradition: while the biblical text refers to the birth of giants from beneath the waters, the heroes of the Armenian national epic *Sasna Tsrer* (The Daredevils of Sassoun) maintain a profound ontological connection to the aqueous element. Specifically, the Sassounite giants derive their miraculous weaponry and their steeds from the depths of the sea, reflecting a localized survival of ancient Indo-European and Near Eastern motifs concerning the divine or heroic emergence from primordial waters.

torrential rains, and scatters the clouds across the firmament. “After Him, a voice shall roar; He shall *thunder* with His majestic voice, and He shall not alter them, that His voice may be heard. The Mighty One shall thunder with His wondrous voice, for He hath done great things which we knew not. He commandeth the *snow*, saying: ‘Be thou upon the earth’; and to the *winter rains*: ‘Be thou upon the earth according to their might.’

He sealeth the hand of every man, that every man may know his own weakness. The wild beasts enter their lairs and take refuge in their dens. From the chambers [of the south] come the *dews*, and from the heights, the *cold*. By the breath of the Mighty One, He giveth *frost*. He showereth the waters as He wills, and He shall sow the choice cloud. The *mist* scattereth His light, and He Himself directeth the circuits... We know that God hath established His works; He hath made light out of darkness. He knoweth the examination of the *clouds*; they are terrors to the transgressions of evildoers.”

The elemental manifestation of the Divine reaches its climax in the Great Speeches of the Lord (Job 38:22–41). Here, the text abandons all abstraction, presenting the Deity as the sole Governor of the cosmic storehouses of *snow* and *hail*, and the Provider of the *torrential rain* that satisfies the desolate wasteland. “Hast thou entered the *storehouses of snow*, or hast thou seen the *treasures of hail*, reserved for the time of enemies, for the day of battle and war? From whence doth the frost issue, or the south wind scatter beneath the heavens? Who hath prepared the course for the torrential rains, and a way for the *thunders* that fall upon the earth where no man dwells, in the uninhabited desert—to satisfy the untrodden and desolate land, and to bring forth the green herb?

Who is the father of the rain, and who hath begotten the drops of dew? Out of whose womb came the ice, and who hath gendered the frost in the heavens, which descendeth like flowing water? Hast thou understood the order of the *Pleiades*, or hast thou opened the veil of *Orion*? Canst thou bring forth *Mazzaroth* in its season, or guide the *Evening Star* with its tresses?

Doth thou call to the *mist* with thy voice, and will it obey thee with a trembling flood of water? Canst thou *send forth lightnings*, that they may go and say unto thee, ‘What is thy command?’ Who hath given to women the wisdom of weaving, or the genius of artistic craft? Who numbereth the clouds by wisdom, and hath bowed the heavens to the earth? Canst thou hunt prey for the lions, or *satisfy the souls of the dragons*? They shudder in their lairs and sit in ambush in the thickets. Who hath prepared food for the raven, when its young cry unto the Lord and wander seeking meat?”

In Job 40:16–20, mention is made of the *reed*—a central element in the myth of Vahagn—followed immediately by the dragon (Leviathan): ‘He lies under the lotus trees, in a covert of reeds and fens... Canst thou draw out leviathan with a hook? Or pierce his jaw with a bridle?’

Job 41:6–21 exhibits a profound and distinct affinity with the myth of Vahagn—the deity whose ‘eyes were suns.’ This finds a striking parallel in the description provided in the Book of Job, where the eyes are likened to ‘the vision of the morning star’. Indeed, if one were to seek a distinction between these two descriptions, it lies solely in the lexical choice between the synonymous celestial bodies: the Sun and the Morning Star. Yet, this is not all. Upon further reading, we learn that smoke issued from the nostrils of the Joban deity, and flames leapt from his mouth—a description that mirrors, almost precisely, the birth of Vahagn: ‘smoke and flame issued forth from the reed pipe’: “His belly is as shields of brass; his joints are like a flint-stone, joined one to another, such that no air may pass between them. Each is joined to its brother; they cling together and shall not be parted. From his sneezing, lightnings flash; his eyes are as the vision of the morning star. From his mouth proceed burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap forth. From his nostrils issues smoke, as from a furnace of burning coals. His breath kindles embers, and a flame goes out of his mouth. In his neck dwells strength; before him, destruction runs. The members of his body are joined together; though one should pour [water] upon him, he remains unshaken. For his heart is hardened as a stone; it stands firm as an immovable anvil. At his stirring, the beasts, the four-footed creatures, and the creeping things of the earth are seized with terror. If spears should strike him, they avail not, nor do the lance and the javelin. For he considers iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. The bow of brass shall not wound him; he accounts the stones of the sling as mere grass. He deems the mace as a reed and mocks the brandishing of fire. His bed consists of sharpened lances; all the gold of the sea beneath him is as boundless clay.”

Synthesizing the aforementioned evidence, it may be posited that the deity depicted in the Book of Job exhibits profound and substantial similarities with the Armenian storm god. Given that some of these parallels can hardly be attributed to mere coincidence or translational nuances, it becomes imperative to fundamentally re-examine and re-evaluate the identification of the Land of Uz with the Armenian Araratian world, as well as the geographical origins of the narrative itself.

In this context, it is pertinent to recall that dragons also occupy a prominent position in the Armenian epic cycle of ‘Artashes and Artavazd’:

The progeny of the dragons stole the infant Artavazd and substituted a demon in his place.” (Movses Khorenatsi, II, 61).

The primary remnants of this epic have been preserved by Movses Khorenatsi, while an additional fragment has reached us through the epistles of Grigor Magistros Pahlavuni. A nearly complete correspondence with the Book of Job can also be observed in the thematic use of curses: in one instance, Job curses the day of his birth, while in the other, Artashes curses his son, Artavazd.

Job says (3:8–10):

Let him curse that day who is to curse it;
even he who is to subdue the great dragon.
Let the stars of that night be darkened;
let it wait for, and the light let it not see,
nor let it behold the morning star as it rises.

And Artashes cursed his son, saying:

*‘If thou shouldst ride to hunt up toward the heights of Azat Masis,
may the demons seize thee and take thee up toward the heights of Azat Masis;
there shalt thou dwell, and the light thou shalt not see.’*

In our view, the expressions ‘and the light thou shalt not see’ (ևւ զլոյս մի՛ տեսցես) and ‘let it look for light, and the light let it not see’ (ևւ ի լոյս մի տեսցէ), as well as the verbal forms ‘thalt thou dwell’ (կայցես) and ‘let it wait’ (սպասեցէ), demonstrate a fundamental affinity. Furthermore, if the passage in the Grabar translation regarding those who ‘subdue the great dragon’ is understood as ‘capturing the great dragon,’ the parallels become even more pronounced. In both instances, the narrative concerns the capture of a monstrous entity: in one case, the great dragon Leviathan, and in the other, the demon-possessed Artavazd.

Furthermore, striking similarities can be discerned in the circumstances of the narratives, as well as in the physical health, spiritual condition, and the profound emotional and psychological experiences of the protagonists.

Job, who had lived in glory and prosperity, found himself in the throes of a debilitating disease after losing everything. In Chapter 29 (31 in the Grabar), he recalls those blessed times with longing and yearning, repeatedly employing the formulas ‘O, that we were given’ and ‘Who would give.’ Identical rhetorical structures

and emotional states are mirrored in the words of King Artashes as he lay upon his deathbed⁵¹.

Who would give me the smoke of the hearth-chimney,
And the morning of Navasard,
The coursing of the hinds,
And the galloping of the stags;
We sounded the horn and beat the drum,
As is the custom of kings.

King Artashes recalls the enjoyments of his life, describing the scenes of his royal hunts and concluding with the line, ‘As is the custom of kings.’ Correspondingly, Job expresses a strikingly similar sentiment—at least in its structural form—using the construction ‘O, that one would make me’. Instead of a hunt, Job recounts his past ‘delight upon the paths,’ ending his narrative with a phrase profoundly akin to the ‘custom of kings’: ‘And I sat as a chief, and dwelt as a king among the soldiers’ (Job 29:2–25).”

O, that one would make me as in the months of days past,
when God preserved me;
When His lamp shone over my head;
When by His light I walked through the darkness;
When I stood rejoicing upon the path... I chose their path, and I sat as a chief;
And I dwelt as a king among the soldiers.

Ultimately, both Job and King Artashes evoke a shared sense of longing for a vanished order—a world that has irreversibly receded beyond their reach. This common existential lament, when considered alongside the aforementioned mythological parallels, points to a deeper affinity between the figure of Job and the Armenian cultural and spiritual horizon. By interlacing the biblical narrative with archetypes rooted in Armenian antiquity, the text moves beyond the level of mere literary coincidence and situates Job within an ancient, organically coherent context, one that resonates with the Armenian landscape and its inherited traditions.

⁵¹ See: *The Letters of Grigor Magistros* [Գրիգոր Մագիստրոսի թղթերը], critical edition with introduction and notes by Karapet Kostaniants (Alexandrapol: Sanoyan Publishing, 1910), p. 87 (in Armenian).

ՀԻՄՆԱԲԱՌԵՐ

Armenian thunder god, Vahagn, Birth of Vahagn, Azhdahak's dream, Dragon-slayer (Vishapaqagh), Comparative mythology, Tigran, Chromatic symbolism, Biblical parallels, Mythological birth.

РЕЗЮМЕ

Статья посвящена армянскому божеству грома. В работе рассматриваются малоизученные аспекты его образа, а также выявляются параллели с отдельными мотивами и образами Откровения Иоанна Богослова и книги Иова.

