

Leviathan – “King over all the Sons of Pride”



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“May those who curse days curse that day,
those who are ready to rouse Leviathan.”
(Job 3:8)

The name of this mythical water serpent derives from Hebrew and means “that which gathers itself into folds” or “that which is drawn out.” It appears mostly in Christian sources: The Old Testament (Book of Job, Book of Isaiah, Book of Psalms) and in the apocrypha (Book of Enoch, Book of Esdrash), where it refers to a serpent, dragon, crocodile, whale, or generally – a sea beast. Leviathan is also mentioned in the rabbinical literature and in Gnostic accounts. The Bible presents Leviathan as one of the creations of Yahweh:

“There go the ships, and Leviathan
which thou didst form to sport in it.” (Psalms 104:26)

Yahweh created this marvelous sea serpent as a pride of the world. Leviathan is, however, also an enemy of Yahweh. He is the embodiment of evil, conceit, darkness and chaos, which this god is continuously striving to defeat. As a seven-headed serpent, Leviathan is one of the Devil's shapes:

“In that day the Lord with his hard and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent,
Leviathan the twisting serpent,
and he will slay the dragon that is in the sea.” (Isaiah 27:1)

The Old Testament describes Leviathan as the most dangerous monster whom Yahweh has to confront. But the apocrypha and the rabbinical literature mention two monsters: a male and a female. The female is Leviathan, the male: Behemoth (plural of “behamah” = “beast”). According to the Midrash, there were two Leviathans created on the fifth day of Creation. In the beginning, they were a mated couple, but God, fearing that their offspring would destroy the world, slew the female monster. Her flesh will be served up as a dainty to the pious on the Day of Judgment. The male monster dwells in the seas, in the Mediterranean Sea in particular, and the waters of Jordan run into his jaws. His body is 300 miles long, and when he is hungry, the heat from his mouth causes all waters to boil. Also, the eyes of Leviathan shine with an odd light, and are “like the eyelids of the dawn.” (Job 41:18).

However, according to the Book of Enoch, Leviathan and Behemoth will be separated no earlier than on the Day of Judgment:

“In that day shall be distributed for food two monsters; a female monster, whose name is Leviathan, dwelling in the depths of the sea, above the springs of waters; And a male monster, whose name is Behemoth; which possesses, moving on his breast, the invisible wilderness. His

name was Dendayen in the east of the garden, where the elect and the righteous will dwell.”
(Enoch 7-9)

Then, both monsters will be defeated and Leviathan will be slain, and his body will be served at the feast of the righteous. From Leviathan’s skin God will make tents for the most pious people, belts, necklaces and jewelry. The remains of the skin will be hung on the walls of Jerusalem and it will shine on the whole world. According to the legend, it will be Gabriel who will face Leviathan in a fight. But he will not be able to defeat the sea serpent on his own. Neither Yahweh nor any of his angels is powerful enough to slay the beast of the sea. God will command Leviathan and Behemoth (the mountain ox) to enter a duel, and their fight will end with the death of both monsters.

The Judgment Day is similarly presented in the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch. According to this apocryphal account, Leviathan and Behemoth will be slain on the day of the coming of Messiah, and their flesh will serve as a feast for the chosen.

Another apocryphal work, the so called Books of Esdras, does not foresee Leviathan’s and Behemoth’s fate. However, it describes them as two monsters that were created on the fifth day and separated because the waters could not hold them together. And so Behemoth went to dwell in the mountains and in the deserts, while for Leviathan God assigned the seventh part of the earth – the one filled with waters. Behemoth became the lord of the dry land, Leviathan – the ruler of waters and all watery creatures.

The description of Leviathan’s appearance is given in the Book of Job where he is identified as a crocodile. His back is made of rows of shields. Out of his mouth go flaming torches and sparks of fire leap forth. Out of his nostrils comes forth smoke and his breath can kindle coals. His heart is hard as a stone. When he raises himself up, the mighty are afraid and faint. When he moves, he leaves a shining wake behind. His breath stirs the sea waves. He is the lord of tempests and storms. No weapon can hurt him. He is undefeatable and fears nothing:

“Upon earth there is not his like,
a creature without fear.
He beholds everything that is high;
he is king over all the sons of pride.” (Job 41,33-34)

Leviathan and Behemoth appear also in Gnostic sources. The Ophites regarded these two creatures as two (of the seven or ten) circles or stations which the soul has to pass in order to be purged and to attain bliss. In their writings, Leviathan is the soul of the world identified with the Ouroboros serpent.

These two primordial beasts also have many counterparts in other mythologies and legends of different cultures. They are often identified with the Babylonian chaos dragon Tiamat and her consort, Kingu (similarity in the phonetics of Aramaic “akna” = “serpent”). The name “Tiamat” means “abyss,” which corresponds to the Hebrew “tehom” – “depths.” In the Ugaritic mythology the counterpart of Leviathan is Lotan, identified with another sea deity, Yamm. The biblical story may be based on the Canaanite story of the fight between Yamm and Baal: At the dawn of time there were only two creatures: Yamm and Baal. Yamm, known also as “The Prince of the Seas,” was described as a sea monster – dragon, serpent, or seven-headed beast. Baal was the god of storms, clouds and air. These two primordial creatures engaged in a battle for the sovereignty over the world. It ended with Baal’s victory over the sea-serpent Yamm.

A similar story is the myth about the fight between the Babylonian god Marduk and the goddess Tiamat, portrayed as a sea dragon and personification of all waters. Out of her flesh he created the earth and human bodies. Leviathan also shares many qualities with other serpents and sea beasts from many other mythologies, e.g. the Scandinavian Jormungandr, Rahab, or Tannin – the sea demons from Jewish legends, the Norwegian Kraken, or the legendary Hydra. Bernard Heuvelmans writes in his book *In the Wake of the Sea-Serpents* that Leviathan could be an authentic giant sea serpent that was seen by many sailors during their sea voyages.



Leviathan
Gustave Doré, XIX century

In the Christian tradition, Leviathan is often identified with Satan, or presented as one of the fallen angels who serve him: the lord of waters and the direction of west. In this form he appears in the grimoire entitled *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin the Mage*. There he is mentioned as one of the main rulers of Hell, together with Lucifer, Belial and Satan. In this aspect he is identified with the angel Rahab, often described as an angel of death. This view also derives from the ancient belief in the relation between the sea beast and darkness, evil – the common attributes of the Devil:

“...Shaitan was being called ‘the Old Serpent (dragon)’ and ‘the Lord of the Abyss.’ The Old Serpent or Old Dragon is, according to experts such as E.A. Budge and S.N. Kramer, Leviathan. Leviathan is Lotan. Lotan traces to Tietan. Tietan, we are told by the authorities on Near Eastern mythology is a Later form of Tiamat. According to the experts the Dragon of the Abyss called Shaitan is the same Dragon of the Abyss named Tiamat.” (2)

Leviathan is also described as an intermediary between Lilith and Satan-Samael, the pair of hellish rulers. Moreover – he is the image of their union: “You already know that evil Samael and wicked Lilith are like a sexual pair who, by means of an intermediary, receive an evil and wicked emanation from one and emanate to the other. I shall explain this relying on the esoteric meaning in the verse ‘In that day the Lord will punish with His great, cruel, mighty sword Leviathan the twisted serpent and Leviathan the tortuous serpent’ - this is Lilith - ‘and He will slay the dragon of the sea’ (Isaiah 27:1). As there is a pure Leviathan in the sea and it is called a serpent, so there is a great defiled serpent in the sea in the literal sense. The same holds true above in a hidden way. The heavenly serpent is a blind prince, the image of an intermediary between Samael and Lilith. Its name is Tanin’iver... He is the bond, the accompaniment, and the union between Samael and Lilith. If he were created whole in the fullness of his emanation he would have destroyed the world in an instant.” (4)

For this reason the name Leviathan (LvTHN) appears on the symbol of Baphomet, a representation of the union between Lilith and Samael, as an encircling and eternal force – the symbol taken by Anton LaVey from the French occultist Eliphas Levi.

In the medieval encyclopedia of biblical art, the so-called *Liber Floridus*, we can see Leviathan as a beast carrying on its back the Antichrist. Leviathan is presented here as a beast resembling a dragon, with black eyes and sharp teeth. The drawing implies that the Antichrist draws his force from the beast he is riding. This is confirmed by the Apocalypse of St. John: “Men worshipped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast.” (Revelation 13:4)

Symbolically, Leviathan represents most of all the lower forces, the primeval chaos that creates the balance in the cosmic order. He is also the primordial beast serving as a cosmogonic sacrifice – as Marduk defeats Tiamat, or Baal slays Yamm, so Yahweh kills the female Leviathan and uses her skin and flesh as elements of other creations. The “garments of light” prepared for Adam and Eve were created from the skin of the slain Leviathan. Because “garments” are interpreted as flesh covering human soul, thus the bodies of humans are a part of the primordial chaos beast.

Michael Aquino writes in *The Diabolicon*: “Before God or Angel, Daemon or man, there was Leviathan alone, principle of continuity and ageless existence.” Leviathan represents therefore the very beginning, the original cosmic force that gave rise to the universe. Not accidentally, the Gnostics believed that he is the Anima Mundi, the soul of the world. He is the eternal beginning and ending. He cannot be defeated or tamed because the slain dragon/serpent always rises back to life, or exists as a part of the world and humanity. One can awaken and summon him, which is told by Job who curses the night of his own birth and says that there are people skillful to do it. In the microcosmic sense, Leviathan represents the darkest levels of the unconscious. He is the element of chaos and the potential of the force lying dormant in the dark recesses of the human psyche.

Leviathan is what binds the astral and the physical bodies. He represents self-control and mastering of the self through a dynamic change. He is both the above and the below – the inner and the outer force, the soul of the world and the divine spark. He is the timeless existence, the principle that wakes and binds the essence of the self. You can find him by immersing yourself in the depths of the unconscious, in dreams and visions through which the impulses of the unknown are brought to the light of consciousness. This process is an integral part of the left hand path, where the adept gradually reaches the center of consciousness by immersion in its inner core – in search for potential that enables one to shape reality – both the inner and the outer. Through walking the path of Leviathan we become as

him – the Serpent/Dragon, the divine being, separate from all cosmic structures. All we have to strive for is to become aware of and master the spark of divinity, the essence of Leviathan.

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