THE EARTH OF GENESIS 1:2
ABIOTIC OR CHAOTIC?

PART II

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1. Hosek and ‘al ~ pene in Gen 1:2

Etymology of *hsk

Before specifically considering the Hebrew term *t’hom in the OT and in the literature of the ANE, we analyze the Hebrew words *hosek and *’al-pene in Gen 1:2. Hosek is a masculine singular noun that means "darkness, obscurity," "darkness," "Finsternis kosmich," "oscuridad, tinieblas, lobreguez, sombra."

Words similar to the Heb root *hsk exist in Phoenician, Punic, biblical and extrabiblical Aramaic, as well as in later Semitic languages. This root does not appear in Ugaritic and Akkadian texts. In the MT the verb only appears in the Qal form "to be/come to be dark" and Hiphil "make dark, darken." The noun *hosek means "darkness, obscurity." The derived nouns include *həseka "darkness," mahsak "dark, secret place," and the adjective *hasok "dark."

The root appears 112 times in the OT, once in Aramaic (Dan 2:22). The verb appears 17 times (11 x in Qal and 6x in Hiphil). The noun *hosek appears 79 times, *həseka 8 times, mahsak 7 times, and the adjective only once (Prov 22:29).

In Egyptian, the term for darkness is *kkw, in Sumerian it is *kukku,

1 BDB, 365.
6 TDOT, 5:245.
which is represented by the double writing of the sign GI6, which means "black" and "night." In the Targums and in Talmudic and Midrashic literature hosek is interpreted as "darkness." In Gen 1:2 hosek is used to refer to the primeval "darkness" that covered the world. In Gen 1:3ff, God created light and "separated the light from the darkness." The separation is conceived both in spatial and temporal terms. In Gen 1:5 God "called the darkness night." This name is more than an act of identification; by naming darkness God characterized it and expressed its nature and even indicated his control over it. God, who created light and darkness as separate entities, on the fourth day of creation put them under the "laws" of the heavenly lights which separated "light from darkness" (Gen 1:18).

The function of darkness in the cosmos is later explained in texts such as Ps 104:20, where the function of the light and the darkness is to indicate the amount of time for the everyday life routine of animals and human beings. In many texts, hosek is equivalent or parallel to "night" (Josh 2:5; Job 17:12; 24:16; Ps 104:20). The word appears more times in Job, Psalms, and Isaiah than in all of the other biblical books together.

The OT emphasizes that darkness is under God's control (2 Sam 22:2; Ps 18:2 [28]; Job 1:8; Isa 42:16; Jer 13:16). The ninth plague of Egypt (Exod 10:21-23) illustrates: "So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and total darkness [hosek- "pela] covered all Egypt for three days." This event was extraordinary since Pharaoh, the son and the representative of the sun-god, was considered the source of light for his country. The darkness directly attacked the great sun-god of Egypt. Another example of God's power over darkness occurs in the desert when the Lord used darkness to protect his people (Exod 14:20; Josh 24:7).

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7 Ibid., 246-247.
8 M. Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Targumin, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalami, and the Midrashic Literature (New York: Title, 1943), 511.
9 TWOT, 1:331.
10 N. H. Ridderbos, "Genesis i.1 and 2," in Studies on the Book of Genesis, ed. Berend Gemser, Oudtestamentische Studien, v. 12 (Leiden: Brill, 1958), 239. This author notes that God gave a name to darkness and discusses the importance of giving a name in the OT.
11 TWOT, 1:331.
12 TDOT, 5:249.
13 TWOT, 1:331.
14 All scriptural texts are taken from the New International Version (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978).
15 TDOT, 5:249-250.
Past studies tended to see in Genesis 1 an antagonism between light and darkness, the scheme of Marduk's fight against the monster of chaos that is described in the Babylonian creation myth.\textsuperscript{16} It must be emphasized that nowhere in the OT is mention made of a battle or dualism between light and darkness. Neither is the primeval ocean or darkness considered a chaotic power or mythical enemy of God. God is the creator of both light and darkness (Isa 45:7); his kindness transcends the antithesis of light and darkness (Ps 139:12).\textsuperscript{17}

E. J. Young indicates that darkness in Gen 1:2 was merely one characteristic of the unformed earth. Man could not live in darkness, and the first step in making the earth habitable was the removal of darkness.\textsuperscript{18} Moreover, Young presents the theological meaning of darkness by stating that God named the darkness, just as he did light. Both are therefore good and well-pleasing to him; both are created, and both serve his purpose, making up the day. Thus, darkness is recognized in Genesis 1 as a positive good for man.\textsuperscript{19}

In a recent study about darkness in Gen 1:2, based on the text rather than on past exegesis, Nicolas Wyatt proposes some interesting points: (1) The literary structure of the verse is important to the interpretation and the meaning of hosek; therefore, "darkness" corresponds in some way to ruah 'elohim "God's spirit."\textsuperscript{20} (2) If ruah 'elohim denotes some divine quality, hosek must denote some similar quality; an example is Ps 18:1, where darkness appears as the place of invisibility and possibly the place of the Deity (see Deut 4:11, 23, where darkness seems to be the appropriate environment for the divine voice); darkness is a figure of invisibility.\textsuperscript{21} (3) The logical structure of the verse implies the initial stages of the Deity's self-revelation: it is an unusual account of a theophany. Gen 1:2 refers to God's invisibility in the context of a primeval cosmogony.\textsuperscript{22}

In short, the term hosek "darkness" refers to an uninhabited Earth, where human beings could not live until God created light. Furthermore, the logical structure of the verse implies the Deity's self-revelation, an unusual account of a theophany.

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{TDOT}, 1:157.
\textsuperscript{18} E. J. Young, \textit{Studies in Genesis One} (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 35 n. 33.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid, 21, 35 n. 33.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid, 550-552.
'al ~ pene

'āl~pene is a preposition + masculine plural noun construct which means "face ... surface, upon the face of the deep," face = visible side: surface, p'ne tehom, p'ne hammayim, "face, surface," "superficie del océano = superficie de las aguas." In Hebrew, as in other Semitic languages, the noun appears only in plural. Panim is one of the most frequent words in the OT, appearing more than 2100 times. However, in the vast majority of the texts panim is joined to a preposition (which may be ℓ, min or 'al) thus making a new prepositional expression. In many such texts the nominal meaning ("face") has been lost.

Panim, especially when related to concepts such as country, land, sea, and sky, means "surface," mainly in the construction 'āl~pene. The preposition 'āl~pene related to concepts such as 'ādama "land, ground"; 'eres "land, country"; mayim "water" (Gen 1:2); ℓ'hom "primeval abyss" (Gen 1:2) means "on (the surface of)" or "towards (the surface)." This construction is important in determining the etymology and the meaning of the Hebrew word tehom.

2. Etymology of *thm

The Hebrew word ℓ'hom in Gen 1:2 is translated into English as "deep." In the Greek LXX it is translated ἀβυσσός "abyss."

T'hom is a feminine singular noun that means "primeval ocean, deep," "deep sea, primeval ocean," "Urmeer, Urflut," als ein der Schopfung voransgehendes Element," "oceano, abismo, sima, manantial. Especialmente el océano primordial, abisal, en parse subterraneo, que

23 BDB, 816, 819.
24 Holladay, 293.
25 Klein, 513-514. It is related to the Phoenician דֹּם (= face), see Z. S. Harris, A Grammar of the Phoenician Language (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1936), 137; Ugaritic pnn (= into); Akkadian panu (= face, surface); Syriac ḫnab (= side).
26 Schockel, 793. Translation: "surface of the ocean - surface of the waters."
28 Ibid., 2:561, 563.
30 BDB, 1063; Holladay, 386.
31 Klein, 693.
31 KBS, 1558.
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argen lagos, pozos, manantiales, y esta presente en mares y rios (de ahi su use en plural), . . . superficie del oceano,"32

T’hom is the Hebrew form of the Semitic word *tiham-(at) "sea," which in Akkadian appears as the usual term for "sea" ti’amtum (later tamtu).33 In the Targums, as well as the Talmudic and the Midrashic literature, t’hom is interpreted as "deep, depth, interior of the earth."34

The construct relation between ‘al-pene and t’hom (as well as e’al-pene and hammayim) contributes to the determination of the meaning of t’hom.35

Arguing against taking t’hom as a personified being, A. Heidel points out:

If t’hom were here treated as a mythological entity, the expression "face" would have to be taken literally; but this would obviously lead to absurdity. For why should there be darkness only on the face of t’hom and not over the entire body? "On the face of the deep" is here used interchangeably with "On the face of the waters," which we meet at the end of the same verse. The one expression is as free from mythological connotation as is the other.

Thus the expression ‘al-pene t’hom, "on the surface of the t’hom," indicates that it does not refer to a mythical being but to the mass of waters."

Supposed Babylonian Origin of t’hom

B. W. Anderson, among others, assumes that there is some kind of relationship or linguistic dependence between the Babylonian Tiāmat and the Hebrew t’hom.38 Scholars who followed Gunkel have maintained that the

32 Schockel, 792. Translation: "ocean, abyss, chasm, spring. Especially the primeval, abyssal ocean which is partly underground, and outcroppings in lakes, wells, springs, and is present in seas and rivers (hence its use in plural) ... surface of the ocean."

33 Jenni and Westermann, 2:1286.

34 Jastrow, 1648.

35 See B. K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns,1990), 240-241. See R. Ouro, "The Earth of Genesis 1:2: Abiotic or Chaotic, Part 1," AUSS 36 (1998): 259-276. Paul Jouon and T. Muraoka indicate: "A noun can be used in close conjunction with another noun to express a notion of possession, of belonging, etc.... The genitival relationship is expressed by the close phonetic union of the two nouns, the first of which is said to be constructed on the second.... The two nouns put in a genitival relationship form a compact unit, and theoretically nothing must separate them" (A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew, Subsidia Biblica 14/1,11 [Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1991],1:275; 2:463). Finally, C. L. Seow points out: "The words in such a construct chain are thought to be so closely related that they are read as if they constituted one long word" (A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew, rev. ed. [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995], 116).


37 Jenni and Westermann, 2:2190.

38 B. W. Anderson, Creation versus Chaos: The Reinterpretation of Mythical Symbolism
author of Genesis borrowed the Babylonian name *Tiamat* and demythologized it. But, as Tsumura points out, if the Hebrew *ṭḥom* were an Akkadian loan-word, it should have a phonetic similarity to *ti’amat*. In fact, there is no example of Northwestern Semitic borrowing Akkadian /'/ as /h/. Moreover, it is phonologically impossible for the Hebrew *ṭḥom* to be borrowed from the Akkadian *Tiamat* with an intervocalic /h/, which tends to disappear in Hebrew (e.g., /h/ of the definite article /ha-/) in the intervocalic position.

Therefore, *ṭḥom* cannot linguistically derive from *Tiamat* since the second consonant of *Ti’amat*, which is the laryngeal alef, disappears in Akkadian in the intervocalic position and would not be manufactured as a borrowed word. This occurs, for instance, in the Akkadian Ba’al which becomes Bel.

All this suggests that *Tiamat* and *ṭḥom* must come from a common Semitic root *ṭḥm*. The same root is the base for the Babylonian *tamtu* and also appears as the Arabic *tihamatu* or *tihama*, a name applied to the coastline of Western Arabia, and the Ugaritic *t-h-m* which means "ocean" or "abyss." The root simply refers to deep waters and this meaning was...
maintained in Hebrew as a name for water in the deep ocean. Thus, the popular position that the Hebrew נָבְעָה was borrowed from the Babylonian divine name Tiamat, to which it is mythologically related, lacks any basis.

Well-known Assyriologists such as W. G. Lambert, T. Jacobsen, and A. W. Sjoberg have discussed the supposed connection between Genesis 1 and the Enuma elish. These scholars doubt the influence of Mesopotamia on the mythological and religious concepts of peoples living along the Mediterranean coast; instead, they see a strong influence of that region on Mesopotamia. W. G. Lambert pointed out that the watery beginning of Genesis is not an evidence of some Mesopotamian influence. Moreover, he saw no clear evidence of conflict or battle as a prelude to God's division of the cosmic waters. T. Jacobsen also maintains that the story of the battle between the thunderstorm god and the sea originated on the Mediterranean coast, and from there moved eastward toward Babylon.

Furthermore, in some ancient Mesopotamian creation accounts, the sea is not personified and has nothing to do with conflict. In those traditions, the creation of the cosmos is not connected to the death of a dragon as it is in the Enuma elish. Tsumura concludes that since some accounts never associated the creation of the cosmos to the theme of the conflict, there is no reason to accept that the earlier stage, without the conflict-creation connection, evolved into a later stage with this connection. Frankly, the evolutionary process should be reversed: from an earlier stage with the mythological conflict-creation connection to a

45 TWOT, 2:966.
46 See also Tsumura, 47.
49 Lambert, 96-109.
51 Tsumura quotes as an example a bilingual version of the "Creation of the World by Marduk," which belongs to the Neo-Babylonian period and describes the creation of the cosmos without mentioning any theme of conflict or battle. In this myth, the initial circumstances of the world are described simply as "all the earth was sea" (49).
52 Ibid.
more recent stage without the mythological conflict-creation connection.

In conclusion, the Hebrew term *tehom* is simply a variant of the common Semitic root *thm* "ocean," and there is no relation between the account of Genesis and the mythology of *Chaoskampf*.

Supposed Canaanite Origin of *tehom*

Since the discovery of the Ugaritic myths, a Canaanite origin for the conflict between Yahweh and the sea dragons has been widely propounded. This motif is thought to be related to creation and is proposed as a basis of a supposed *Chaoskampf* in Gen 1:2.

Recently, J. Day stated that Gen 1:2 was a demythologization of an original myth of *Chaoskampf* coming from the ancient Canaan. He suggested that the term *tehom* can be traced back to the early Canaanite dragon myth. Therefore, he understands the Hebrew term *tehom* as a depersonification of the Canaanite mythological divine name.

However, scholars have pointed out that the myth of the Baal-Yam conflict in the existing Ugaritic texts is not related to the creation of the cosmos; the storm god Baal is not a creator-god as is Marduk in the *Enuma elish*. In the Baal cycle there is no evidence that he creates the cosmos from the bodies of defeated monsters as does Marduk. In Ugaritic mythology, El is the creator-god; as the creator of humanity he is called "Father of humanity." No other god fulfills any role in the creation of the cosmos.

Finally, if the account of the creation in Genesis were a demythologization of a Canaanite dragon myth, the term *yam* "sea" should appear at the beginning of the account, but this term does not.

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54 Ibid., 50.
55 Ibid.
57 Tsumura, 64.
60 See also P. D. Miller, Jr., "El, the Creator of Earth," *BASOR* 239 (1980): 43-46.
appear until Gen 1:10, in the plural form *yammim*.\(^{61}\) As Tsumura points out, if the Hebrew term *ṭ'hom* came from a Canaanite divine name and was later depersonified, the term would be something like *ṭahom*. There is no evidence that the term *ṭ'hom* in Gen 1:2 is a depersonification of a Canaanite mythological deity.

3. *Thm in the Old Testament

The term *ṭ'hom* appears 36 times in the OT, 22 in singular and 14 in plural.\(^{62}\) This Hebrew term appears without an article in all texts but Isa 63:13 (singular) and Ps 106:9 (plural).\(^{63}\) *Ṭ'hom* always means a flood of water or ocean (abyss); there is no type of personification. The word appears in a context of creation\(^{65}\) with no mythical reference. The word is used to designate a phenomenon of nature.\(^{66}\) Many times *ṭ'hom* is parallel to *mayim* "water"\(^{67}\) or *yam* "sea."\(^{68}\)

*Ṭ'hom* also means "deep waters, depth" as in Ps 107:26: "They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths." Translated as "depth" it acquires in some contexts the meaning of "abyss or depth" that threatens human existence.\(^{69}\)

The depth of the ocean is also presented as bottomless. Thus, *ṭ'hom* is conceived in some texts as a source of blessing.\(^{70}\) The texts that consider *ṭ'hom* a source of blessing make it impossible to believe that the basic

\(^{61}\) Tsumura, 62, 65.
\(^{62}\) See A. Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Old Testament* (Jerusalem: Kiyat Sefer, 1990), 1219-1220. The 22 texts in singular are: Gen 1:2; 7:11; 8:2; 49:25; Deut 33:13; Job 28:14; 38:16, 30; 41:24; Pss 36:7; 42:8 (2x); 104:6; Prov 8:27, 28; Isa 51:10; Ezek 26:19; 31:4, 15; Amos 7:4; Jonah 2:6; Hab 3:10.
\(^{63}\) Ibid, 1220. The 14 texts in plural are: Exod 15:5; 8; Deut 8:7; Pss 33:7; 71:20; 77:17; 78:15; 106:9; 107:26; 135:6; 148:7; Prov 3:20; 8:24; Isa 63:13.
\(^{64}\) Job 38:16; Pss 33:7; 104:6; Prov 3:30; 8:24, 27-28.
\(^{65}\) Westermann, 105.
\(^{66}\) Job 38:30: "when the waters become hard as stone, when the surface of the deep is frozen?"; *ṭ'hom* is, in this instance, the mass of water that freezes due to intense cold.
\(^{67}\) Exod 15:8; Ps 77:17; Ezek 26:19; 31:4; Jonah 2:6; Hab 3:10.
\(^{68}\) Job 28:14; 38:16; Pss 106:9; 135:6; Isa 51:10.
\(^{69}\) Exod 15:5; Neh 9:11; Job 41:23; Pss 68:23; 69:3, 16; 88:7; 107:24; Jonah 2:4; Mic 7:19; Zech 1:8; 10:11; "marine depth" Isa 44:27; "depths" Pss 69:3, 15; 130:1; Isa 51:10; Ezek 27:34. *Ṭ'hom* has this meaning in the song of the Sea in Exod 15:5, where the destruction of the Egyptians is described: "the deep waters have covered them; they sank to the depths like a stone."
\(^{70}\) Gen 49:25: "blessings of the deep that lies below"; Deut 8:7; 33:13; Ps 78:15; Ezek 31:4.
meaning of the Hebrew term is a "hostile mythical power., 71

In some texts, *ṭāhôm* refers to "subterranean water," as in Deut 8:7: "a land with streams and pools of water, with springs flowing in the valleys and hills." This is a description of the land of Canaan being watered by fountains and springs fed by subterranean waters. We find a similar picture of *ṭāhôm* in Ezek 31:4: "The waters nourished it, deep springs made it grow tall; their streams flowed all around its base and sent their channels to all the trees of the field."

The texts generally used to explain the term *ṭāhôm* are Gen 1:2 and the verses related to the flood (Gen 7:11; 8:2). Before considering the word in the flood story, it must be noted that H. Gunkel had a powerful influence on the exegesis of these verses through his *Schopfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* (1895). In that work he derived the term directly from the Babylonian Tiamat, the mythical being and the feminine principle of chaos, thus maintaining a basically mythical meaning. Hasel has rightly pointed out that this direct derivation is unsustainable, for in the OT *ṭāhôm* never refers to a mythical figure. 72

Gen 7:11 notes that *nīḇqū ʾe kḵol ʾāšāʾī yāʾ not ʿṭāhôm ṛabbāh waʿ rubbot ḥassamayim niptahu*, "all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened." The verb *baqaʾ* appears here in the Niphal perfect 3 plural common; it means "burst open," "be split, break out," "to split, to break forth," "was cleft, was split, was broken into," "sich spalten, hervorbrechen." 77 This verb frequently appears in the biblical literature in connection with the outflowing or expulsion of water. 78 In Gen 7:11 the phrase refers to the breaking open of the crust of the earth to let subterranean waters flow in unusual quantity. 79 The parallelism in Gen 7:11b is marked by a precise

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71 Jenni and Westermann, 2:1290.
73 BDB, 132.
75 Holladay, 46.
76 Klein, 81. Ugar. *bqʾ (= to cleave, to split), Arab. faqʿaʿa (= he knocked out, it burst, exploded), baʿaja (= it cleft, split).*
77 KBS, 143.
79 Hasel, 70.
chiastic structure.\textsuperscript{80} In short, when considering the Hebrew terminology and the literary structure of Gen 7:11b, it is evident that the bursting forth of the waters from the springs of the "great deep" refers to the splitting open of springs of subterranean waters.\textsuperscript{81}

The Hebrew of Gen 8:2 is similar to that of Gen 7:11b in terminology, structure, and meaning.\textsuperscript{82} The two Niphal verbs in 8:2 (\textit{wayyissak}ə'ru "had been closed" and \textit{wayyikkale}′ "had been kept back") indicate the end of the impact of the waters on the earth; in the chiasm they correspond to each other both grammatically, with the two Niphal verbs of Gen 7:11b (\textit{nibq}ə'u "burst forth" and \textit{niptahu} "were opened"), and semantically, with the inversion of the phenomenon that begins with the flood in Gen 7:11b (\textit{nibq}ə'u, a "burst forth" and \textit{niptahu} "were opened") and ends in Gen 8:2 (\textit{wayyissak}ə'ru "had been closed" and \textit{wayyikkale}′ "had been kept back").\textsuperscript{83} The quadruple use of the verb in passive voice

\begin{itemize}
\item A \textit{nibq}ə'u burst forth
\item B kkol~ma ʻy'not tehom rabbah all the springs of the great deep
\item B' waʻrubbot hassamayim and the floodgates of the heavens
\item A' \textit{niptahu} were opened
\end{itemize}

The chiastic structure A:B:B':A' indicates that the waters below the surface of the earth flowed (were expelled) in the same way that the waters on the earth fell (were thrown). In B: B' there is a pair of words which are common parallels in biblical literature, \textit{fəhōm} // \textit{hassamayim} (Gen 49:25; Deut 33:13; Ps 107:26; Prov 8:27). But above all there is phonological, grammatical, and semantic equivalence between \textit{nibq}ə'u // \textit{niptahu} (Job 32:19; Num 16:31b-32a; Isa 41:18), \textit{rabbah} // \textit{rubbot} (see J. S. Kselman, "A Note on Gen 7:11," CBQ 35 (1973): 491-493); and between, \textit{nibq}ə' ukkol~ma ʻy'not fəhōm rabbah \textbackslash wa\textit{a rubbot hassamayim niptahu}, \textit{verb +subject \subject +verb (\ antithetical parallelism)}. See also A. Berlin, \textit{The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism} (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 107].

\textsuperscript{81} Hasel, 71.

\textsuperscript{82} "Now the springs of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens had been closed, and the rain had stopped falling from the sky."

A \textit{wayyissak}ə'ru now had been closed

\begin{itemize}
\item B maʻy'not tehom the springs of the deep
\item B' waʻrubbot hassamayim and the floodgates of the heavens
\item A′ \textit{wayyikkale}′ had been kept back
\end{itemize}

The verb "had been closed" corresponds to "had been kept back" (A:A'); "the springs of the deep" correspond to "the floodgates of the heavens" (B:B'). The chiastic parallelism indicates that the waters below the surface of the earth stopped flowing (being expelled) just as the waters on the earth stopped falling (being thrown). The same pair of parallel words appears as in Gen 7:1 lb \textit{fəhōm} // \textit{hassamayim}. Above all there is a phonological, grammatical, and semantic equivalence between \textit{wayyissak}ə'ru // \textit{wayyikkale}′ and between maʻy'not fəhōm \textbackslash waʻrubbot hassamayim wayyikkale′; \textit{verb +subject \subject +verb (\ antithetical parallelism)}.

\textsuperscript{83} Hamilton, 300.
indicates clearly that the flood was not a caprice of nature, but that both its beginning and end were divinely ordered and controlled. The Hebrew terminology and literary structure of Gen 8:2 give it a meaning similar to that of Gen 7:11b: the splitting, open of springs of subterranean waters is envisaged.

Thus, not even here is *tehom* used in a mythical sense. The word designates subterranean water that breaks the surface of the earth, thus producing the catastrophe. In a similar way, modern scholarship understands the use of the term in Gen 1:2 is widely understood as "ocean, abyss, deep waters," therefore, as purely physical. *Tehom* is matter; it has no personality or autonomy; it is not an opposing or turbulent power. There is no evidence of demythologization of a mythical concept of *tehom*. Jenni and Westermann conclude their discussion of *tehom* by pointing out that "if one wishes to establish the theological meaning of *tehom*, one must conclude that *tehom* in the OT does not refer to a power hostile to God as was formerly believed, is not personified, and has no mythical function.

4. *Thm in Ancient Near Eastern Literature*

The Ugaritic term equivalent to the Hebrew term *tehom* is *thm* which appears in Ugaritic literature in parallel with *ym*. It also appears in the dual form *thmtm*, "the two abysses," and in the plural form *thmt*. The basic meaning is the same as in Hebrew, "ocean, abyss."
Thm appears in the cycle of "Shachar and Shalim and the Gracious Gods" (Ugaritic text 23:30). The parallel use of ym and thm is evident.

[30] [il. ys] i. gp ym [El went out] to the shore of the sea wysgd. gp. thm and advanced to the shore of the ocean.  

Del Olmo Lete points out that the Ugaritic thm is a cognate of the Hebrew ē'hom and translates the word as "oceano."  

The plural thmt appears twice. Line 3 c 22 of "The Palace of Baal" reads:

[22] thmt. ‘mn. kbkbm of the oceans to the stars.  

The other example appears in the cycle of Aqhat (17 VI 12)-

[12] [ ] mh g’t. thmt. brq [ ] the ocean(s) the lightning.  

The dual thmtm is found in the cycle of "The Palace of Baal" (4 IV 22)

[22] qrb. apq. thmtm amid the springs of the two oceans.  

It also appears in the cycle of Aqhat (Ugaritic text 19 45):

[45] bl. sr’. thmtm without watering by the two deeps.  

Other ANE languages use forms of the thm root to describe a large body of water. The Akkadian ti’amtum or tamtum also means "sea" or "ocean" in the earliest texts, dated before the Enuma elish.  

In the Babylonian account of the flood, the Atra-Hasis epic, the expression "the barrier of the sea" (nahbala tiamtim) appears 6 times. In turn, tiamta "sea" is used in parallel to naram "river," with a common meaning for both.

92 G. Del Olmo Lete, Mitos y Leyendas de Canaan (Madrid: Cristiandad, 1981), 443. In this he agrees with Gibson, 159; cf. Del Olmo Lete, 635. In his study, this author notes also the occurrences of the plural thmt and the dual thmtm.  
93 Ibid, 49.  
94 Ibid, 108.  
95 Ibid., 59.  
96 Ibid, 115.  
97 D. T. Tsumura, The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2, JSOT Supplement Series 83 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 55. Tsumura quotes the example from an ancient Akkadian text in which the term tiamtim is used in its common meaning "sea, ocean":

Lagas ki atima tiamtim in’ar (SAG.GIS,RA) he vanquished Lagas as far as the sea
kakki (va TUKUL-gi)-su in tiamtim imassi He washed his weapons in the sea.

98 Ibid.
In Eblaite ti-‘a-ma-tum commonly means "sea" or "ocean." The evidence indicates that the Ugaritic term thm is a cognate of Hebrew term ℓ’hom and both mean "ocean." In addition, cognate words from other ANE languages have the same meaning and come from a common root, *thm.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, both the OT and the Ancient Near Eastern Literature indicate that the term ℓ’hom in Gen 1:2 must be interpreted as a lifeless part of the cosmos, a part of the created world, a purely physical concept. ℓ’hom is matter; it has no personality or autonomy and it is not an antagonistic and turbulent power. The "ocean/abyss" opposes no resistance to God's creating activity. Certainly there is no evidence that the term ℓ’hom, as used in Gen 1:2, refers at all to a conflict between a monster of the chaos and a creator-god.

There is no evidence of a mythical concept in ℓ’hom. Therefore, it is impossible to speak about a demythification of a mythical being in Gen 1:2. The author of Genesis 1 applies this term in a nonmythical and depersonified way.

The Hebrew term ℓ’hom in Gen 1:2 has an antimythical function, to oppose the mythical cosmologies of the peoples of the ANE. This antimythical function is confirmed by the clause in Gen 1:2c, "the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." Here there is no fighting, battle, or conflict. The presence of the Deity moves quietly and controls the "waters," the "ocean, abyss" to show his power over the recently created elements of nature. This interpretation is further confirmed in the following verses, particularly in Gen 1:6-10 where God "separates water from water" (v. 6); then says, "let the water under the sky be gathered" (v. 9); and calls the "gathered waters" by the name "seas" (v. 10). The whole process concludes in v.10: "and God saw that it was good." All that God does on the surface of the waters and the ocean is good. These two elements are lifeless; they do not offer resistance or conflict to his creative

99 Ibid., 56.
fie; they respond to his words, orders, acts, and organization with absolute submission. All this is contrary to what happens in the mythologies of the ANE, where creation is characterized by conflict or battle between powers (or gods) of nature.

In short, the description of ŏhom in Gen 1:2 does not derive from the influence of any Ancient Near Eastern mythology but it is based on the Hebrew conception of the world which explicitly rejects the mythological notions of surrounding nations.103

103 Stadelmann agrees: "The subsequent acts of creating the heavenly bodies manifest the same antithetical view as we have noted in the cosmological presuppositions of the Priestly writer" (17). On the distinction between the Hebrew conception of the world and that of other peoples of the ANE, see ibid., 178ff.