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BAAL בעל

I. The name *ba'al* is a common Semitic noun meaning 'lord, owner'. Applied to a god it occurs about 90 times in the OT. The LXX transcribes Βααλ, Vulgate *Baal*, plural Βααλιμ and *Baalim*. Though normally an appellative, the name is used in Ugaritic religion as the proper name of a deity. Also in the Bible, the noun occurs as the name of a specific Canaanite god.

II. According to Pettinato the noun *ba'al* was originally used as a divine name. It is attested as such already in third millennium texts. The mention of ^dba₄-al_x in the list of deities from Abu Šalabikh (R. D. BIGGS, *Inscription from Abu Šalabikh* [OIP 99; Chicago 1974] no. 83 v 11 = no. 84 obv. iii 8') provides the oldest evidence of Baal's worship. Since the Abu Šalabikh god list mentions the god amidst a wealth of other deities, each of them referred to by its proper name; it is unlikely that *ba'al* should serve here as an adjective. The appellative 'lord', moreover, has a different spelling, viz. *be-lu* or *ba-aḥ-lu*. In texts from Ebla (ca. 2400 BCE) the name Baal occurs only as an element in personal names and toponyms.

PETTINATO (1980) makes a case for Baal being an originally Canaanite deity (so also DAHOOD 1958:94; POPE & RÖLLIG 1965: 253-254; VAN ZIJL 1972:325), and argues that he should be distinguished from →Hadad. Their identity is nevertheless often emphasized in modern studies. Many scholars hold that Hadad was the real name of the West Semitic weather god; later on he was simply referred to as 'Lord', just like Bel ('lord') came to be used as a designation for →Marduk (so e. g. O. EISSFELDT, *Baal/Baalat*, *RGG* 1 [1957³] 805-806; DAHOOD 1958:93; GESE 1970:120; DE MOOR & MULDER 1973:710-712; A. CAQUOT &

M. SZNYCER, *LAPO* 7 [1974] 73). Yet the parallel occurrences of *b'l* and *hd* (Haddu) in, e.g., *KTU* 1.4 vii:35-37; 1.5 i:22-23; 1.10 ii:4-5 do not necessarily support this assumption. It could also be argued, with KAPELRUD (1952:50-52), that the name of the Mesopotamian weather god Hadad/Adad, known in the West Semitic world through cultural contact, was applied secondarily to Baal. If Baal and Hadad refer back to the same deity, however, it must be admitted that, in the first millennium BCE, the two names came to stand for distinct deities: Hadad being a god of the Aramaeans, and Baal a god of the Phoenicians and the Canaanites (J. C. GREENFIELD, *Aspects of Aramean Religion, Ancient Israelite Religion* [FS. F. M. Cross; ed. P. D. Miller, Jr., et al.; Philadelphia 1987] 67-78, esp. 68).

In the texts from Ugarit (Ras Shamra) Baal is frequently characterized as *aliyn b'l*, 'victorious Baal' (see e.g. *KTU* 1.4 v:59; 1.5 v:17; 1.6 v:10; 1.101:17-18); *aliy qrdm*, 'mightiest of the heroes' (*KTU* 1.3 iii:14; iv:7-8; 1.4 viii:34-35; 1.5 ii:10-11, 18; for a closer analysis see DIETRICH & LORETZ 1980: 392-393); *dmrn*, 'the powerful, excellent one' (*KTU* 1.4 vii:39; cf. *KTU* 1.92:30); or *b'l špn* (*KTU* 1.16 i:6-7; 1.39:10; 1.46:14; 1.47:5; 1.109:9, 29 →Zaphon, →Baal-Zaphon). The latter designation is also found, in syllabic writing and therefore vocalised, in the Treaty of Esarhaddon of Assyria with king Baal of Tyre (SAA 2 [1988] no. 5 iv 10': ^dBa-al-ša-pu-nu). It also occurs in a Punic text from Marseilles (*KAI* 69:1) and a Phoenician text from Saqqara in Egypt (*KAI* 50:2-3). The Baal residing upon the divine mountain of Šapānu (the Jebel el-Aqra', classical Mons Casius, cf. the name *Ḥazi* in texts from Anatolia) is sometimes referred to in Ugarit as *il špn* (*KTU* 1.3 iii:29; iv:19; note, however, that the latter designation

may also be used to refer to the collectivity of gods residing on Mount Zaphon). Apparently, in the popular imagination, Baal's palace was situated on Mount Zaphon (*KTU* 1.4 v:55; vii:6; cf. *šrrt špn*, 'summit of the Šapānu', *KTU* 1.3 i:21-22; 1.6 vi:12-13, and *mrym špn*, 'heights of the Šapānu', *KTU* 1.3 iv:1, 37-38; 1.4 v:23). In a cultic context Baal was invoked as the god of the city-state of Ugarit under the name *b'l ugrt* (*KTU* 1.27:4; 1.46:16 [restored]; 1.65: 10-11; 1.105:19; 1.109:11, 16, 35-36).

Such genitival attributions as *b'l ugrt* may be compared with those that are known from Phoenician and Aramaic inscriptions: *b'l krnryš* (*KAI* 26 A II:19); *b'l lbnn* ('Baal of the →Lebanon', *KAI* 31:1-2); *b'l šdn* ('Baal of →Sidon', *KAI* 14:18); *b'l smd* (*KAI* 24:15); *b'l šmyn* ('Baal of the Heavens', *KAI* 202 A 3); *b'l šmm* (*KAI* 4:3, →Baal shamem); cf. also *b'l 'dr* (*KAI* 9 B 5); *b'l hmn* (*KAI* 24:16; →Hermon); *b'l mgnm* (*KAI* 78:3-4). For other special forms of Baal see the survey by POPE & RÖLLIG 1965:253-264. It is also to be noted, finally, that the Ugaritic Baal in his capacity as lord over the fertile land is said to be *bn dgn*, 'the son of →Dagan' (*KTU* 1.5 vi:23-24; 1.10 iii:12, 14; 1.14 ii:25; iv:7). Yet as a member of the pantheon, the other gods being his brothers and sisters, Baal is also the son of →El—since all gods are 'sons of El' (*KTU* 1.3 v:38-39; 1.4 iv:47-48; v:28-29; 1.17 vi:28-29; once Baal addresses El as 'my father', *KTU* 1.17 i:23). There is no particular tension between these two filiations; they should certainly not be taken as an indication to the effect that Baal was admitted into the Ugaritic pantheon at a later stage. On the contrary: the appellative *bn* expresses appurtenance to a certain sphere. Baal was judged to be a member of the Ugaritic pantheon, and as such he was a son of El. Inasmuch as his activity was concerned with the fertility of the fields he was a son of the grain god Dagan.

The excavations at Ras Shamra have supplied us with various figurative representations of the god Baal (A. CAQUOT & M. SZNYCER, *Ugaritic Religion* [Leiden 1980]

pl. VIII c (?), IX a-d, X, XII). Such iconographic representations are known from other places in the Syro-Palestinian area too, though their interpretation is fraught with difficulties; an unambiguous identification with Baal is rarely possible (P. WELTEN, *Götterbild, männliches*, *BRL* [1977²] 99-111; cf. R. HACHMANN [ed.] *Frühe Phöniker im Libanon: 20 Jahre deutsche Ausgrabungen in Kāmid 'el-Lōz* [Mainz am Rhein 1983] 165).

The worship of Baal demonstrably pervaded the entire area inhabited by the Canaanites. During the period of the Middle Kingdom, if not earlier, the cult was adopted by the Egyptians, along with the cult of other Canaanite gods (S. MORENZ, *Ägyptische Religion* [RdM 8; Stuttgart 1977²] 250-255). In the wake of the Phoenician colonization it eventually spread all over the Mediterranean region.

The domain or property of the god consists either of a natural area or one created by human hand; the relationship of the god to his territory is expressed with a genitival construction: Baal is the lord of a mountain, a city, and the like. The place may either coincide with a sanctuary, or contain one. Since the separate population groups within the Syrian-Palestine area each knew their own Baal, as the literary documents show, it may be assumed that people had a well circumscribed image of the god as a deity of fundamental significance for the human existence (cf. A. CAQUOT & M. SZNYCER, *LAPO* 7 [1974] 77). The conclusion is confirmed by the frequency of Baal as theophoric component in personal names (*IPN* 114, 116, 119-122; *KAI* III, 45-52; F. GRÖNDAHL, *Die Personennamen der Texte aus Ugarit* [Rome 1967] 114-117.131-133). Also in the Amarna letters there occur proper names compounded with the divine name Baal (if ^dIM may be read as *ba'lu*, e.g. *EA* 256:2, 5; 257:3; 314:3; 330:3).

Since the information concerning Baal in the Bible is negatively biased, a characterization of the god and his attributes must be based in the first place on texts from the Syro-Canaanite world. The examination of

the Iron Age inscriptional material, however, be it Phoenician, Punic, or Aramaic, is not especially productive. Though Baal or one of his manifestations is frequently mentioned, he usually appears in conjunction with other gods, his particular field of action being seldom defined. Only the Phoenician inscription of Karatepe (8th century BCE) yields information in this respect (*KAI* 26). It tells about Baal in a way that is reminiscent of the mythic tradition of Ras Shamra. King Azitawadda calls himself 'steward' (*brk*, cf. Akk *abaraku*, Ebla *a-ba-ra-gu*, see M. KREBERNIK, *WO* 15 [1984] 89-92) and 'servant' (*bd*) of Baal (*KAI* 26 A I:1). He claims that the god appointed him in order that he (i.e. the king) might secure for his people prosperous conditions (*KAI* 26 A I:3, 8; II:6). A possible counterpart may be found in the Aramaic inscription of Afis (8th century BCE) where King Zakir (or Zakkur) of Hamat and Lu'ash says that Baal-Shamin appointed him king over Hazrak (*KAI* 202 A 3-4) and promised him aid and rescue in distress (lines 12-13). On occasion, Baal is asked to grant life and welfare (*KAI* 26 A III:11; C III:16-20; IV:12; cf. 4:3; 18:1,7; 266:2). In the Karatepe inscription, as in the inscription from Afis (B 23), the heavenly Baal (Baal-shamem) is mentioned besides other gods as guarantor of the inviolability of the inscription (A III:18; cf. *KAI* 24:15-16); it is an open question whether he differs from the god Baal or whether he is really the same deity approached from a different angle. Some random data may be culled from the remaining texts. The Phoenician incantation of Arslan Tash (*KAI* 27), presumably dating from the 7th century BCE (unless it is a forgery, as argued by J. TEIXIDOR & P. AMIET, *AulOr* 1 [1983] 105-109), has been thought to mention the eight wives of Baal (I. 18); it is also possible, if not more likely, that the epithet *b'l qdš* refers back to →Horon, whose 'seven concubines' are mentioned in line 17 (cf. *NESE* 2 [1974] 24). A Neo-Punic inscription from Tunisia refers to Baal-hamon and Baal-addir (*KAI* 162:1), apparently as gods that are able to grant pregnancy and offspring.

These few testimonies give only a very general idea of Baal. The capacities in which he acts, as kingmaker and protector, benefactor and donator of offspring, do not distinguish him from other major gods.

Far more productive are the mythological texts from Ras Shamra ca. 1350 BCE, which contain over 500 references to Baal. They help us to delineate the particular province of the god. The myths tell how he obtained royal rule and reigns as king (*KTU* 1.2 iv:32; 1.4 vii:49-50). He is called sovereign ('judge', *tpi*, a title more frequently applied to the god Yammu) and king (*KTU* 1.3 v:32; 1.4 iv:43-44). Several times his kingdom, his royal throne and his sovereignty are mentioned (*KTU* 1.1 iv:24-25; 1.2 iv:10; 1.3 iv:2-3; 1.4 vii:44; 1.6 v:5-6; vi:34-35; 1.10:13-14). His elevated position shows itself in his power over clouds, storm and lightning, and manifests itself in his thundering voice (*KTU* 1.4 v:8-9; vii:29, 31; 1.5 v:7; 1.101:3-4). As the god of wind and weather Baal dispenses dew, rain, and snow (*KTU* 1.3 ii:39-41; 1.4 v:6-7; 1.5 v:8; 1.16 iii:5-7; 1.101:7) and the attendant fertility of the soil (*KTU* 1.3 ii:39; 1.6 iii:6-7, 12-13 [note the metaphor of 'oil and honey', for which see also the Hebrew phrase 'a land flowing with milk and honey' in Exod 3:8.17; Lev 20:24; Deut 26:9; cf. Amos 9:13; Ps 65:12]; *KTU* 1.4 vii:50-51). Baal's rule guarantees the annual return of the vegetation; as the god disappears in the underworld and returns in the autumn, so the vegetation dies and resuscitates with him. Being the major one among the gods, or rather perceived as such, Baal was naturally a king to his Ugaritic devotees. Yet kingship is not Baal's sole characteristic; it is merely the way he is extolled. His nature is far more rich.

Baal is seen at work not just in the cyclical pattern of the seasons. He is also called upon to drive away the enemy that attacks the city (*KTU* 1.119:28-34), which shows that the god also interferes in the domain of human history. His involvement in matters of sex and procreation, though often mentioned in secondary studies, is not very explicit in the texts. A passage in the Epic

of Aqhat narrates how Baal intercedes with El, that the latter might grant a son to Dan'el (*KTU* 1.17 i:16-34). Yet this is almost the only testimony concerning Baal's involvement in the province of human fertility. The other texts referred to in older studies are either misinterpreted or highly dubious. Thus *KTU* 1.82 is not an incantation asking Baal to grant fertility, but a text against snake bites (G. DEL OLMO LETE, *La religión cananea según la liturgia de Ugarit* [Barcelona 1992] 251-255). *KTU* 1.13 may indeed be an incantation against infertility, with Baal in the role of granter of offspring (J. C. DE MOOR, An Incantation Against Infertility, *UF* 12 [1980] 305-310), but other interpretations can also be defended with some plausibility (see, e.g., LAPO 14 [1989] 19-27). On the whole it seems mistaken to infer from Baal's role as bestower of natural fertility that he fulfilled the same role in the domain of human fertility. Also, at Ugarit, there are other gods who might equally be called upon to bless a family with children.

A further theme in the myths is the antagonism between Baal and Yammu the god of the →sea (*KTU* 1.2). In addition to this tablet from the Baal Cycle, other texts allude to the theme; they speak of Baal's combat against the →River (Naharu) and the monsters *tnn* (Tunnanu, →Tannin), *bṯn 'qltn* (the twisted serpent), *ln bṯn brh* (Litānu, the fugitive serpent; →Leviathan), and *šlyt* (Šalyaṯu; *KTU* 1.3 iii:39-42; 1.5 i:1-3, 27-30)—all belonging to the realm of Yammu according to *KTU* 1.3 iii:38-39. It is interesting to compare these data with the account by Philo Byblius: "Then Ouranos [= El?] again went to battle, against Pontos [= Yammu]. Yet having turned back he allied himself with Demarous [= Baal]. And Demarous advanced against Pontos, but Pontos routed him. Demarous vowed to offer a sacrifice in return for his escape" (Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* I.10.28; cf. H. W. ATTRIDGE & R. A. ODEN, Jr., *Philo of Byblos: The Phoenician History* [Washington 1981] 52-53, 190 nn. 119-120).

These reports might lead to the conclusion that Baal is revered as the god who

protects against the forces of destruction. More particularly, however, his defeat of Yammu symbolizes the protection he can offer sailors and sea-faring merchants. Baal is a patron of sailors (C. GRAVE, *The Etymology of Northwest Semitic šapānu*, *UF* 12 [1980] 221-229 esp. 228; cf. M. BIETAK, *Zur Herkunft des Seth von Avaris, Ägypten und Levante* 1 [1990] 9-16). In the Baal temple of Ugarit a number of votive anchors have been found. Sailors could descry from afar the acropolis temple, so they knew where to turn to with their supplications for safekeeping and help (cf. M. YON, *Ougarit et ses Dieux, Resurrecting the Past: A Joint Tribute to Adnan Bounni* [ed. P. Matthiae, M. van Loon & H. Weiss; Istanbul/Leiden 1990] 325-343, esp. 336-337). This observation is confirmed by a reference in the treaty of Esarhaddon with king Baal of Tyre. It shows that Baal Zaphon had power to rescue at sea, since the curse speaks about the possibility of Baal Zaphon sinking the Tyrian ships by means of a sea-storm (SAA 2 no. 5 iv 10'-13').

Finally attention should be paid to a rather different aspect of the way believers thought Baal might intervene in their lives. It concerns Baal's connection with the netherworld, as it is expressed in the myth about Baal's fight with →Mot (personified death). Mythological fragments not belonging to the Baal Cycle have increased our knowledge of this side of the god. Baal is called with the epithet *rpū* (Rāpi'u), 'healer' (cf. Hebrew *rōpē*). DIETRICH & LORETZ have shown that Baal is called *rpū* in his capacity as leader of the *rpum*, the →Rephaim (1980:171-182). They find the epithet in *KTU* 1.108:1-2 and guess *KTU* 1.113 belongs to the same category of texts. The Rāpi'ūma (Hebrew *rēpā'im*) are the ghosts of the deceased ancestors, more especially of the royal family. Baal is their lord in the realm of the dead, as shown by the circumlocution *zbl b'l arš* ('prince, lord of the underworld'; DIETRICH & LORETZ 1980:392). According to *KTU* 1.17 vi:30 Baal is able to vivify, which DIETRICH & LORETZ interpret to mean that he activated the dece-

ased and thus played a major role in the ancestor cult. The expression *adn ilm rbm* (KTU 1.124:1-2) may also be understood as an epithet of Baal, designating him as 'lord of the great gods', i.e. of the deified ancestors (1980:289-290).

III. The biblical references in which בעל means 'husband' (e.g. Gen 20:3; Exod 21:3.22) fall outside the scope of this article. Only Hos 2:18 is ambiguous in this respect. Evidently the verse did not originate as a dictum of Hosea; it was written at a later time (so already W. W. Graf BAUDISSION, *Kyrios als Gottesname im Judentum und seine Stelle in der Religionsgeschichte* [ed. O. Eissfeldt; Giessen 1929], Vol. 3, 89-90; recently J. JEREMIAS, *Der Prophet Hosea* [ATD 24/1; Göttingen 1983], ad locum). In the eschatological future, according to the prophet, the Israelites will call →Yahweh 'my man' and no longer 'my Baal'. Since otherwise Baal is never used as a designation of Yahweh, both 'my man' (ʿišī) and 'my Baal' (baʿālī) are to be understood as 'my husband', even though the former is more common in this sense than the latter (Gen 2:23; 16:3; Lev 21:7; Num 5:27 and often). In the background, however, the verse is a polemic against the cult of Baal (thus also the LXX by the plural Βααλμ).

The name Baal is used in the OT for the most part in the singular, and rarely in the plural; it is generally preceded by the article (Num 22:41 is no exception because it characterizes a cultic place). On the basis of this data, EISSFELDT has denied that there were a great number of Baals, distinguished from each other by reference to a locality or some other specification, such as a genitival attribute (→Baal-berith) or an apposition (Baal-zebul, thus to be read instead of →Baal-zebul; see O. EISSFELDT, Baʿal-šamem und Jahwe, ZAW 57 [1939] 1-31, esp. 15-17 = KS II [1963] 171-198, esp. 184-185). The many local Baals are rather to be understood as manifestations of the one Baal worshipped among the Canaanite population (thus DE MOOR & MULDER 1973:709-710, 719-720; but note the critical observations by KÜHLEWEIN 1971:331).

The frequent occurrences of the name

Baal in the OT are instructive about the kind of relations that the Israelites entertained with the deity. During the early history of Israel the name was by no means applied to Yahweh, as is sometimes affirmed (*pace* KAPELRUD 1952:43-44). The proper name Bealiah (1 Chr 12:6[5]), meaning 'Yahweh is Baal/Lord', is insufficient evidence to prove that Baal was a customary epithet of Yahweh. The theophoric component 'Baal' in proper names reveals most bearers of these names to be worshippers of Baal, or to come from a family of Baal worshippers. All kinds of observations in the Bible document the fact that the Israelites addressed a cult to Baal. From a religio-historical point of view this comes hardly as a surprise. Also among the Ammonites Baal enjoyed a certain popularity (see Gen 36:38-39 for Baal as theophoric element in an Ammonite personal name; the god is possibly mentioned in the Amman theatre inscription, see K. P. JACKSON, *The Ammonite Language of the Iron Age* [HSM 27; Chico 1983] 45 and U. HÜBNER, *Die Ammoniter* [ADPV 16; Wiesbaden 1992] 21-23; bʿl occurs as a theophoric element in a personal name on a seal from Tell-el-ʿUmērī: bʿlyšʿ, HÜBNER 1992:86; B. BECKING, JSS 38 [1993] 15-24). In addition to the more general references in Judg 6:31-32; 1 Kgs 18:21.26; 2 Kgs 10:19-20.28, there are references to the temple of Baal (1 Kgs 16:32; 2 Kgs 10:21.23.25-27; 11:18); his altar (Judg 6:25.28.30-32; 1 Kgs 16:32; 2 Kgs 21:3); his cultic pillar (2 Kgs 3:2; 10:27); his prophets (1 Kgs 18:19.22.25.40; 2 Kgs 10:19); and his priests (2 Kgs 11:18). It cannot be said that the cult of Baal flourished only in certain periods or in a number of restricted areas; nor was it limited to the Canaanite part of the population (assuming that Canaanites and Israelites were distinguishable entities). The general impact of his cult is proven, in the negative so to speak, by the reports about its suppression in Israel and Judah (1 Sam 7:4; 12:10; 2 Kgs 10:18-28; 11:18; 23:4-5; 2 Chr 23:17; 34:4), and by the references to the handful of faithful who had not bowed to Baal (1 Kgs 19:18; 2 Chr 17:3). Similarly the increasingly sharp pol-

emics which came to dominate the Israelite literature (cf. KÜHLEWEIN 1971:331) attest to the fact that during the early Iron Age the god Baal played a large part in the belief of the Israelite population. F. E. EAKIN, Jr. (Yahwism and Baalism before the Exile, *JBL* 84 [1965] 407-414) correctly emphasizes that until Elijah, the worship of Yahweh and the cult of Baal coexisted without any problem. It should be remembered, moreover, that the cult of Baal did not cease to be practised, notwithstanding the notice in 2 Kgs 10:28 which says that "Jehu wiped out Baal from Israel".

The polemics gained prominence as the worship of Yahweh gained ground. Their typical means of expression is the accusation that the Israelites turned away from Yahweh at a very early stage in their history; they allegedly preferred to bring sacrifices to the Baalim or to Baal, and they continued to do so until the end of the existence of the independent states of Israel and Judah (see e.g. Judg 2:11-13; 1 Kgs 16:31-32; 2 Kgs 17:16; Hos 11:2; Zeph 1:4; Jer 9:13). In Judaism the substitution of the reading 'Baal' by *bōšet*, 'ignominy, disgrace, dishonour' became customary (→Bashtu); the Septuagint used the terms αἰσχύνη (1 Kgs 18:19.25; with Aquila and Theodotion Jer 11:13) and εἰδωλον (Jer 9:13; 2 Chr 17:3; 28:2). The few references suggest that the Greek pejorative names were seldom used. Yet it should be noted that Βααλ is often preceded by the feminine article, which fact must be interpreted as a reflection of a reading ἡ αἰσχύνη. The Vulgate throughout renders *Baal* and *Baalim* (for the historic development of that usage cf. DE MOOR & MULDER 1973:719).

The figure of Baal which the Bible presents as being worshipped by the Israelites must have resembled the Baal known from Syrian and Phoenician sources, most notably the Ugaritic tablets. As the biblical data are unyielding with information about the nature of Baal, however, the researcher is often reduced to guesses based on comparative evidence.

The first source to be dealt with is the cycle of Elijah narratives, as they are con-

cerned with the competition between Baal and Yahweh—or rather the respective groups that claim loyalty to the one or the other. The central issue of the battle is the ability to produce rain, and hence to grant fertility to the fields (cf. 1 Kgs 17:1.7.14; 18:1.2.41-46). It is Yahweh's prophet who announces the withholding of the rain and its ultimate return. His message is that rain and fertility of the soil do not depend on Baal but on Yahweh (cf. Hos 2:10). Apparently 1 Kgs 18:38 ("Then the fire of Yahweh fell") is to be understood as a reference to lightning and thunder. It has often been noted that this implies a transference of certain qualities of Baal onto Yahweh. Elsewhere, too, Yahweh has assumed characteristics of Baal. He is associated with winds, clouds, rain, flashes, and thunder (Exod 19:9.16; Amos 4:7; Nah 1:3; Ps 18 [= 2 Sam 22]:14-15; 77: 18-19). It is Yahweh who gives the 'dew of heaven' and the 'fatness of the earth' (Gen 27:28)—something normally associated with Baal.

Baal's chthonic aspect should also be taken into consideration. It, too, has been transferred and projected upon Yahweh, thus widening his sphere of action. Yet a distinctive difference remains. Unlike Baal in the Ugaritic tradition, Yahweh is never said to be descending into the netherworld for a definite amount of time, in order to fortify the dead. Yet Yahweh was believed to possess the ability to perform acts of power within the realm of the dead inasmuch as he was able to resuscitate from the dead, or to interfere in matters of the underworld. The texts that say so (Amos 9:2; Hos 13:14; Isa 7:11) date from the 8th century BCE. They voice a conviction not formerly found; it was a prophetic innovation with far-reaching consequences. The ground for it had been prepared by the popular belief that Baal, as an important deity in human life, must equally have power over the realm of the dead. In the mind of the believer, there are no fixed limits to the power of the god.

The tradition of Baal as the slayer of the sea and its monsters was also known in Palestine (→Leviathan). This is shown, for instance, by the fact that in later times

Baal's victories have been ascribed to Yahweh. In passages which are almost literal echoes of certain Ugaritic texts and expressions, Yahweh is celebrated as the one who defeated Yammu and the sea dragons *tannîn, liwyātân, nāhās, bārīah* respectively *nāhās 'aqallātôn* (Isa 27:1; 51:9-10; Jer 5:22; Ps 74:13-14; 89:10-11). In addition there is the defeated monster →Rahab, so far absent from the mythology of Ras Shamra.

The Canaanite cult of Baal as described in the Bible, and practised by the Israelites, has certain traits that are not without parallels outside the Bible. The ecstatic behaviour of the Baal prophets described in 1 Kgs 18:26.28, the bowing to the image of the god (1 Kgs 19:18), and the kissing of his statue (Jer 2:8; 23:13) are hardly typically Israelite (cf. R. DE VAUX, *Les prophètes de Baal sur le Mont Carmel, Bible et Orient* [Paris 1967] 485-497).

Considering the data about Baal surveyed until now, it cannot be excluded that the Palestinian Canaanites called their god Baal with the title 'king' as well—in the same manner as the Ugaritic texts do. El too may have received the title. Such practices will undoubtedly have been an influence in the Israelite use of the epithet in relation to Yahweh (cf. SCHMIDT 1966). Yet we are not in a position to determine exactly when and how the transfer of the title came about.

Because of the similarity between the two gods, many of the traits ascribed to Yahweh inform us on the character of the Palestinian Baal. For lack of other data, it is impossible to say whether the resulting image is complete. Also, it cannot be excluded that the Palestinian cult of Baal, and its theology, differed at various points from that which is found in the Ugaritic texts. The case of Rahab, mentioned before, offers a telling illustration. Something, however, which can hardly be correct about the Palestinian Baal is the accusation that child sacrifice was an element in his cult (Jer 19:5; 32:35). The two texts that say so are late and evidently biased in their polemic; without confirmation from an unsuspected source their infor-

mation should be dismissed. Similarly the idea of cultic prostitution as an ingredient of the Baal cult should not be taken for a fact. This too is an unproven assumption for which only Jer 2:23 and Hos 2:15 can be quoted in support; neither text is unambiguous (cf. DE MOOR & MULDER 1973: 717-718).

Baal held a unique position among the inhabitants of Palestine. People experienced the pattern of the seasons, and the regular return of fertility, as an act of Baal's power. Yahweh was initially a god acting mainly in the realm of history. Owing to his growing place in Israelite religion, his sphere of influence gradually widened to eventually include what had once been the domain of Baal as well. His rise in importance was only possible, in fact, through his incorporation of traits that had formerly been characteristic of Baal only.

IV. Bibliography

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BAALAT בַּעֲלַת

I. *Ba'alat*, 'mistress', 'lady', 'sovereign' (Heb *ba'älät*; Phoen/Ug *b'lt*; Akk *bēltu*), is attested as both a divine name and an epithet in the ancient Near East from the middle third millennium BCE. Though the term is attested in the MT as a place name (Josh 19:44; 1 Kgs 9:18; 2 Chr 8:6), it does not occur in the biblical text as the designation of a divinity.

II. In Akkadian, the epithet is applied to a number of goddesses, most often associated with fertility and birth, as *bēlit ilī*. In addition to being a common designation of →Ishtar, this epithet is also associated with specific goddesses, their cities, or their functions.

At Ugarit, *b'lt* occurs as both an epithet and a divine name. In several ritual texts, offerings are made to *b'lt bhtm*, 'the mistress of the palaces', whose identification remains questioned. M. C. ASTOUR (*JNES* 27 [1968] 26) suggested a relation with Akk *bēlet ekallim*, 'the mistress of the palace' (see also PARDEE 1989-90:445). In a mythological text (*KTU* 1.108:6-8), however, *b'lt* is a designation for the goddess →Anat, called *b'lt mlk b'lt drkt b'lt šmm rmm* [ʿn't *kpt*, 'mistress of kingship, mistress of dominion, mistress of the high heavens, Anat of the headdress'. It is also attested in the personal name ^m*abdi-bēltu*, 'servant of Beltu', from Ugarit.

The majority of the attestations of *b'lt* as a divine name are associated with the goddess Ba'alat of Byblos (*b'lt gbl*), 'the Mistress/Sovereign of Byblos', to whom a sanctuary from the early second millennium BCE was dedicated. As *bēltu ša uruGubla*, this goddess is regularly referred to in the Amarna correspondence of Rib-Addi to the Pharaoh from the fourteenth century BCE. The inscriptional evidence from the first millennium BCE demonstrates that she was the leading dynastic deity of that city. In the tenth century BCE inscription of Yeḥimilk, *b'lt gbl* is invoked alongside →Baal-shamem as part of a pair in parallel to 'the assembly of the holy gods of Byblos' (*mphrt 'l gbl qdšm*; *KAI* 4:3-4). The entire inscription of Yeḥawmilk (*KAI* 10; fifth century BCE) is dedicated to Ba'alat, indicating the importance of this goddess to the ruling dynasty of the city.

The relief on the upper register of the latter inscription depicts the deity with the headdress commonly associated with the Egyptian →Hathor, an identification also made with the Ba'alat (*b'lt*) of the Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions (fifteenth century BCE). With which of the major goddesses of Canaan the 'Mistress of Byblos' is to be equated remains debated. Though it is common to identify *b'lt gbl* with →Astarte, based on the association of Astarte with →Aphrodite in later sources, there appears to be good reason to question the equation. While there is evidence from Ugarit suggesting that *b'lt* was an epithet of Anat, there are also reasons to interpret *b'lt* as a title of →Asherah, who was known in Egypt as Qudšu. While it is possible that *b'lt gbl* is to be equated with the great Canaanite goddess Asherah, this deity could have been a syncretistic deity that combined some of the aspects of Asherah, Ashtarte, and Anath.

III. In the OT, *b'lt* does not occur as a divine name or as an epithet of a deity. It is attested, however, in two place names. In Josh 19:44, *ba'älät* occurs as the name of a town included in the territorial allotment to Dan. A town by the same name is also listed among those sites which were fortified by