

WHO ARE THE MARUTS?

Peter L. Gilman

IN *Worlds in Collision*,¹ Immanuel Velikovsky drew a provocative parallel between two sets of “flying armies” described in two very different religious documents of the past: one set, having to do with the “Terrible Ones” occurring in the Old Testament book of *Joel*; the other set, having to do with things called “Maruts”, gleaned from the pages of the Vedic hymns.

Professor Velikovsky, arguing on the basis of the similarities involved in the two texts and of an established etymological connection between the name “Marut”, which was, as I’ve said, the name given to the Vedic phenomena, and the Umbrian word “Mars”, wished to show that his thesis of a series of near-collisions between Earth and Mars in the 8th century B.C. was thereby reinforced: according to Velikovsky’s interpretation, the aerial armies of *Joel* and of the Vedic hymns were “comets which after the collision between Venus and Mars” (which preceded those between Earth and Mars) “multiplied infinitely and began to spin, each one, on its separate minuscule orbit—following behind or preceding the parent planet, Mars.”²

In this article I am offering a re-interpretation of Velikovsky’s evidence which will allow us to understand how the Terrible Ones of *Joel* could crawl on walls and through open windows, on the one hand, and how, on the other, the Maruts of the Vedic hymns could be actually prayed to and regarded as friendly gods. That is to say, whereas Velikovsky has quite legitimately brought up certain similarities for our consideration, it is my own intention—being somewhat of an iconoclastic and brutal nature—to point a gleeful and irreverent forefinger at some of the differences, and to show that the differences outweigh the similarities.

The differences will show that the aerial army of *Joel* is a mere swarm of grasshoppers, but that the phenomena known as the Maruts cannot be grasshoppers or comets either one, but something far more interesting than either. As a matter of fact, I believe the Vedic Maruts were UFOs—pilots and craft, depending on the contexts—and partly in view of eliminating any unnecessary confusion between insects and UFOs, but partly also to put forth some additional evidence for the Martian origin of—some—UFOs, it has seemed to me worth exploring the matter in a preliminary way.

First of all, then, *Joel*. When I said “a mere swarm of grasshoppers”, I of course had no intention of belittling the message of the Jewish prophet. There was a swarm of grasshoppers, or locusts, and it practically ruined Israel. *Joel*’s first lines show that for him there was nothing “mere” about these insects—far from it:

“Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation. . . . What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten. What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten, and what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten. Awake, you drunkards, and weep; and wail, all you drinkers of wine. . . . For a nation has come up against my land, powerful and without number; its teeth are lion’s teeth, and it has the fangs of a lioness.” etc.³

Now *Joel* is talking about locusts in this opening passage of his book and although this leads him later on to the more suitable—one might say, inevitable—prophetic vision of the world’s last night (falling stars, red moon, and so on), there is no real reason to suppose that he is being coy or secretive about the actual nature of what is plaguing Israel at the time of his writing. Grasshoppers do fly, do cause enormous destruction, do becloud the very sun by their great numbers. On the other hand, there seems no good reason to believe that a grasshopper would be a fitting symbol or useful mnemonic device for comets—isn’t the coming generation capable of remembering comets, and if *Joel* saw comets why should he desire his grandchildren to remember locusts?

“A powerful army drawn up for battle. Before them peoples are in anguish, all faces grow pale. Like warriors they charge, *like soldiers they scale the wall*.”⁴ I quote from Velikovsky’s quotation of *Joel*, but the italics, needless to say, are not his. We also read in Velikovsky: “They march each on his way, they do not swerve from their paths”, but for some reason he has forgotten to cite: “*They run upon the walls; they climb up into houses, they enter through the windows like a thief*.”⁵

Now I have a very profound and warm admiration for Professor Velikovsky and his theories, but with the best will in the world I cannot believe in comets “scaling walls” and “climbing into our windows like a thief.” There is something so monstrously unsubtle about the way a comet will come through one’s window, as some of us may have learned to our sorrow.

Another example of this suspicious “selectivity” occurs when Velikovsky cites: “Fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns . . . and nothing escapes them.”⁶ The elided two verses specify: “The land is like the garden of Eden before them, but after them a desolate wilderness”, which plainly puts us back into a locust context: “fire” is of course simply *Joel*’s metaphor—and a good one, too—for the effect of a vast swarm of these ravenous creatures on verdant farmland: “like the crackling of a flame of fire devouring the stubble”⁷ follows only a few lines later. There is nothing in any of this but grasshoppers. And there are so many of them that by *Joel* 2:20, one is beginning to feel a little crawly about the whole business. In *Joel* 2:20, the close of the insect-phase and the prelude to the vision-of-the-last-day stage, we read: “I (Jehovah) will drive the northerner far from you (Israel), and drive him into a parched and desolate land, his front into the eastern sea, and his rear into the western sea; *the stench and smell of him will rise*. . . .”⁸

But let us bother ourselves no longer about these locusts!

What are the Maruts?

The most obvious difference between *Joel*’s treatment of his terrible flying army and the Vedic hymns’ treatment of theirs is in the attitude of the writers: *Joel* is

lamenting and despairing; the Vedic hymns have nothing but praise and awed admiration for the Maruts: "Indra (Mars), powerful hero, you give to us the glory, terrible Indra in the midst of the terrible Maruts. You are powerful, and you give us the victory. . . ." "Your charge, O Maruts, is dazzling. . . . We pray to you, great Maruts. Eternal voyagers of space (or: the sky). . . ." ¹⁰

Furthermore, the Maruts glow with a fantastic light: "Like the dawn, they give off rays of fire in the dark night . . . their blinding light. . . . In their splendid course, unchecked, they have dressed up in their brightest colour." ¹¹ There is nothing like this in *Joel*. In *Joel*, the army of the Terrible Ones *darkens* the sky, never illumines it. In the Vedic hymns, although the Maruts are described as causing darkness in one or two passages, in most passages they are described as bright, light-bearing, burning, dazzling. . . .

One might feel tempted to ask at this point: but why couldn't the Maruts be Velikovsky's comets, since it seems obvious enough now that they weren't Joel's locusts?

First of all, of course, the force of Velikovsky's argument is in the multiplicity of independent and correlating testimony from points far distant from each other on the globe. He posits global catastrophe, thus he must find global agreement. In the present case, he had the bare minimum agreement—two parties—and we have just seen that one of them must assimilate to insects. Thus his argument is without force: the Maruts seem to have been a locally observed phenomenon.

But there are two more positive reasons for rejecting Velikovsky's interpretation of the Maruts as comets.

The first is that, as Velikovsky himself points out, the majority of the Vedic hymns are dedicated to the Maruts as if to gods, but—as Velikovsky neglected to add—not merely to gods as such (this might be comets, easily enough), but to gods who actually intervened in the history of the Indian nation to which Brahma is said to have "spoken" by revelation—rather, to whose priest-poets he "spoke". But a natural force does not take sides in human warfare and usually it is nothing if not aimlessly destructive: volcanic eruptions, floods, showers of meteors, locusts, and so on. At the same time the Maruts are far from being harmless: "The Maruts through their lightning bolts, strike with the thunder, burn with wind, shake the mountains." ¹² Yet the Maruts' destruction is *not aimless*, for they are referred to constantly in these hymns as *fellow-warriors*, assuring victory to their Indian allies in a way that evokes at once the idea of a modern military force in which air and ground forces co-operate against the enemy: "Our victory is violent, magnificent, total, crushing, and splendid. The tireless army of the Maruts. . . ." ¹³ "Indra, powerful hero, you give *us* the victory, terrible Indra amidst the terrible Maruts. You are terrible and you give *us* the victory" ¹⁴ (my italics). The Maruts thus strike selectively, with something we must compare to human intelligence, only the enemies of the Indian nation.

The second reason for rejecting Velikovsky's comet theory in connection with the Maruts is that he has picked out those passages of the Vedic hymns which describe the Maruts as glowing airborne chariots and

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treated them as if they adequately characterised the complete phenomenon. Yet as Paul Misraki has indicated, ¹⁵ the Maruts are generally classified or described as a kind of non-human rational being, in the same general category with angels and demons, gods, demi-gods, genies, trolls, cherubim, and so on. A thorough study of the Maruts, then, would obviously involve doing justice to both these aspects of the Maruts, namely, as luminous and rapid air-chariots; and as non-human but rational beings. Of course, as we have already had occasion to note, a certain amount of overlapping is bound to arise: thus the air-chariot bombards selectively, that is, according to intelligent control. But if the two aspects are not accorded equal weight, then we will have another half-analysis resulting in something less than half the truth. Velikovsky's unfortunate tendency in this respect could well serve as an object lesson to any and all of us whose enthusiasm in research is always threatening to blunt the edge of an objective desire to get at the *truth itself*.

Now I do not propose to undertake any extensive analysis of the role played by the Maruts in the Vedic hymns—at least, not in the present article. We can be reasonably certain, however, that that role was very large, and that a thorough study is in order. From the point of view of religion, one tends naturally to see the Maruts as occupying the same sort of role in the development of the Hindu faith as that apparently held in the development of Judaism and Christianity by the Cherubim (and perhaps other types of angelic beings): the Vedic hymns are at the base of the Hindu religion, being its sacred books, of which the *Pouranas*, *Soutras*, etc., are commentaries. It is perhaps worth mentioning that in both cases we have to do with beings apparently so concerned to establish and further a particular body of religious and ethical doctrines on a particular nation of men, that actual participation and co-operation in the wars of that nation are not excluded from their programme. And yet two vastly different religions are seen to develop among the Jews and the Indians!

In this concluding passage I wish to discuss briefly the question of the origin of the Maruts. And now Velikovsky is back "on our side" again with some most

interesting information! It is that (a) the Maruts are always associated in the Vedic hymns with Indra, the Indian equivalent to Mars; and secondly that (b) the name "Mars" (genitive: Martis) seems to have the same origin as "Maruts". But for those of us no more disposed to trust Velikovsky's etymology than his entomology, it is reassuring to find that in this judgment he is following a linguist and authority on the Vedas, F. Max Müller, who writes¹⁶: "Why refuse to recognise in 'Mars Martis', a parallel form of 'Maruts'? I won't claim that the two words are identical; I simply affirm that their root is common. . . . If any doubt subsisted as to the identical origin of 'Marut' and of 'Mars', it should be dispelled by the Umbrian *Cerfo Martio*, which . . . corresponds exactly to the expression *sardha-s maruta-s*, the army of the Maruts. Such perfect coincidences could hardly be accidental."

Max Müller wrote this passage in 1891. As far as I'm aware, he didn't believe in flying saucers (or their 1891 equivalent) and would probably not even have accepted a free year's subscription to FSR, designed to complete his education on the subject. But he seems to have provided us with a rather valuable link between the planet Mars and those demi-gods in flying chariots known to the readers of the Vedic hymns as Maruts. . . .

We shall see, I believe, as time passes and evidence accumulates, more and more reason to believe that

there is an advanced non-human civilisation on the very door-step of our world and that this civilisation has had varied and enormously significant influence on our terrestrial history. By some, the mysterious small visitors from the red planet have been called cherubim, by others, they have been called Maruts. What will be the total picture, when the pieces have all been fitted together! God only knows—and, of course, the Martians themselves. But it would surprise me very much if that final picture turns out to be an altogether rosy one to the eyes of the human race.

What if they even tried to give us back God . . . ? They seem to have such a religious temperament!

NOTES

¹ Velikovsky, Immanuel: *Mondes en collision*, trad. de Henri Morisset, Stock, Paris, 1961 (in this article I have made my own re-translations).

² Velikovsky, page 241.

³ *Joel* I: 3-6.

⁴ Velikovsky, page 238.

⁵ *Joel* II: 9.

⁶ *Joel* II: 3.

⁷ *Joel* II, 5.

⁸ *Joel* II: 20.

⁹ Velikovsky, page 235.

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ *Joel* II: 10.

¹² *Joel* II: 10.

¹³ Velikovsky, page 238.

¹⁴ Velikovsky, page 235.

¹⁵ Thomas, Paul, *Les Extraterrestres*, Plon, Paris, 1962, page 16. (English language version *Flying Saucers through the Ages*: N. Spearman.)

¹⁶ Quoted by Velikovsky, page 367, note 28.

TWENTY YEARS BACK

Brinsley le Poer Trench

WE will now recall the sighting of a UFO by one of the best qualified witnesses ever to see one. The following brief account is reproduced from my recent book exactly as it appeared there.¹

"The distinguished astronomer, Professor Clyde W. Tombaugh, discoverer of the planet Pluto, was the witness of a UFO.²

"It was at about 10.45 p.m. on August 20, 1949, that Professor Tombaugh was enjoying the evening air outside his house at Las Cruces, New Mexico, with his wife and mother-in-law.

"He happened to glance up directly overhead and was amazed to see six or eight greenish lights flying southwards at uniform speeds, which immediately suggested to him they might have been windows of some large flying object dimly outlined against the night sky.

"Professor Tombaugh commented afterwards that in all his thousands of hours of night sky-watching he had never seen anything so strange. The UFO made no sound."

Aimé Michel made some interesting comments on this sighting in his excellent first book.³ He pointed out that Professor Tombaugh gave his first account of what he had seen to *Life* magazine, and later supplied Professor Menzel with a fresh account for his book.⁴

Michel asks why Menzel did not reproduce in his book the account given him by Tombaugh verbatim,

without changing a syllable, as he insists on others doing?

Michel continues, "An even more serious point is that he received from Professor Tombaugh some drawings of the object observed. Such drawings, made by an astronomer of Professor Tombaugh's reputation, would have been a precious addition to the dossier on flying saucers. . . . In this book, which contains no fewer than 96 illustrations, including quite a number portraying medieval monsters, imaginary Martians or the visions of the prophet Ezekiel, no room has been found for a picture of a flying saucer, drawn by perhaps the most qualified witness who ever saw one."

Michel goes on to state that our old adversary Menzel (a contributor of several articles to FSR) proceeded to attack Tombaugh's sighting on the basis that what he saw "was the reflection of ground lights on a thin curtain of haze."

Michel pointed out that Tombaugh's description was very circumstantial, and ended up by remarking: "Whatever we may think of Professor Menzel's theory, it is surely odd that Professor Tombaugh, a distinguished astronomer, accustomed by long experience to observe meteorological and astronomical phenomena, did not suggest such an explanation himself. . . ."

Frankly, while recognising that Professor Menzel is a distinguished man in his own right—no one disputes

(continued on page 31)