



Modern Day Dragons

Are Dragons Real?

Lemuel ben Emunah

Modern Day Dragons

In our everyday world there are many types of animals that have amazing chemical defenses. The following examples include an insect, mammal, fish, amphibian, sea invertebrate, and a reptile. The animals used in these examples all use some kind of projectile chemical defense that is reminiscent of a dragon's fire.

Bombardier Beetle



The bombardier beetle has two sacs on its abdomen that contain different chemicals that when mixed create a nasty gas. One of the sacs contains hydroquinones and hydrogen peroxide. The smaller sac contains special enzymes, catalases and peroxidases, that initiate the chemical reaction. The chemical reaction produces heat around 100° C (212° F) or the boiling point of water. One African explorer noted that after spraying, the beetle itself was too hot to pick up.

Skunk



Most people think the lowly skunk only stinks. However, the spray that a skunk emits contains n-butyl mercaptan, which, besides smelling bad, can cause temporary blindness and nausea.

Boxfish



The boxfish is also known as the “neutron bomb” fish because when stressed, the fish releases through its pores a toxin that will kill any fish in the near vicinity. It is even toxic to the boxfish itself! So the fish usually releases the toxin while making a quick exit.

Fire Salamander



The fire salamander has a gland that contains deadly toxins. The paratoid gland is usually located behind the head, but some salamanders have several glands along the spine. Usually, the toxins are released when pressure is applied, but some fire salamanders can spray the toxins up to seven feet away. Some species of fire salamander will even aim the toxic spray. The toxin is called tarichatoxin and is chemically identical to tetrodotoxin or TTX. TTX is the third deadliest non-protein toxin known.

Sea Slug



When threatened, sea slugs emit a veritable chemical soup containing hydrogen peroxide, ammonia, and several acids. The chemicals are stored in two separate glands and ejected when needed. They contain the chemicals L-lysine, L-arginine, and the enzyme escapin. The enzyme creates the reaction between the two chemicals.

Spitting Cobra



The spitting cobra will actually ‘spit’ venom as a means of defense. Spitting cobras are known to aim for the eyes and are very accurate. When the venom comes in contact with the eyes it causes a severe stinging pain and could even cause blindness. When the venom is injected into the bloodstream it interferes with the respiratory system and results in death.

Hooded Pitohui



In 1992, it was discovered that birds in the genus pitohui had a potent neurotoxin in their skin and feathers. The toxin, homobatrachotoxin, is a member of the batrachotoxin (BTX) family. Prior to this, BTX's had only been found in poison-dart frogs of the genus phyllobates. It only takes 100 micrograms, two grains of table salt, of BTX to kill a 150 pound (68 kg) person.

Dragons in Scripture

Dragons are mentioned several times in Scripture, but there is an actual description of one in Iyov (Job) chapter 41.

Job 41:1-34 "Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook? Or press down his tongue with a cord? ² "Can you put a rope in his nose? Or pierce his jaw with a hook? ³ "Will he make many supplications to you? Or will he speak to you soft words? ⁴ "Will he make a covenant with you? Will you take him for a servant forever? ⁵ "Will you play with him as with a bird? Or will you bind him for your maidens? ⁶ "Will the traders bargain over him? Will they divide him among the merchants? ⁷ "Can you fill his skin with harpoons, Or his head with fishing spears? ⁸ "Lay your hand on him; Remember the battle; you will not do it again! ⁹ "Behold, your expectation is false; Will you be laid low even at the sight of him? ¹⁰ "No one is so fierce that he dares to arouse him; Who then is he that can stand before Me? ¹¹ "Who has given to Me that I should repay *him*? *Whatever* is under the whole heaven is Mine. ¹² "I will not keep silence concerning his limbs, Or his mighty strength, or his orderly frame. ¹³ "Who can strip off his outer armor?

Who can come within his double mail? ¹⁴ "Who can open the doors of his face? Around his teeth there is terror. ¹⁵ "His strong scales are *his* pride, Shut up as *with* a tight seal. ¹⁶ "One is so near to another, That no air can come between them. ¹⁷ "They are joined one to another; They clasp each other and cannot be separated. ¹⁸ "His sneezes flash forth light, And his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning. ¹⁹ "Out of his mouth go burning torches; Sparks of fire leap forth. ²⁰ "Out of his nostrils smoke goes forth, As *from* a boiling pot and *burning* rushes. ²¹ "His breath kindles coals, And a flame goes forth from his mouth. ²² "In his neck lodges strength, And dismay leaps before him. ²³ "The folds of his flesh are joined together, Firm on him and immovable. ²⁴ "His heart is as hard as a stone; Even as hard as a lower millstone. ²⁵ "When he raises himself up, the mighty fear; Because of the crashing they are bewildered. ²⁶ "The sword that reaches him cannot avail; Nor the spear, the dart, or the javelin. ²⁷ "He regards iron as straw, Bronze as rotten wood. ²⁸ "The arrow cannot make him flee; Slingstones are turned into stubble for him. ²⁹ "Clubs are regarded as stubble; He laughs at the rattling of the javelin. ³⁰ "His underparts are *like* sharp potsherds; He spreads out *like* a threshing sledge on the mire. ³¹ "He makes the depths boil like a pot; He makes the sea like a jar of ointment. ³² "Behind him he makes a wake to shine; One would think the deep to be gray-haired. ³³ "Nothing on earth is like him, One made without fear. ³⁴ "He looks on everything that is high; He is king over all the sons of pride."

Dragons are also mentioned in the Torah.

Exodus 4:2-5 ² And the LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" And he said, "A staff." ³ Then He said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. ⁴ But the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand and grasp *it* by its tail"-- so he stretched out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand-- ⁵ "that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you." Leviathan Iyov 41

(The following excerpt is taken from Zerubbabel Emunah's parashah "Shemot.")

In order to really appreciate this passage, we need to look carefully at the word that is translated as "serpent". In the above passage, in verse three, we find the Hebrew word נָחָשׁ (l'nachash – the root being nachash - נָחָשׁ). This word can mean snake, serpent or dragon. The question is, which one is correct in this passage?

Let us consider related passages in Shemot [Exodus] 7:9, 10, 12. We find in these verses the root word תַּנִּינִי (taniyn). This word means sea monster or dragon.

When Aharon (Aaron) threw down Moshe's staff in front of Pharaoh, his staff turned into a תַּנִּינִי (taniyn). The first usage of this word is found in B'reshit [Genesis] 1:21 in which we learn that Elohim also created (bara) the sea monster (dragon).

When we consider what the Scripture teaches us concerning Leviathan in Iyov chapter 41, we see a very apt description of a dragon.

Now please consider this. Moshe has spent forty years in the wilderness, and he was probably used to seeing snakes and serpents frequently. He probably would not be too surprised to see them, and probably reacted to them in a calm manner, just as something that was common.

But the text tells us that Moshe ran from it (that is, he took flight). I cannot image that Moshe would do this if it was only a snake (serpent). However, if it was a dragon, that would be something to run from!

Furthermore, when Moshe was in Pharaoh's court and the magicians did this as well, being magicians they probably would have been in the practice of conjuring up dragons. Even today, dragons are closely associated with sorcery. Things have not really changed much in all these thousands of years!

Then after all that, YHWH commands Moshe to grab this dragon by the tail. Can you image the feelings that Moshe had to overcome to obey that command? Whew!

Chemicals

At this point some people may be thinking that dragons did exist but surely they didn't breathe fire? And why not? Why couldn't an animal breathe fire? We've already seen how some living animals use a chemical spray as defense, so why couldn't there be a creature that breathes fire? There are several chemicals that can react with air to explode and/or catch fire.

1,2-Di-(dimethylamino)ethane

Highly Flammable, slightly water soluble, sensitive to heat and possibly sensitive to air. Will be easily ignited by heat, sparks, or flame. Vapors may form explosive mixtures with air.

1,2-Dichloroethylene, (trans isomers)

Highly flammable; oxidizes in air to form unstable peroxides that may explode spontaneously. Insoluble in water.

1,3-Dimethylbutylamine

Highly flammable; may be ignited by heat, sparks, or flames. Vapors may form explosive mixtures with air. Slightly water soluble.

1,3-Dioxane

Highly flammable; can form dangerous peroxides when exposed to air. Water soluble.

1-Chloroheptane

Highly flammable; vapors may form explosive mixtures with air. Insoluble in water.

So, we can see that it is entirely in the realm of possibility for an animal to breathe fire. Also, many of the chemicals listed have harmful vapors and are corrosive. This brings to mind verse 27 of Iyov (Job) 41: He regards iron as straw, Bronze as rotten wood. And verse 20: Out of his nostrils smoke goes forth, As from a boiling pot and *burning* rushes. At this point some might be thinking that it is *possible* that fire-breathing dragons did exist, but *possible* doesn't mean they actually did.

Dragon Sightings

In A.D. 67, Octavius Livy, a Roman historian, said he witnessed a battle between the 8th Roman Legion, led by General Scipio Regulus, and a heraldic Dragon in what is now Libya. The battle lasted a week and 3000 soldiers were killed.

In the first century, Pliny the Elder reported that a dragon was slain on Vatican Hill during the reign of Emperor Claudius.

In 1222, dragons were reported over London, England.

During the 13th century, a Ukrainian historian named Byliny records a small dragon terrorizing western Russia for several decades. It was finally killed by a Ukrainian hunter named Dobrynja.

During the 13th century, a dragon lived in the Rhone River of France. It's name was Drac, and the town of Draguignan was later named after it. Ocino, Ragnarold, and Umberto of Guineve record several campaigns against Drac; none were successful.

On September 26, 1449, an entire township, between the English counties Suffolk and Essex, witnessed a fight between a red dragon and a black dragon. The event was also witnessed by two of the most respected Englishmen of the time: John Steel and Christopher Holder.

In 1572, Italian naturalist Ulisse Aldrovandi claimed to have a lindworm (a type of dragon).

In 1608, German naturalist Edward Topsell recorded a dragon starting fires while flying over Sanctogarian, Germany.

In 1608, Edward Topsell reported a dragon poisoning wells near Neidenburg, Germany.

In 1609, Christopher Schorer, a prefect of the canton of Solothum, reported a flying dragon in Lucerne, Switzerland.

In 1660, German naturalist Athanatius Kircher examined a dragon slain near Rome, Italy. It had webbed feet.

In 1669, a large dragon was killed on Vatican Hill. It had webbed feet and wings. (Recorded in *Historia Naturalis*.)

In 1817, the French-American scientist Rafinesque-Schmaltz wrote an article about a 200 foot long sea-serpent seen by Mrs. W. Lee in 1805 near Cape Breton and Newfoundland.

On July 15, 1825, several people saw a 60 foot animal with a body like a tree trunk, in Halifax Harbour. The next summer, a similar creature was seen south of Newfoundland by William Warburton.

On May 15, 1833, three officers and two enlisted men of Her Majesty's Navy saw a dragon.
“. . . the head and the neck of some denizen of the deep, precisely like those of a common snake, in the act of swimming, the head so far elevated and thrown forward by the curve of the neck as to enable us to see the water under and beyond it. The creature rapidly passed, leaving a regular wake, from the commencement of which, to the forepart, which was out of water, we judged its length to be about 80 feet; and this within rather than beyond the mark . . .

It is most difficult to give correctly the dimensions of any object in the water. The head of the creature we set down at about six feet in length, and the portion of the neck which we saw, at the same; the extreme length, as before stated, at between 80 and 100 feet. The neck in thickness equaled the bole of a moderate-sized tree. The head and the neck of a dark brown or nearly black colour, streaked with white in irregular streaks.”

They even signed their names.

W. SULLIVAN, Captain, Rifle Brigade, June 21, 1831.

A. MACLACHLAN, Lieutenant, ditto, August 5, 1824.

C. P. MALCOLM, Ensign, ditto, August 13, 1830.

B. O'NEAL LYSTER, Lieut. Artillery, June 7, 1816.

HENRY INCE, Ordnance Storekeeper at Halifax.

In 1860, Peter Karl van Esling gave an account of a dragon, or sea serpent.

“We saw a gigantic reptile, bright blue and silver in colour. He swam gracefully around the ship before the sailors' eyes, and submerged himself without a splash. His eyes were enormous, with vertical pupils and an intelligent expression. They seemed luminous, but this effect could be due to the reflection from the setting sun.

“His head was adorned with bright blue and green crests. Even though he disappeared under water and did not reappear, he appeared to measure some seven meters in length, and on his back they could make out something resembling a crest or fins. It was serpent-like, but the sailor thought they saw legs and claw.”

“Rusty” Beetle sees a dragon while fishing off Dungeness Spit in Juan de Fuca Strait.

The animal was serpentine and had a body at least forty feet long. The head was like that of a camel or horse and there was a mane.

On August 10, 1932, Mr. F. W. Kemp, an officer of the Provincial Archives, reported seeing an 80 foot long dragon swimming in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, near Chatham Island. The creature crawled up on shore and was basking in the sun. Upon seeing Kemp, it went back into the water.

In 1933, Major W. H. Langley saw a similar creature, also near Chatham Island.

In 1937, Fred and George Lawrence saw an animal that “...had a head like a camel's, a small neck, and a body about the size of a large barrel. It was between fifty and sixty feet long.”

In 1942, the crew of the German U-boat Reichland saw a 60 foot long sea serpent.

In 1966, John Ridgeway, a British paratrooper, saw a sea serpent during a survival exercise in the Atlantic.

In the late '90's, a woman saw a dragon in the Rocky Mountains of Alberta and British Columbia.

“The creature was in a beautiful shade of dark green and could easily blend with trees as he had been standing by them but the witness report that he was perched on a rocky outcropping on the side of the mountain. ...He was fanning his wings slightly, looking quite calmly into the valley below. I had been hiking up this mountain, when the movement of his head caught my eye. I had been this way before, and there was a group of trees on the cliff where there had been none before. I did not believe what I had seen at first, but the shape was too obvious, and he was parallel to me, about seven bus lengths away. I was climbing up one rock outface, he was on another.

“He was the most beautiful creature I had ever seen. His head was long, with a large eye ridge and two smaller bumps with a triceratops-like horn on his nose. At the back of his head were two large horns, jutting out backwards, and two smaller horns below them. They were a greyish-white and caught the light like dull silver. His forelegs were slightly smaller than his hind legs and were gripping the edge of the cliff. He looked as though he were a quadruped. He had slightly darker dorsal ridges running from between the longest horns to about halfway down his tail.

“As I stood there, gaping like a fish out of water, the dragon turned and looked at me. He cocked his head to the side, almost like a bird, then spread his enormous wings and vaulted off the cliff. He was absolutely elegant in the air, flapping his wings several times before banking into a glide and disappearing around the side of the mountain. My legs felt so weak that I had to sit down. I have been camping in those mountains for over ten years, and I have never seen anything to suggest that dragons might actually exist there. But after that encounter I began to think about it. What better place for a dragon to live than in the mountains? There are places in Banff and Jasper that nobody has ever been to, and there are many elk and deer and possibly even bears for it to feed on. Plenty of lakes, and the mountains themselves have many hidden caves and the like.”

Conclusion

From the scientific evidence, we can see that it is possible for fire-breathing dragons to exist. In Scripture, YHWH himself gives us a description of a dragon. We also see that many dragons have been seen throughout history. Many of the sightings were recorded by respected historians, naturalists, and military personnel. After examining the scientific and scriptural evidence and the eye-witness accounts, it is safe to say that dragons not only could exist but did, and still do. Dragons, the most powerful and ferocious animals to walk the earth, are not myth.

Are Dragons Evil?

Many people, especially believers, tend to believe dragons, and serpents, are evil. They use various Scripture passages which refer to Satan as a dragon to support their belief. Zerubbabel ben Emunah has written a brief response to this question, which I will quote below:

Dragons are simply one of many of YHWH's creation. In the book of B'reshit chapter one Elohim states that everything that He made was good. Scripture also states that what YHWH calls good we are not to call evil.

The confusion comes in when we as humans start blurring the lines between the physical realm and the spiritual realm. The difference is that there are places in Scripture that indicate that YHWH used a dragon for good. One example is Moshe. When he threw his staff down and it became a dragon, YHWH was using that to show His true power. YHWH used it for good.

The biggest problem comes from the reality that Scripture draws a close parallel between the physical creature, dragon, and haSatan. There are many such places that liken him as a dragon. There is a reason for this and when we understand it, then it helps us to keep these two creations separate.

There are three places in B'reshit chapter one where the word "bara" is used. The word bara means to create from nothing. Those verses are 1, 21, & 27. Elohim "bara" (created) the heavens and the earth in verse one. Elohim "bara" man in His own image in verse 27 and in verse 21 Elohim "bara" created the great sea monster - Leviatan. But what does this mean, that Elohim "bara" created the great sea monster?

When we remember that we were created in His image and then we see the close connection between the physical creature of the dragon with haSatan, then we begin to see the truth that Elohim created Leviatan in the image of haSatan.

Therefore, as the Spirit of YHWH can come and dwell in us as we are created in His image, likewise, haSatan can dwell in the physical creature, the dragon. Thus, when the dragon tempted Chava, it was not just the physical creature, the dragon, but rather it was haSatan dwelling in and speaking through the dragon.

What this shows us is that Satan can dwell in a dragon, but because he is a created being, he can only dwell in one dragon at a time. Thus we have the close connection between the creature dragon and haSatan and also helps us to understand much of the confusion between the two of them.

Bottom line, like all of Elohim's creatures, the dragon can be used for good or bad.