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**BAAL AND YAHWEH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: A FRESH EXAMINATION OF
THE BIBLICAL AND EXTRA-BIBLICAL DATA**

by

Brian Paul Irwin

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Theology of the University of St. Michael's College
and the Biblical Department of the Toronto School of Theology in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Theology
awarded by the University of St. Michael's College

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Abstract

“Baal and Yahweh in the Old Testament: A Fresh Examination of the Biblical and Extra-Biblical Data”

Doctor of Philosophy, 1999

Brian Paul Irwin

Faculty of Theology of the University of St. Michael's College

The study concludes that the term *habba'al* in the OT is not a uniformly understood proper noun but a title, “the baal”, that had distinct uses in the north and the south. In northern sources, “the baal” refers to the Phoenician storm deity introduced by the Omrides—likely understood by them to be a form of Yahweh but a figure rejected by the prophets as foreign. The related term, “the baals”, is used separately in the DH as a collective for gods of which the Deuteronomist disapproved. In the south, polemics against “the baal” do not generally contain the allusions to storm or fertility present in northern sources. For the most part, when the southern prophets of the 7th century and onward speak against “the baal” they attack a figure unlike that found in narratives like 1 Kings 17-19. This deity is centred in Jerusalem, honoured with human sacrifice and fragrant meal offerings, and is intimately associated with “the baals” or “the Host”. The one feature that “the baal” in southern writing and “the baal” in northern writing share in common is the fact that the people appear to have understood the title as referring to a figure compatible or identical with Yahweh. The connection of this Baal with human sacrifice at Tophet as well as his identification with “the Molek” points toward a chthonic character for this deity.

In the post-exilic period, cultic danger came not from a dynastically sponsored cult but in the gods of the peoples with whom Israel rubbed shoulders in the territory of Judah. For this reason, it is not surprising to find that the Chronicler sometimes uses “the baals” where the DH made reference to “the baal”. In order to provide a relevant message to this new situation the Chronicler, in his own work and often in his reuse of

Kings, changed “the baal” to “the baals”. In so doing, he took the warnings given to earlier generations and updated them for use in his own time.

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Abbreviations

ANEP	Pritchard, J.B. (ed.), <i>The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament</i> . Princeton University Press, 1954.
ANET ³	Pritchard, J.B. (ed.), <i>The Ancient Near East in Texts and Pictures Relating to the Old Testament</i> . 3rd edition. Princeton University Press, 1969.
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BD	Allen, Thomas George (ed. & trans.), <i>The Book of the Dead, or Going Forth by Day: Ideas of the Ancient Egyptians Concerning the Hereafter as Expressed in their Own Terms</i> . Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization, ed. Elizabeth Blaisdell Hauser, 37. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1974.
BDB	Brown, Francis, S.R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs. <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament...Based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius as Translated by Edward Robinson</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952.
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
COS	Hallo, William W. and K. Lawson Younger Jr. (eds.), <i>The Context of Scripture, Volume 1: Canonical Compositions from the Ancient World</i> . Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997.
CT	Faulkner, R. O. (ed. & trans.) <i>The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts</i> . 3 vols. Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1973-78.
DH	Deuteronomic History
DNSI	Hoftijzer, J and K. Jongeling (eds.), <i>Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions</i> . Handbook of Oriental Studies. The Near and Middle East, 1. E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1995.
EA	Moran, William L. (ed. & trans.) <i>The Amarna Letters</i> . Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.
GKC	Gesenius, Wilhelm, E. Kautzsch, and A.E. Cowley. <i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar as Edited and Enlarged by the Late E. Kautzsch</i> . Translated by Cowley, A.E. Second English Edition Revised in Accordance with the Twenty-Eighth German Edition (1908) by A.E. Cowley ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910.
KAI	Donner, H. and W. Röllig, <i>Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften</i> . Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1964.
KTU	Dietrich, Manfred, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín. <i>The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places (KTU)</i> . Abhandlungen zur Literatur Alt-Syrien-Palästinas und Mesopotamiens, 8. 2nd ed. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995.
KJV	King James Version
LB	Late Bronze

LXX	Septuagint
MR	Survey of Israel Map Reference
<i>Midr. Deut. R.</i>	<i>Midrash Deuteronomy Rabbah</i>
<i>Midr. Ex. R.</i>	<i>Midrash Exodus Rabbah</i>
<i>Midr. Lev. R.</i>	<i>Midrash Leviticus Rabbah</i>
<i>Midr. Song of Sol.</i>	<i>Midrash Song of Solomon</i>
MT	Massoretic Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NIV	New International Version
NJPS	<i>Tanakh: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures according to the Traditional Hebrew Text.</i> Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1988.
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
PE	Eusebius of Caesaria. <i>Praeparatio evangelica</i>
PRE	<i>Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer</i>
PT	Faulkner, R. O. (trans.) <i>The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts.</i> Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969.
RS	Ras Shamra
<i>Tg. Ps.-J.</i>	<i>Targum Pseudo-Jonathan</i>

Baal and Yahweh in the Old Testament – Chapter One

Introduction and History of Research

Introduction

Until the early part of the twentieth-century, the scholarly understanding of the god Baal was informed mainly by the Hebrew Bible and scattered references in inscriptions and classical Greek literature. With the discovery of the Ugaritic tablets, however, the academic world gained access to a repository of second-millennium religious texts of unprecedented scope. This find, in addition to creating a new discipline within Near Eastern studies, became the catalyst for a generation of scholars seeking to understand the relationship between Israelite and Canaanite religion.

In recent years a number of studies have appeared that have examined Canaanite gods and their relationship to the religion of ancient Israel.¹ Conspicuous in its absence among these studies is any comprehensive treatment of the Canaanite god Baal.² Given the prominence of this deity in both the Old Testament and the Canaanite pantheon, such a lacuna is surprising.³ This dissertation will attempt to remedy this situation by undertaking a comprehensive study of references to Baal in the OT.

-
- 1 E.g. Molek (Day 1989; Heider 1985), Anat (Walls 1992), Shemesh (Stähli 1985; Taylor 1993) and Asherah (Olyan 1988; Wiggins 1993b; Binger 1997). In addition, a number of works have dealt with the relationship between the entire Canaanite pantheon and Israelite religion (e.g. Handy 1994:37-44, 157-67; Mullen 1980).
 - 2 While Baal has figured at least tangentially in a number of recent books and articles on Israelite religion, no recent, single work has been devoted to the study of this deity in the OT. Among these studies are Curtis (1978), Day (1985), Tigay (1986), Battenfield (1988), Smith (1990a), Dearman (1993), Halpern (1993a), Chisholm (1994), Domeris (1994), Woods (1994), and Toombs (1995).
 - 3 Among the most recent English-language studies of Baal and Yahweh are the works by Habel (1964) and Oldenburg (1969). To these works may be added a study in Dutch by Mulder (1962). A 1972 study by van Zijl deals primarily with Baal at Ugarit. Cornelius (1994) has recently produced a strictly iconographic

At least two developments provide the impetus for a such a treatment. First, many of the recent works on other deities noted earlier have provided new avenues for understanding references to deities other than Baal mentioned in the OT. This approach awaits application to the subject of Baal in the OT. Second, recent changes in the consensus regarding Israelite origins have highlighted the need for a re-evaluation of the relationship between Canaanite and Israelite religious beliefs. These developments, plus the fact that no study of Baal has recently been undertaken, justify a new study of Baal in the OT.

This dissertation will show that the term *habba'al* in the OT is not a proper noun but a title, "the baal", that had distinct uses in the northern and southern kingdoms. It will be demonstrated that in northern sources, "the baal" typically refers to a Phoenician storm/fertility deity introduced by the Omrides. The related term, "the baals", is used separately in the DH as a collective for gods of which the Deuteronomist disapproved. The dissertation will also show that in the south, "the baal", refers to a separate entity centred in Jerusalem and one intimately associated with Molek as well as "the baals" or "the Host". Unlike "the baal" of the north, this figure is honoured with human sacrifice and fragrant meal offerings. The one feature held in common by the southern and northern "baal" is the fact that the people appear to have understood the title as referring to a figure compatible or identical with Yahweh. This dissertation will also demonstrate that in the post-exilic period, the Chronicler sometimes replaced "the baal" with "the baals" in order to reshape the message of the DH for a new audience and situation.

study covering Baal and Reshef down to the end of the Iron I period. Cornelius, however, deals only with representations of Baal and does not relate the material to the history of Israelite religion.

History of Research

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to glance backward in order to see how past scholarship has approached the question of Baal in the OT. Understanding how the landscape has been traversed in the past will foster an appreciation for the complexity of the issues involved and the wide variety of perspectives that have been brought to bear on the question.

Josephus is one of the earliest extant sources to make reference to Baal in the OT. Along with many of the Greek writers who follow him, Josephus shows a great dependence on the OT for most of what he relates concerning Baal. In the eight places where Josephus mentions a god named Baal he uses βααλ seven times and βελιαν once. It is clear from these references that he uses the term to refer to the worship of a foreign deity imported from Tyre. Josephus suggests that this Tyrian Baal was imported by Ahab as a means of pleasing his father-in-law (*Antiquities* ix.138). The closest Josephus comes to describing the specifics of Baal worship is in his statement that Jezebel built a temple to Baal (βελιαν) and planted groves and appointed priests and prophets to the god (*Antiquities* viii.318, l. 3). Here, however, it is clear that Josephus is offering nothing new, but is drawing directly from 1 Kgs. 16:30-33. Similarly, in line 1 of *Antiquities* ix.154, he states that Athaliah and Joram built a temple to Baal in Jerusalem, a conclusion he seems to draw from 2 Kgs. 11:18 and 2 Chron. 23:17. At least as interesting as what Josephus says about Baal is what he seems to omit—for there are several places in Josephus where references to this deity are noticeably absent. In his retelling of the Balaam story (Numbers 22-25), for example, Josephus makes no mention of the Baal of Peor. Treating this passage, Josephus states only that Israel's enemies used women to entice Israelite men to renounce their customs and embrace the customs and gods of the Midianites (*Antiquities* iv.126-40). Likewise, Josephus omits entirely the story of Gideon's destruction of the altar to Baal at Ophrah (Judg. 6:25-32)(*Antiquities*

v.213-5).⁴ Even in his account of the sacrificial challenge atop Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18), Josephus does not once use the term Baal, preferring instead to refer to the “foreign gods” introduced by Ahab and Jezebel (*Antiquities* viii.335-46). Elsewhere Josephus prefers to refer to the ministers of Baal killed by Jehu, simply as “false prophets” and “false priests” (*Antiquities* ix.134-8). Describing Josiah’s destruction of the vessels dedicated to Baal, Josephus speaks only of vessels dedicated to “idols” and “strange gods” (*Antiquities* x.65). What seems clear from Josephus’ references to Baal is that he sees the worship of this god as something foreign to Israelite religion and tradition.

In addition to Josephus, the name Baal occurs in the writings of a number of the Church Fathers including Origen, John Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzus and others. In the majority of cases, however, these occurrences are simply quotes or paraphrases of OT passages and so do not provide any additional knowledge concerning Baal in the OT. One interesting reference to Baal is by Theodoret of Cyrus (d. ca. 466) who, writing on Ps. 105:28-29 (LXX; MT=106:28-29), suggests that Baal of Peor should be identified with Baal, whom he further identifies with Kronos.⁵ Despite this identification, it is clear that Theodoret recognises that the term Baal is used in a number of ways in the OT. In

4 See, however, the article by Feldman who argues that the omission by Josephus of elements of the Gideon story is explicable by assuming that the historian was down-playing aspects that would have been offensive to his Gentile audience (1993:5-28). Problematic for this view, however, is the fact that Josephus preserves equally offensive material when he relates the story of Jehu’s slaughter of the prophets of Baal (whom he refers to as “false prophets and priests”)(*Antiquities* ix.134-8). Further, Feldman’s argument does not fully explain the absence of references to Baal elsewhere in Josephus’ writings.

5 *Interpretatio in Psalmos*, ed. Migne, vol. 80, page 1729, ll. 13-17. Here, Theodoret seems dependant upon John Chrysostom (d. 407) who makes similar comments in his work on this same passage (*In Psalmos 101-107*, ed. Migne, vol. 55, page 663, ll. 76-79). The identification of Baal with Kronos is interesting because in the “Phoenician History” of Philo of Byblos, Kronos seems clearly to be identified with El (*PE* 1.10.18).

his comments on Jer. 32:35, Theodoret suggests that in that book, the name Baal stands as a collective term for idols.⁶

A Greek source that has exerted a profound effect on the scholarly understanding of Baal is the so-called “Phoenician History” of Philo of Byblos. What remains of this work is preserved in Eusebius’ *Praeparatio Evangelica*. From the excerpts Eusebius collects, it is clear that a Roman era *literatus* named Philo of Byblos (ca. AD 63-141) claimed to have translated from Phoenician into Greek an historical work authored by a certain Sanchuniathon. As one of the very few extra-biblical sources dealing with Canaanite religion, the “Phoenician History” was for centuries a source of primary importance in any discussion of Israelite or Canaanite religion. Throughout this century there has been a great deal of discussion concerning the identity, date and historicity of the figure Sanchuniathon. Following the discovery of the Ugaritic texts, much of the earlier scepticism about this figure was swept aside as scholars began to observe parallels between the Ugaritic tradition and the “Phoenician History”.⁷ More recently, however, two studies in particular have tempered this enthusiasm by focusing attention on a number of features in the work that may best be explained by assuming it to have a Hellenistic provenance.⁸ While Hellenistic features may be present in this work, there is

6 *Interpretatio in Jeremiam*, ed. Migne, vol. 81, page 673, ll. 18-22.

7 Among the leading proponents of an early date for Sanchuniathon and his work were Albright and Eissfeldt. Albright (1972:240; 1990:225), for reasons never adequately explained, suggested that Sanchuniathon was a refugee from Tyre who settled in Beirut in the second quarter of the sixth-century BC. Eissfeldt (1952b:25, 70) maintained that Sanchuniathon lived and worked in Beirut in the second half of the second millennium BC and that his work was refined and updated by Philo in the Roman period.

8 Attridge and Oden (1981) and Baumgarten (1981).

much in the History to suggest that it does preserve some Canaanite religious traditions from at least as far back as the Iron age.⁹

-
- 9 It is obvious, for example, that the "Phoenician History" preserves with relative accuracy the names and occupations of a number of deities known from the Late Bronze period. Among these are Chousar (*PE* 1.10.11), whose name and occupation clearly reflects Ugaritic Kothar-wa-Khasis (*KTU* 1.2 III.7; 1.2 IV.7-11; 1.3 VI.21-23; 1.4 V.49-55; 1.17 V.25-27) and Mot who is related in both the cosmogony and in ancient Near Eastern literature with slime or putrefaction (*PE* 1.10.1; *KTU* 1.4 VIII.10-13; 1.5 II.14-16; see also Pope 1965:73-74.). Not to be overlooked is the fact that Philo gives prominence to El, a god well-known in the second millennium, but rarely mentioned in the first (Cross 1973:13).

To these parallels may also be added the following items that would seem to indicate that the "Phoenician History" includes elements derived from earlier religious traditions. One noteworthy passage in the "Phoenician History" describes how the god Taautos—elsewhere identified with the Egyptian god Thoth—invented for Kronos a royal emblem incorporating four eyes and four wings. Philo describes this symbol as portraying Kronos as ever-watchful and ever-ready to act. This royal symbol is reminiscent in several respects of the description in Ezek. 1:10-11 of the cherubim/living creatures that accompany the mobile throne of God. As is the case in Philo, these royal attendants have four-wings and enhanced vision—each one having four faces and a body covered with eyes (Ezek. 10:12). The parallels involving wings, eyes and a royal context makes it possible that both the Ezekiel passage and Philo preserve an authentic tradition in which a four-winged creature stood as a royal symbol. That this is the case is suggested by the fact that in Egypt, Judah and Ammon a tradition did indeed exist in which a four-winged creature was regarded as a distinctly royal symbol (Yunker 1985). In Egypt a four-winged dung beetle represented Horus of Behdet/Edfu, a deity connected with royalty and one known as the protector of the "Two Lands". Amulets incorporating just such a four-winged scarab are known from royal tombs of the 25th dynasty of Egypt. Related to this Egyptian royal emblem are the *lmlk* jar handles from Judah. Recently J. Glen Taylor has argued that the two- and four-winged emblems on these jar handles represent variants of the royal seal of the kingdom of Judah. By drawing together the imagery found on the *lmlk* jar handles and the later rosette jar handles and noting striking parallels between these elements and the royal Nubian amulets of the 25th dynasty, Taylor attempts to show that the *lmlk* jar handles represent Judaeen royal symbols that were inspired by Egyptian "originals" (Taylor 1993:46, 49, 52-8). Returning to the work of Philo of Byblos, it is interesting to note that the royal symbol created for Kronos is fashioned by Taautos (Thoth) to whom all Egypt is given (*PE* 1.10.36-8). Parallels to Ezekiel and to similar imagery in both Egypt and the kingdom of Judah then, suggest that Philo's reference to a four-winged royal symbol of Egyptian inspiration may well have some grounding in an older tradition.

Given the fact that Philo's work is preserved only in excerpts, nothing definitive can be stated about the structure of his work. As presented by Eusebius, however, the work may be divided into six sections:¹⁰ 1) Cosmology (1.9.30-10.5); 2) History of

A further element that suggests that Philo preserves some early traditions relates to the city of Tyre. In *PE* 1.10.31,2, Philo states that during Astarte's travels throughout the world, the goddess discovered a star (ἀστέρᾱ) which had fallen from the sky. This object she took up and consecrated in the city of Tyre. Baumgarten suggests that given the euhemerising tendency of the Phoenician History, this passage probably preserves the recollection of a meteorite being enshrined at Tyre. As evidence of this, he points to representations of an ovoid object in a portable shrine preserved on Tyrian coins of the third century AD (Baumgarten 1981:220). That here Philo may be preserving an older tradition is perhaps also suggested by a section of the prophecy against Tyre found in Ezekiel 28. In 28:14-7, the prophet says:

- (14) You were the anointed cherub, the one who covers. I placed you (there). You were in the holy mountain of God. You walked amongst the stones of fire.
- (15) You were perfect in your ways. From the day you were created until perversity was found in you.
- (16) By the greatness of your trade they filled your midst (with) violence and you sinned. Therefore I profaned you from the mountain of God and I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from amongst the stones of fire.
- (17) Your heart became proud because of your beauty, you ruined your wisdom by your splendour. I threw you onto the earth, I placed you before the kings to look (reproachfully) on you.

Of interest here is the likening of the king of Tyre to a cherub dwelling on the holy mountain of God. Particularly intriguing is the statement that prior to being thrown down to earth, this figure walked among the "stones of fire". While the phrase *'abnê-ēš* (vv. 14,6) is a *hapax legomenon*, the phrase itself and the context of the dwelling place of God / the gods (*bēhar qōdeš 'ēlōhīm*)(v. 14) makes it quite possible that *'abnê-ēš* refers to deities perceived as the heavenly bodies Tyre (Eichrodt 1970:393; Zimmerli 1983:93). If this is the case, then Ezekiel 28:14-7 shows striking similarities to Philo's mention of the fallen star consecrated at Tyre. It may be that a tradition Philo preserves as a romantic tradition concerning the founding of Tyre, Ezekiel embellishes to show that Tyre was condemned from its inception. If this is the case, then the passages in Ezekiel and Philo each in their own way reflect the remembrance and use of a genuine Tyrian religious tradition.

10 This breakdown follows that of Attridge and Oden (1981). Alternative divisions are given by Barr (1974-75) and Baumgarten (1981).

Culture (1.10.6-14); 3) Life of Kronos (1.10.15-30); 4) Accounts of Later Rulers (1.10.30-42); 5) Human Sacrifice (1.10.44); and 6) Serpents (1.10.45-53).

Turning to the subject of Baal, Philo's work contains references to three figures that might be associated with the ancient Near Eastern deity. The first, Beelsamen, appears in the so-called "History of Culture", a section dealing with those who made significant technological contributions to the human race. It is important to note, however, that this Beelsamen is not himself one of the contributors, but a god worshipped by them. Beelsamen is clearly to be identified with Baalshamem and is described by Philo as a god identified with the sun and Zeus who was worshipped during time of drought (*PE* 1.10.7). The association with the "thunderer" Zeus and the fact that supplication to this god was made when rain was needed comports with an identification with the weather god Baal. More on the possible identity of this figure will be said below in chapter two.¹¹

The second possible Baal figure is a son of Kronos (El) named Zeus Belos (*PE* 1.10.26) who is mentioned in the section dealing with the life of Kronos. As with Beelsamen, the association of this figure with the name Zeus suggests a possible identification with the weather god Baal. Further, Zeus Belos' status as a son of Kronos is in a sense reminiscent of the symbolic "father-son" relationship between El and Baal at Ugarit. His relationship with Pontos and Poseidon (one of whom should probably be equated with Yam) is, however, problematic. According to Philo, Zeus Belos is the grandfather and great-grandfather of Pontos and Poseidon respectively (*PE* 1.10.26-27). This relationship and the absence in the narrative of any sign of conflict between Zeus Belos and either Pontos or Poseidon, however, suggests that Zeus Belos is not related to Ugaritic Baal.

11 See pp. 51-52.

Another figure appearing in the “Life of Kronos” seems most likely to be related to Baal. The name of this god, Demarous, corresponds nicely to *dmrn*—one of the titles of Baal in the Ugaritic Baal cycle (KTU 1.4 VII.39). A further correspondence comes in Philo’s apparent reference to Demarous as Adodos,¹² a title strikingly similar to the “Hadad” used to refer to Baal in the Ugaritic texts (PE 1.10.31). As with the other Baal-like figures mentioned in the “Phoenician History”, Demarous too is called Zeus. Here, however, the association is stronger, with Demarous being called “king of the gods”—ruling over these other deities with the consent of Kronos (PE 1.10.31). Demarous, like Ugaritic Baal, does battle with Pontos the god of the sea (PE 1.10.26-28). Unlike his Ugaritic counterpart, however, Demarous is defeated by the sea god.

One of the difficulties in assessing the value of the “Phoenician History” is the presence of several figures—noted above—each of whom possess at least some Baal-like qualities. One explanation for this is the possibility that each of these figures represents the Baal of a distinct local mythic tradition whose independence was preserved when Philo of Byblos compiled his work.

At the end of the nineteenth century, W.R. Smith set the tone for much of the discussion concerning Baal and the OT with his influential work, *The Religion of the Semites*. Smith maintained that the authority of gods was essentially local with each deity being the “*baʿal*” or “possessor” of a particular place or region. These local *bēʿālīm* were essentially all fertility gods, distinguished one from another by the geographic name incorporated into their title (e.g. Baal of Tyre, Baal Lebanon, etc.). The common basis upon which the authority of these various gods rested was their ability to make their particular territory fruitful. In the arid world that was the ancient Near East, these

12 On the ambiguity of this passage and the reasons for seeing Adodos as another name for Demarous, see Attridge and Oden (1981:55, n. 126) and Baumgarten (1981:219).

deities ensured the fertility of the land by their control of the springs, streams and underground watercourses. Only as nomadic worshippers of these deities moved into areas that required irrigation by rainfall, did the *bēʿālîm* come to be known also as rain gods (Smith 1956:92-113). For Smith, then, there was no one Baal *par excellence* but rather a plethora of minor fertility gods each of which was lord or *baʿal* of its own tiny domain.

At the beginning of this century, Paton and a number of other scholars¹³ followed Smith by arguing that the OT use of the word *baʿal* in all its forms should be understood by reference to its meaning of “lord” or “possessor”. Unlike Smith, however, Paton argued that the cult of the *bēʿālîm* represented a developmental stage just below polytheism in which the beings worshipped were not gods, but spirits that inhabited natural objects such as trees, springs, rocks etc. The OT references to *bēʿālîm* could therefore be taken to refer to individual spirit-beings whose function was to be “lord” or “possessor” of a specific object, phenomenon or geographical area. Paton supported his claim on the grounds that there was no evidence that *baʿal* became a proper noun prior to the Hellenistic and Roman periods. He also argued that Baal names that included a geographic designation (e.g. Baal-Hermon, Baal-Hazor, etc.) could not be local forms of a single god named Baal because the Semites never combined the names of gods with places (1909:284).¹⁴

According to Paton, most of the Baal names in the OT had their origin in Canaanite religion and the agricultural life of a sedentary culture. Conservative elements within Israel such as the Kenites and Nazirites attempted to avoid the *bēʿālîm*

13 See for example, Gilmore (1908:390-91) and Peake (1919:209).

14 Both of these contentions, of course, have been disproved by recent textual discoveries. From the Ugaritic materials, it is clear that there was a Canaanite deity named Baal. Additionally, the reference in a Kuntillet ʿAjrud inscription to “Yahweh of Samaria”, demonstrates that a divine proper name could be combined with a place name.

so intimately connected with life in Canaan by eschewing agricultural life altogether and returning to desert nomadism and a more “traditional” Yahwism. In the end, suggested Paton, Israel achieved a measure of success over the *bēʿālîm* by absorbing them and transforming them into local manifestations of Yahweh. As a result, Yahweh ceased to be a god of Sinai and became a god of Canaan, a patron of agriculture and civilisation—a process completed by the time of David. The worship of these local manifestations of Yahweh was one aspect of popular religion that was opposed by the prophet Hosea. It was not until the exilic period that Yahwism was able to eradicate the last vestiges of the Canaanite *bēʿālîm* cult (1909:285-92).

During the time of Ahab, Paton continues, the monarchy of the northern kingdom attempted to introduce a new Baal into Israelite religion. This programme involved not another local manifestation of Yahweh, but the introduction of a foreign god whom Paton identified with Melqart of Tyre. According to Paton, the prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah alluded to this Tyrian deity whenever they used the term “the Baal”.¹⁵ Ending the worship of this deity was one of the goals of the reform programme of Josiah (1909:292).

In his discussion of Baalism in the OT, A.S. Peake too maintained that originally there was no supreme deity named “Baal”, but rather a plethora of local and independent fertility gods. Following Smith, Peake argued that these early *bēʿālîm* were not sun or sky gods, but were gods of streams and springs, the natural sources of irrigation in the arid regions in which they were worshipped. Eventually the fertility of lands watered by rains and all of human fertility was also assigned to these deities. The Israelite practice of referring to Yahweh as “*baʿal*” meant that Israelite religion

15 A slightly different view was expressed by George Gilmore who suggested that in Jeremiah, the term “the Baal” is used as a generic term for “idol” (1908:390).

eventually became debased with elements imported from the Canaanite Baal cult (1919:209-10).

In a fundamental departure from the thinking of Smith and those who followed him, D.M. Pratt suggested that the term *ba'al* referred to a single Canaanite deity of whom there were a multitude of local manifestations. The Baal referred to in the OT, he suggested, was Baal Shemaim, a "sun god" to whom human sacrifices were sometimes made. Despite the use of *ba'al* in a pagan context, the Israelites early on applied the term *ba'al* to Yahweh. The efforts of Ahab to introduce worship of a Phoenician Baal led Yahwists to abandon the use of the term during the time of Hosea (Hos. 2:16). The street and rooftop altars condemned so strongly by Jeremiah, Pratt identified as part of the worship of Baal Shemaim (1915:345-46).

One of the scholars to write extensively on the subject of Israelite religion was Otto Eissfeldt. Eissfeldt saw Israelite religion as a syncretistic belief system combining a Hebrew element that evolved in the stark desert regions and involved worship of a stern, detached and transcendent God and a Canaanite element that grew up in the cultivated regions and involved worship of a much more immanent deity who blesses those who follow him with agricultural bounty (1962c:1-4). While the harsh character of Yahweh appealed to men, women favoured the kindness and caring that was present in Canaanite religion (1962c:5). Conflict between Yahwism and Baalism began with the entry of Israel into Canaan. Following the Israelite victory over the Canaanites in the time of Saul, Canaanite religious elements were incorporated into Yahwism, with protests against the presence of Canaanite elements coming at least as early as the time of Elijah (1962c:6). Following the flood of Phoenician elements that came during the reign of Solomon and later in the time of Ahab, there arose a reactionary movement within Israel that sought to remove Canaanite elements from Yahwism. With the religious reforms of Hezekiah and later Josiah, this movement ultimately prevailed

(1962c:6-8). This victory meant that the realm once occupied by Baal now became the domain of Yahweh. In this way, nature elements and imagery became incorporated into Yahwism (1962c:9).

Throughout much of the twentieth century, the figure of W.F. Albright loomed large over Biblical studies in North America. As part of his contribution to the study of Israelite religion, he argued in some detail that the origins of Yahwism could be traced to Israel's Sinai experience and the person of Moses.¹⁶ According to Albright (1946:218), the relationship between Israel and the Canaanites was one of physical and spiritual conflict; the Israelites, he maintained, "were a wild folk, endowed with primitive energy and a ruthless will to exist". This rugged determination allowed the Israelites to overwhelm their Canaanite neighbours and prevent a cultural fusion that would otherwise have "depressed Yahwistic standards" (1946:218).¹⁷ After the conquest, however, the early "missionary drive" which had characterised the time of Moses and Joshua began to wane and pre-Mosaic religious practices began to reappear. In addition, the paganism of Canaanite groups that had been only partially assimilated by Israel came into favour (1963:38). Since both Yahweh and Baal were storm and fertility deities, there was a natural tendency for the people of the land—especially those in the north—to mix the two and adapt elements of Baalism in the worship of Yahweh. Evidence of the syncretism which followed was found by Albright in the increase in Baal names during the time of the Judges (1946:218). During this time there was

16 Albright (1946:196-207).

17 According to Albright, obviously Canaanite elements that had come down into Mosaic Yahwism through pre-Mosaic tradition were gradually "de-mythologised". For example, the dragon of chaos which in Canaanite and Babylonian mythology preceded the gods, was in Hebrew reckoning created by Yahweh himself. This process began in the thirteenth-century and continued down to the sixth-century (1968:183-84).

occasional open conflict between those who were loyal to Yahweh and those who were open to the inclusion of a variety of elements from Canaanite religion.¹⁸

According to Albright, Baalism found more fertile ground in the kingdom of Israel than in Judah to the south. In the south, names with the theophoric element Baal disappear from the OT after the tenth-century, while in the north, sources like the Samaria ostraca testify to their existence well into the eighth-century (1963:70-71). In the northern kingdom, the iconography of the cult established by Jeroboam I—which harked back to a pre-Mosaic image of an Israelite storm god—elevated imagery that many Yahwists found too much akin to the fertility aspect of Baalism (1946:230; 1968:197). Later, during the reign of Ahab and Jezebel, the royal house introduced the worship of the Baal of Tyre into the kingdom of Israel. This deity, whom Albright identifies with Melqart, was opposed by the prophet Elijah. Despite the work of Elijah and the reforms of Jehu in the north and Jehoash in the south, the worship of Baal was never entirely removed from Israelite religion. Beginning with the days of Solomon and Jeroboam I, canaanising elements had been present in the cult and had created the tendency to adapt Baalistic practices to the local cult of Yahweh as it was carried on at the open air shrines and country altars (1946:234-38).

In the opinion of Albright, Yahwism was a phenomenon that was originally external to Canaan. With the post-conquest mingling of the polytheistic Canaanites and monotheistic Israelites, however, there resulted a syncretistic and “debased” form of Israelite religion that persisted throughout most of the OT period. The subsequent history of Israelite religion then, was characterised by a constant struggle to rid the

18 Albright finds an example of such conflict in the destruction of the altar of Baal by Gideon (Judges 6). He also maintains that the task of defending Yahweh against encroachment by Canaanite Baal fell largely to the Levites (1946:218).

Yahwistic faith of these damaging foreign (i.e. Canaanite) elements.¹⁹ Albright's assertion that, "the pious Israelite probably knew little about many pagan beliefs" (1968:207) reflects his judgement that the struggle was largely successful.

Like Albright, Roland de Vaux perceived Israel as originating outside of Canaan and the relationship between Baal and Yahweh as essentially a clash between two separate peoples and religious systems.²⁰ According to de Vaux, the Patriarchs worshipped a form of the god El known to them as "Shaddai"—"the One of the Steppe". The absence of Baal names in the patriarchal narratives was taken by de Vaux to indicate that Baal was not worshipped during this early period. Toward the end of the LB period, however, the place of El had been taken in Syria and elsewhere by the newly arrived god, Baal (1978:277-79). By the time Israel entered Canaan, therefore, Baal was firmly ensconced as the ranking deity. The inability of Yahwism to tolerate the theology conveyed by the Canaanite myths meant that conflict between Yahweh and Baal quickly ensued.²¹ Despite this confrontation, however, Yahwism took over many of the functions of the defeated Canaanite gods and borrowed freely from their feasts, sacrifices and imagery (1978:152, 388). During the divided monarchy, the conflict between Baal and Yahweh came to a climax with the introduction by Ahab of the worship of the Baal of Tyre. In the north, the door to syncretism had earlier been

19 See Albright (1968:193-207). The idea that throughout the history of Israelite religion Yahweh and Baal were in conflict with one another is the thesis of Habel's published dissertation, *Yahweh Versus Ba'al: A Conflict of Religious Cultures* (1964); see also Oldenburg (1969:176-82) and Bright (1981:148-62, 78).

20 A similar perspective is shared by Eichrodt. Eichrodt stressed the role of covenant in creating for Israel an historical and religious self-awareness that became the basis upon which they then related to other groups. The unique relationship Israel had with Yahweh meant that upon entering the land of Canaan, Israel was propelled toward conflict with the Baal cult (1961:36-48, 104-6, 152, 201-3, 225-26).

21 According to de Vaux, the story of Gideon preserves two versions of how this conflict was played out (1965b:306-7).

opened by Jeroboam I, the founder of two Yahwistic shrines featuring bull iconography dangerously similar to Baal imagery (1965b:334). Collecting evidence from a variety of late sources, de Vaux argued that the Baal of Tyre should be identified with Melqart-Heracles and that the events atop Mount Carmel were modelled after a Tyrian ceremony in which a pyre was used to awaken the god. This Baal, so opposed by the literary prophets, was the Baal (Melqart) of Tyre (1971b). As a result of this later conflict with Baal, practices that had earlier been a legitimate part of Yahwistic worship²² were condemned because of their appearance in the Baal cult (1978:285).

For de Vaux as for Albright then, the history of Israelite religion was one in which the Yahwism of the invading Israelites came into conflict with the cult of Baal, the Canaanite storm god. Later, this longstanding conflict gave rise to a new threat in the form of the cult of the Phoenician Baal–Melqart of Tyre.

A strikingly different reconstruction of Israelite religion was put forward by Yehezkel Kaufmann—a contemporary of both Albright and de Vaux. In his *magnum opus*,²³ Kaufmann set forth a vision of Israelite religion in which the pre-exilic Israelites

22 Among these practices were the setting up of sacred stones (*maššēbôt*) and worship at high places (*bāmôt*) (1965b:288; 1978:285). A similar view is expressed by Cross (1973:190-94), who suggests that at an early date, Israelite religion absorbed a variety of Canaanite mythic elements which it refashioned in the service of Yahwism. By the ninth century, however, Yahwism began to give way to the cult of Baal and the old, appropriated language became a conduit for Baal mythology. As a result, the prophets abandoned such Baal-related language in favour of images derived from traditions of El's council. The theophany experienced by Elijah at Sinai, with the insistence that Yahweh was in neither the storm, quaking nor fire, marks a final statement that Yahweh was not present in the phenomena of nature as was Baal. The appearance of Yahweh in a "thin whisper of a sound", therefore, marked, "a new era in his mode of self-disclosure".

23 Kaufmann's, *The Religion of Israel: From its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, originally appeared in Hebrew in eight volumes published from 1937 to 1956. All citations in this study are from the abridged English translation (1960) edited by Moshe Greenberg.

were monotheists with very little real understanding of Canaanite religion (1960:134, 47). He argued that Biblical statements about idolatry in pre-exilic Israel are exaggerations that belong to the editorial framework of Judges-Samuel. Where such condemnations do exist, they are deliberately vague—no mention being made of priests or prophets of Baal or of the destruction of specific altars or temples (1960:134, 38-39). Where the people were involved in idolatry, it was on only a “vestigial” level involving belief in amulets, spells, pagan rites and the influence of the host of heaven. This relationship with pagan religion did not amount to an acceptance of a mythological cult of pagan gods, but rather to an idolatrous approach to Yahweh that leaned heavily on pagan ritual and means of expression (1960:142-47). In this context, the term “baals” is used to refer to genuinely foreign deities that in Israel were the object of a superstitious veneration that did not amount to true, mythological worship (1960:144). According to Kaufmann, the only occasion on which Israel did embrace the cult of a foreign deity was when the Tyrian Baal was promoted by Ahab in the north and Athaliah in the south. Even here, however, the worship of this deity was, he maintained, not a case of syncretism,²⁴ but a truly foreign intrusion that drew few followers.²⁵ In the view of Kaufmann, then, Baal worship in Israel existed in Israel only briefly and soon became little more than an “out-of-the-way cult” (1960:274).

An important contribution to the study of Baal in general came in the 1952 monograph by the Scandinavian, Arvid Kapelrud. In this treatment of Baal in the Ras

24 Kaufmann (1960:141-42) argues that Jezebel’s persecution of the prophets of Yahweh, the ruined condition of the Yahweh-altar atop Mount Carmel and Elijah’s call to choose either Baal or Yahweh all demonstrate that the Baal cult of Ahab and Jezebel was not a syncretistic phenomenon.

25 Kaufmann (1960:135, 40) points to the fact that Jehu assembles all of the Baal worshippers in the land in one temple as proof that the Baal cult of Ahab had few followers (2 Kgs. 10:21). The use of the phrase, *bēkol-yiśrāʾēl* (“throughout all Israel”), however, is surely a formulaic expression employed for literary effect (e.g. 2 Sam. 14:25; 1 Chron. 21:4; 2 Chron. 11:1; 30:5-6).

Shamra texts, Kapelrud argued that the deity Baal was a relative newcomer to the Ugaritic pantheon who toward the end of the LB period challenged and replaced El as king of the gods (1952:75-78, 86-93, 130-35).²⁶ With regard to the place of Baal in Israelite religion, Kapelrud suggested that as early as the time of Saul and David, Yahweh must have absorbed Baal, this conclusion being based on the proliferation among Yahwists during this period of personal names containing the element Baal. The fusion of this storm deity with Yahweh was not unique, but part of a larger, ongoing process by which a number of deities were successfully merged with the god of Israel. For example, with the conquest of Jebus in the time of David, deities such as Shelem, Sedek and El Elyon were absorbed into Yahwism. The merging of Baal with Yahweh, therefore, raised no particular difficulties for the Israelite cult (1963:36, 62). One practical result of the identification of Baal with Yahweh was the appropriation by Yahweh of the role of god of the storm and of fertility, a development which finds poetic expression in Psalms 29 and 104. Elsewhere (Psalms 48, 87, 99), Mount Zion came to replace Saphan's role as mountain of the gods. Also deriving from Baal worship was the autumnal enthronement of Yahweh as king (Psalms 4, 93, 95, 100) and the struggle of Yahweh with Leviathan. Despite these additions, however, the character of Yahweh as a god of the wilderness continued to predominate. The absorption of Baal, however, was not received with equal enthusiasm by all Israelites. With the influx of Canaanite religious elements there came fertility rites that many in Israel—especially the prophets—considered immoral and therefore incompatible with the character of Yahweh. Other aspects of Baal seen as incompatible with Yahweh were the ideas of a consort and the death and resurrection of the god in rhythm with the seasons. The

26 Kapelrud suggests that at the beginning of the second-millennium, Amorite influence brought the worship of Dagon and his son, Baal, to Ugarit (1963:38-39). The view that El was challenged and replaced by Baal was also advanced by Pope in his work on El (1955).

failure of Yahwism to absorb all aspects of Baal's character meant that the Canaanite storm god remained a rival throughout the history of Israel. Furthermore, the periodic influx of non-Israelite religious traditions, as often occurred when foreign women were taken as royal brides, ensured that the vitality of Canaanite Baal elements and those long absorbed by Yahwism never flagged (1963:52-55, 73; 1966:52-58).²⁷ Examples of the persistence of the Baal cult within Israel are found in the references to the rooftop worship of this deity in Jerusalem as late as the reign of Josiah (1963:77-79). Within the territory inhabited by the Israelites, Baal worship was nowhere stronger than it was in the northern kingdom. In establishing his cult-centres in the north, Jeroboam I included cult-imagery that was dangerously close to the bull-imagery found in Baalism. Whether or not this was intentional, the practical result of this choice was that throughout the remainder of its history, the northern kingdom was a region in which the worship of Baal flourished and conflict with Yahwism was waged (1966:56-58).²⁸ The introduction of the worship of Baal-Melqart and Astarte by Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal of Tyre, brought about a violent reaction to Baalism led by the prophet Elijah. In this opposition, Elijah was supported by the Rechabites, a group which, intent on preserving the ancient character of Yahwism, had reverted to the nomadic lifestyle identified with Israel's past. Through the actions of Elijah and his followers and with the purge of the Omrides initiated by Jehu, full syncretism was avoided. Nonetheless, the condemnations of Baalism by the prophet Hosea show that the worship of this deity was not easily quenched (1966:62-66, 73).

27 Kapelrud suggests that the influence of foreign-born royal mothers on their children resulted in Israelite princes who, although obligated to maintain the official Yahweh cult, were sympathetic to the Canaanite religious milieu in which they had been partially raised (1966:57).

28 In his earlier work, *Ras Shamra and the Old Testament*, Kapelrud maintained that Jeroboam's choice of bull-iconography demonstrated that he equated Yahweh with Baal-Hadad (1963:78). In his 1966 work, he allows that the association with Baal may have been unintentional (1966:56).

According to Kapelrud, Baalism was something that first entered Israelite religion during the time of the United Monarchy. During this period, however, most Baal influence came in the form of Baal imagery attached to the person of Yahweh in a way that preserved the predominance of Yahweh within the cult. The fact that Baal was not fully absorbed by Yahweh meant, however, that he continued to be a potential rival. With the passage of time and the influx of foreign influence, the threat posed by Baal grew, especially in the northern kingdom where the Tyrian princess Jezebel introduced the worship of Baal-Melqart. There, a violent reaction instigated by the prophets prevented the complete syncretism of Baal and Yahweh.

Another treatment of Baal in the OT is the 1964 work by Habel. Underlying Habel's discussion is his assertion that most of the critical moments in the life of Israel are marked by covenant ceremonies. In such situations, he maintains, one can expect to find "...a specific religious conflict, a significant religious reaction, or a conscious religious polemic" (Habel 1964:13). Not surprisingly, therefore, Habel's study focuses on the conflict between Baal and Yahweh as reflected in covenant ceremonies and language in the OT. Commenting on the relationship between the covenant ceremony at Sinai and the incident of the golden calf, Habel suggests that the bull-imagery of Aaron's calf is most likely related to Baal worship. In support of this, he argues that the exodus place-name Baal-Zephon is evidence that the god Baal was worshipped in the area (1964:20-24). The later covenant ceremony that takes place on the plains of Moab and which forms the book of Deuteronomy, Habel relates to the incident of apostasy at Beth-Peor. Habel further suggests that the Baal of Peor should be identified with the Canaanite Baal and that the covenant ceremony itself was held opposite Beth-Peor in order to emphasise the conflict motif of Yahweh versus the gods of the land (1964:24-26). Conflict between Yahweh and other deities is also said to stand behind the covenant ceremony held at Shechem. Shechem was chosen as the location for the ceremony because of its association with the worship of Baal-Berit. The three covenant

traditions examined reveal, according to Habel, an ongoing conflict between Yahwism and the surrounding religious culture (1964:28-31). Turning to the materials from Ugarit, Habel highlights three aspects of the god Baal—his kingship and his character as storm and fertility god—and compares these with similar aspects of Yahweh's character as portrayed in the OT. In each case, he concludes that the portrayal of Yahweh stands as a polemic against an aspect of the god Baal (1964:51-109). While Habel acknowledges that Israel grew and developed in a Canaanite context and borrowed from it, he maintains that Yahwism and its major features were in no way derived from Canaanite religion. "In the religious milieu of the ancient near east", he concludes, "Israel was indeed *qādōš* (set apart) but not *nikrāt* (cut off)" (1964:115).

Another significant study touching on the place of Baal in the OT is the work of U. Oldenburg (1969). In this work on the relationship between El and Baal at Ugarit, the author seeks to apply the results of his study to the question of Baal in the OT.²⁹ Doing this, Oldenburg argues that the great antipathy between Baal and Yahweh reflected in the Hebrew Bible is rooted in an earlier conflict between El and Baal. Following and building upon the work of Kapelrud (1952:89, 91), Pope (1955:30, 94), and Cassuto (1971:55-56), Oldenburg argues that at some point, El, the ancient head of the Canaanite pantheon, was deposed and castrated³⁰ by the young storm god (1969:111-12). Moving to Israelite religion, Oldenburg uses the Yahweh-El identification³¹ as an explanation for the animosity between Yahweh and Baal in the OT. During the wilderness wanderings,

29 Oldenburg's work focuses mainly on Philo of Byblos and Ugaritic materials and so does not constitute a systematic treatment of Biblical passages. His discussion of the place of Baal in Israelite religion forms chapter seven of his work (1969:164-82).

30 While each of these scholars suggest that Baal deposed El, Oldenburg stands alone in arguing that the latter was castrated by the former.

31 Oldenburg (1969:171-75). This equation was first argued in detail by Alt (1989:3-77). For a survey of the arguments in favour of equating Yahweh with El, see L'Heureux (1979:49-59).

as Israel became better acquainted with Yahweh and his jealous nature, a form of “monotheism” developed (1969:171-72). Once Israel entered Canaan and began displacing the native inhabitants, Israel and Yahweh came into direct conflict with the Canaanites and their god Baal. As Israel made the transition to a settled agricultural economy, however, they began to absorb Canaanite agricultural technology and the fertility rites that went along with it—with the result that the cult of Baal began to spread within Israel. The loss of national identity that came with adopting Baal worship led to spiritual and military reverses that were periodically remedied by the campaigns of the judges. Through their undertakings, the judges kept the cult of Baal in check until the rise of the monarchy when under the Yahwists Saul, David and Solomon, the worship of Yahweh was firmly established as the national religion. During this period, Baal imagery was appropriated and applied to Yahweh (1969:176-77). The ascendancy of Yahweh during the time of the united monarchy may be judged by the fact that Yahwists such as Saul, Jonathan and David could give *ba'al*-names to their children. Later on, as the threat from Baalism reemerged, such names disappear from the Biblical record (1969:181).

According to Oldenburg, a greater danger to Yahwism came during the reign of Ahab, when the cult of the Tyrian Baal—whom he identifies with Melqart—was introduced as the official religion of the northern kingdom. The fertility aspects of this cult became the point of conflict in a showdown atop Mount Carmel in the “very precincts of Baal”. Following this conflict, as a reaction to the fertility aspect of Baal, the prophets began to stress the fertility functions of Yahweh. Despite these efforts and numerous admonitions, the people continued to worship Baal. As a result, the prophets chose to emphasise the singular nature of Yahweh, ignoring Baal, refusing even to recognise him as a god. As a result of the conflict with Baal, “*ba'al*” ceased to be an appellative for Yahweh and the word *bōšet* (“shame”) was substituted for the *ba'al* found in some earlier personal names (1969:177-82).

In short, Oldenburg holds that during the LB period an intense rivalry between El and Baal resulted in the overthrow of El as the high god in northern Canaan and the elevation of Baal to his place. As the Israelites entered Canaan, their incursions and the identification of their god with the old El led them into sustained conflict with the Canaanites and their god Baal. One of the commonly raised objections to Oldenburg's conclusions is that they rest on the now largely discredited notion that sometime during the LB period, Baal overthrew El.³²

One of the most recent and comprehensive treatments of Baal in the OT is the 1962 monograph by Mulder. In this work and in the entry on Baal in *The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Mulder set out his understanding of the role played by Baal in the OT. Like Albright, Mulder sees Israel as a group that entered Canaan from Egypt. Only upon coming into contact with the settled Canaanites were the nomadic Israelites introduced to Baal, the Canaanite storm and fertility god *par excellence* (1975:199).³³ From this point on, conflict ensued as the Yahwistic Israelites grappled

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- 32 An argument against this view was put forward at an early point by Gray (1965:152-60). That El was in no way dethroned by Baal has been argued cogently by L'Heureux (1979:3-104). Among other things, L'Heureux argues that if Philo is relying on Hesiod, as some would suggest, then it is odd that he provides no Phoenician parallel for the battle between Kronos and Zeus. What Philo does relate on this point is a peaceful transfer of authority from the former to the latter, suggesting that here he is relying on an older Phoenician tradition (L'Heureux 1979:42). Other scholars have also presented arguments for the primacy of El in the LB period. De Moor gathers Late Bronze age Egyptian material and notes that during this period, when the name "El" is translated into Egyptian from Canaanite documents, it is always rendered "Amun-Re" or "Ptah"—the chief gods in the pantheon (de Moor 1990:70-71). De Moor does maintain, however, that in Iron Age northern Canaan, Baal eventually became more influential than El (de Moor 1990:74).
- 33 Mulder suggests that throughout the OT, the term *habba'al* refers not to a variety of Canaanite gods, but to one specific deity. This deity, however, could have a number of local manifestations (e.g. Baal-Berit of Shechem). Place-names with the theophoric element Baal testify to the widespread veneration of the deity throughout Palestine. The plural term, *habbē'ālīm*, was employed by the prophets

with elements of Baalistic religion that threatened to encroach on their nomadic faith. The first evidence of such conflict is found in the narratives describing the work of Gideon (1975:194-95). A more intense conflict occurred later in the northern kingdom as Ahab vigorously promoted the cult of Baal. In the north especially, the prophets opposed the Baal cult. The fertility aspects of the cult struck devout Yahwists as obscene, while its mythology had the effect of deifying nature (1975:200). In Judah, worship of Baal was promoted by Athaliah, daughter of Jezebel. There, Baal worship was dealt a critical blow by the reform programme of Josiah, an effort which eliminated the outlying cult centres where veneration of Baal could occur most easily (1962:58-62; 1975:196).

As noted, Mulder maintained that the Baal of the OT was the storm and fertility god *par excellence* known in various forms throughout the ancient Near East. Whether this deity was known by another name in Israel (e.g. Hadad) is not known. Beginning as early as the judges period, this deity attracted the attention of a significant number of Israelite worshippers (1975:197). While Baalism was viewed as a threat by most Yahwists, it did provide Yahwism with imagery and mythic details that were appropriated and applied to the god of Israel (1975:199). From the work of Hosea, it would seem that in the north, the Baal cult was identified in some way with the worship of Yahweh (1975:196).

In recent years, several discussions of Israelite religion have emphasised the continuity between Canaanite and Israelite culture. In his 1990 work, *The Early History of God*, Mark S. Smith sets out his understanding of the relationship between Yahweh and the other deities in the Canaanite pantheon. Basic to Smith's reconstruction is his

to emphasise the oneness of Yahweh over against the idolatry of Baalism (1975:193-95, 200).

argument that many of the “Canaanite” elements found in Israelite religion were not imported, but were indigenous to Israelite belief. Smith points to the difficulty in differentiating between Canaanite and Hebrew language and material culture as evidence that Israel had a Canaanite cultural background. Additionally, he uses similarities between Ugaritic and Israelite sacrificial and cultic terminology to argue that these cultural similarities extended to the realm of religion. Briefly examining Old Testament proper names with theophoric elements, Smith concludes that Israelite religion of the Judges period included the worship of El, Baal and possibly Asherah. Smith thus eschews any characterisation of Israelite religion as being “syncretistic”, arguing instead that what many have seen as “foreign” deities were actually an indigenous part of Israelite faith (Smith 1990a:1-6).

Smith maintains that in the Judges period, Yahweh ruled over a complex religion which included a number of old Canaanite elements preserved through the identification of Yahweh with El. Underlying this conclusion is a brief discussion of the manner in which early Yahwistic poetry incorporates both El and Baal imagery. Based on this, Smith concludes that during the Judges period there was maintained a co-existence with Baal, a continuation of the concept of the divine council and a belief in partially divinised ancestors (1990a:21-26).

Smith suggests that the acceptance and influence of Baal continued in the period of the united and early divided monarchy. In the kingdom of Judah, Davidic dynasts used the Baal-related imagery of the divine warrior as a means of describing the god (Yahweh) that brought them to power (1990a:55). In the northern kingdom, the acceptance and influence of Baal continued in the use of Baal-related bull iconography in the cult established by Jeroboam I (1990a:51). Throughout the monarchic period, the god Baal continued to be popular because the cult in both kingdoms appropriated Baal imagery to describe the patron god (1990a:56).

Turning to the worship of Baal in the ninth century, Smith suggests that Ahab introduced the god Baal Shamem as the patron deity of the royal house of the northern kingdom. In so doing, he suggests, Ahab was trying to create a theopolitical union with the realm of his father-in-law, Ethbaal of Sidon, that was in “continuity with the traditional compatibility of Yahweh and Baal” (1990a:42-44). The diminution of the cult of Yahweh that inevitably resulted from this programme in turn gave rise to the reaction of the anti-Baal faction led by the prophet Elijah. Later, the Deuteronomists reshaped and reinterpreted earlier traditions concerning Baal in order to portray the once-accepted god in a negative light. Despite these polemical efforts and the reform of Jehu in the north, the cult of Baal remained popular until the fall of the southern kingdom. Turning to the late monarchic period, Smith examines the use of the terms *habbaʿal* and *habbēʿālīm* in the book of Jeremiah and elsewhere and concludes that during this period, these terms were used to signify not only the west-semitic storm god but also a variety of other gods in the land of Israel (1990a:47-48).

In the same year (1990) that Smith’s work appeared, Johannes de Moor published an equally provocative take on the origins of Yahwism. Unlike Smith, de Moor does not see Israelite religion as a simple outgrowth of Canaanite culture. De Moor contends that toward the end of the LB period a crisis had developed in polytheism throughout the ancient Near East. In Egypt and Mesopotamia, the response to this crisis was a movement toward the worship of one primary deity—Amun-Re and Marduk respectively. Although in Canaan there was some attempt by the priest Ilimilku of Ugarit to mount an apologetic for traditional polytheism, even here there was a narrowing of divine power and status (1990:98-100). According to de Moor, in northern Canaan, Baal came to displace the older El as “king of the gods”, while farther south, El—now identified by one group as Yahweh—came to prominence (1990:74-75, 100). This latter group of Yahweh-worshippers enlarged the sway of their god by appropriating to him imagery related to other deities, particularly Baal. The end result

of this process, while not strict monotheism, was the elevation of Yahweh and the fading of other gods into relative insignificance (1990:106, 216-17). Around the end of the thirteenth century BC, a Moses-group of Yahwists arrived in Bashan and suffered a military setback at the hands of the Sea Peoples—an event reflected in Deuteronomy 32. The cause of this defeat was blamed on a flirtation with Baal worship (Deut. 32:15-19)(1990:135, 216-18). Later, as this group came into contact with Canaanites east of the Jordan, they encountered an apologetic for polytheism that was later reworked in the Hebrew Bible as Jotham's fable (Judg. 9:7-15)(1990:182-97, 219). Thus, by de Moor's reckoning, Baal was an original member of the Yahweh-El pantheon, but one that was quickly displaced as Yahweh appropriated much of Baal's imagery and function.

Early on, de Moor maintains, the Israelites modified the existing autumnal Canaanite New Year's festival and endowed it with a distinctive Yahwistic flavour. The lack of cultic centralisation in Israel at this early period and the similarity of the festival to its Canaanite model meant, however, that there was a danger of lapsing into baalism—something which occurred late in the judges period. During the divided monarchy, the northern kingdom especially sunk into baalism—a development due in part to the Baal-like imagery chosen by Jeroboam I for the Yahwistic shrines at Bethel and Dan (1972a:14-15, 20).

Another recent addition to the discussion of Baal in the OT has come from Baruch Halpern. In his 1987 article on the development of monotheism, Halpern rejects the widely held notion that Yahweh gradually became syncretised with a succession of deities including El, El-Elyon, El-Shaddai and Baal, preferring instead to argue that Yahweh was from the outset an El deity.³⁴ Halpern suggests that during its period of

34 Here Halpern seems to accept in general terms the conclusions of Cross (1973:60-75).

national development, Israel's natural tendency would have been to suppress foreign cults, not adopt them. Given this position, Halpern argues that the accretion of storm theophany language to Yahweh does not demonstrate syncretism with Baal, but merely the borrowing of language that was already in keeping with Yahweh's character (1987:82-91). Thus, Halpern does not see within early Israel any confusion between the gods Yahweh and Baal.

According to Halpern, early Israel had a notion of Yahweh that stressed his "incomparability" rather than his "transcendent uniqueness". What developed in the Israel of the united monarchy, he suggests, was a tolerant monolatrous polytheism which held Yahweh to be the supreme deity who presided over a divine retinue. Opponents of Solomon distorted this policy, claiming it to be an acknowledgement that other gods were Yahweh's equals. In the northern kingdom, secession may have brought on a return to the sort of exclusivist nationalism that characterised Israel's original differentiation as an ethnic state among the Canaanites (1987:88, 91).

In an article in the Klaus Baltzer Festschrift (1993a), Halpern elaborates on his earlier work by examining the use of the various forms of the word "*ba'al*" in the deuteronomistic corpus and Jeremiah. From this survey he concludes that the "*bē'ālīm*" so prevalent throughout the time of the Judaeen monarchy were the members of a Yahwistic pantheon worshipped as the moon and the stars. From the testimony of the Judaeen exiles in Jeremiah 44, Halpern concludes that worship of these minor deities was a traditional feature of Israelite religion that came to be attacked only after the reign of Hezekiah (1993a:115-19). While Halpern would agree that the Canaanite god Baal was worshipped in Israel, he would maintain that perhaps apart from the worship of

Tyrian Baal during the reign of Ahab,³⁵ Baal was worshipped as a deity within the retinue of, and subservient to, Yahweh. Thus, for Halpern as for Smith, the deuteronomistic condemnation of the "baals" as "foreign" gods is largely a caricature designed to undermine a feature of "traditional" Yahwism to which Jeremiah and the Deuteronomists objected.

In recent years, the long-dominant view that from its inception Yahwism battled encroachment by a foreign Baal cult has lost much of its scholarly appeal. In recent publications, scholars like Smith, Halpern and de Moor have each suggested that Baal was an original member of a Yahwistic pantheon. Part of the impetus for this shift has been the appearance of a number of site excavations and regional surveys that have stressed the continuity between Canaanite and Israelite cultural remains.³⁶ That these studies should suggest that there was a strong link between Israelite and Canaanite society and religion should not be at all surprising. Such research serves to focus attention on scattered elements of the literary tradition that have not previously weighed heavily in reconstructions of Israelite origins and religion. In a number of places, OT tradition suggests that a significant portion of Israel could trace its origin back to Canaanite or similar non-Israelite roots. The OT tradition includes references to non-Israelites who left Egypt along with Israel, joined them en route or who became dependent upon Israel from the earliest period in the land.³⁷ Whatever date is assigned

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- 35 Although even here, Halpern would suggest that in the Elijah stories it is not clear if the issue was one of, "monotheism versus polytheism as opposed to monolatrous Yahwistic henotheism versus a monolatrous Yahwistic henotheism that included the Tyrian baal..." (1987:92).
- 36 See for example, the conclusion by Israel Finkelstein that Israel had its origins, not in Egypt or the Sinai, but in a Canaanite cultural milieu (1988:336-51). A similar view is expressed by Dever (1990:56-84).
- 37 Among these elements of tradition is the attestation that the group that left Egypt was a "mixed" company (Exod 12:38). Elsewhere, the OT makes further acknowledgement of the presence of "non-Israelites" within Israel. The tradition maintains, for example, that non-Israelite women were added to the group

to these traditions, their presence as part of the Biblical materials show that at the very least, later Israelite national self-awareness included the belief that a significant portion of Israel could be traced to groups not associated with the "Patriarchs". Given the developments noted above, it is clear that a new study is needed of the relationship between Baal and Yahweh in the OT that will lay greater emphasis on the extent to which Baal was seen by some as a normative element of early Israelite religion.

It is the purpose of this study to examine the Biblical and extra-biblical evidence that bears on the question of Baal and his relationship with Yahweh in the OT. To this end, chapter two surveys deities known to Israel that might have been known to her as Baal and might therefore be reflected in the Biblical text. Chapter three is an examination of the terms *ba'al* and *bē'ālīm* with and without the definite article. This portion of the study will establish the manner in which the various forms of the term *ba'al* are used in the OT and will pave the way for chapter four. Chapter four is a study of the Biblical evidence related to Baal and includes an examination of the following, 1) all passages explicitly referring to the worship of Baal in the OT and 2) deities in the OT that have Baal as an element of their name.

following the incident at Baal-Peor (Num 31:9, 18, 35), that Kenite clans entered Canaan along with Israel (Judg 1:16; 4:11), that Gibeonite cities became associated with Israel immediately upon the entry into the land (Josh 9:15-27) and that the judge Abimelech ruled Israel for "three years" from a non-Israelite power-base (Judg 8:31; 9:1-57).

Baal and Yahweh in the Old Testament – Chapter Two

Extra-biblical Material Relating to an Understanding of Baal in the OT

Since the discovery of the Ugaritic tablets, the tendency within scholarship has been to understand Baal in the OT largely in terms of Ugaritic parallels. Israel, however, existed in a world in which she maintained longstanding contacts with a variety of cultures—each of which possessed its own storm or fertility gods. This chapter will examine the character of the storm or fertility deities most likely to have influenced Israel and which as a result might be reflected in OT references to Baal.

Baal in Hebrew Inscriptions

Kuntillet ‘Ajrud

The site of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud is located on a small hill overlooking the Wadi Quraiya in the northern Sinai about 50 kilometres south of Quseima (Kadesh Barnea). In 1975-76, the site was excavated by Ze’ev Meshel of Tel Aviv University. Work at the site revealed two buildings—one a well-preserved, “four-towered” structure at the western extremity of the plateau and a second, poorly-preserved building to the east.¹ The

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- 1 Meshel (1979:34) has argued that the primary role of Kuntillet ‘Ajrud was as a cult site serving travellers on their way to Eilat. In keeping with this assumption, he has interpreted the “Bench Room” as a location where offerings were deposited. As Meshel himself states, however, no cultic artefacts such as animal bones, incense altars or cult stands were found at the site. Moreover, as others have recently noted, there is evidence to suggest that the site served as a military outpost and caravanserai similar to those that dotted the Negev and Sinai several centuries earlier (Hadley 1993:115-24). The overall plan of the western building with its four towers, for example, has the appearance of a small fort. In addition, the two halves of the “Bench Room” correspond in design to a gate structure with

western building yielded a number of inscriptions on plaster, two of which have direct bearing on this study.² Of these inscriptions, the most complete is written in Phoenician script in black ink on plaster and presumably fell from the wall of the "bench-room".³ The presence of Phoenician script is not at all surprising as it is well-known from the OT that the Phoenicians had an ongoing interest in establishing a trade corridor through Israel to the Red Sea at Ezion-geber (1 Kgs. 9:26-28; 2 Chron. 8:17-8).⁴ On the grounds of palaeography and ceramic evidence, the excavator dates this inscription from the end of the ninth to the beginning of the eighth century (1979:34; 1994:102-103).

The text is preserved as follows:⁵

benched seating area (Holladay 1987:259). The large open courtyard of the building with its ovens and adjoining rooms would have provided suitable refuge for passing travellers and perhaps also their animals.

- 2 While the Kuntilet 'Ajrud inscriptions referring to Asherah have been much discussed (see, for example, Day 1986:391-93, Hestrin 1991:50-59, Hess 1991:11-23, Dever 1984:21-37, Hadley 1987b:180-213, Emerton 1982:2-20, Naveh 1979:27-30, Margalit 1990:274-78), comparatively little has been said about the Baal inscriptions. For treatments that include discussion of the Baal texts, see Meshel (1978; 1979:24-35) and Weinfeld (1984:121-30).
- 3 Contradictory statements exist in the publications regarding the locus at which this inscription was found. In an article in *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Meshel (1979:29) states that the text in question was found near the entrance to the western store room and that it had been part of the door jam. In the Israel Museum catalogue published a year earlier, however, Meshel states that the inscription was originally part of the wall in the "bench-room" (1978:D). Personal communication with Prof. Meshel confirms that the error lies in the *BAR* article and that the Israel Museum catalogue is correct. It appears that in this "bench-room" inscription, the name Baal appears alongside that of Yahweh (1978:D).
- 4 Although no mention of the Phoenicians occurs in the account of the plan by Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah to reopen trade through Ezion-geber (1 Kgs. 22:48-49; 2 Chron. 20:35-37), the fact that this maritime expedition was undertaken during a period in which the northern kingdom enjoyed close relations with Tyre makes Phoenician involvement a strong possibility.
- 5 The text here offered is taken from Meshel (1994:100). A slightly different version is given by Davies (1991:82), who bases his transcription on Weinfeld (1984:126). It

- 1 ...]/wbzrh . 'l . br[...
- 2 ...]/wymsn . hrm / wydkn⁶ . gbnm[...
- 3 ...]wš?dš . 'ly[...
- 4 ...]brk . b'l . bym mlh[mh]
- 5 ...]lšm (.) 'l . bym mlh[mh]

Interpreting the text is made difficult by several factors. First, drawings and photographs have not yet been published, and second, it is not clear how much of the text is missing. While the transcription published by Weinfeld (1984:126), implies that the right-hand margin has been preserved in each of the three lines he presents, the excavator in personal communication has stated that all four sides of the text are broken. Meshel (1994:100) translates the text as follows:

- 1 ...And when El rose up...
- 2 and hills melted and peaks were pounded...
- 3 ... ? ...
- 4 bless Baal in the day of war...
- 5 (bless) the name of El in the day of war...

Weinfeld has already drawn attention to similarities between this text and the theophanic passages Deut. 33:2 and Mic. 1:3-4.⁷ A passage overlooked by Weinfeld is Psalm 68 in which similar theophanic terminology is used. Not only does this latter passage include a southern setting (68:8-9, 18), but it also includes the only OT use of

would seem that Hess (1991:22) is incorrect in suggesting that this text is written in Hebrew, rather than Phoenician, script.

- 6 The root *dk'* and the preceding *msh* appear in the 3rd masculine plural imperfect form with paragogic *nun*. See GKC §47m.
- 7 Weinfeld (1984:126) points to Deut. 33:2 in which the term *zrh* is used in a theophany of southern origin. He also draws attention to Mic. 1:3-4 which describes the mountains (*hr*) melting (*msh*) beneath the advance of Yahweh.

the word *gbnn* ("peaks, high-arched places")(68:16-17)—a term which appears in line 2 of the Kuntillet 'Ajrud text. Also, like the text in question, Psalm 68 includes several blessings (68:20, 27, 36) and several uses of the word *ʾl* (68:20-21, 25, 36). The fragmentary nature of the text means that possibilities abound as to its interpretation. It is conceivable, for example, that the terms *ʾl* and *bʾl* should both be taken as common nouns. That this is exceedingly unlikely is suggested by the similarities, already mentioned by Weinfeld (1984:126),⁸ between this text and theophanic passages in the OT. More likely is the possibility that of the two terms, one may be a common and the other a proper noun. For example, *ʾl* may refer to the Canaanite high god El while *bʾl* may be the common noun "lord, master". Based on Biblical Hebrew usage, the *ʾl* of line 5 is most likely to be the proper noun "El", for in the OT, the phrase "name of X" rarely occurs with a common noun but almost always with a proper noun like Yahweh,⁹ Jacob, Israel etc. If this is the case, then the parallelism of lines 4-5 (*bym mlh̄mh*) suggests that the *bʾl* in line 4 should be understood not as the divine name Baal, but as the common noun "master" referring to El. The absence of the definite article with *bʾl* is not surprising given the poetic nature of the material. If lines 4-5 refer to El, then nothing stands in the way of seeing *ʾl* in lines 1 and 3 as referring to El.

In light of the above and the appearance of the consonants *beth* and *resh* at the end of line 1, it is tempting to restore the line to read, *wbzrh . ʾl . br[kbh]* ("when El arose with his chariots..."). Such a reconstruction is suggested by the use in Ps. 68:18 of "chariots" (*rkb*) in connection with the advance of God from Sinai, and the use of the verbal form of the root in 68:5 in which God is depicted as "riding" through the deserts.

8 See above, note 7.

9 The phrase "name of Yahweh" may refer to the power (e.g. Deut. 18:22; 28:10; 32:3; Ps. 20:7; 102:15) or presence (e.g. 1 Sam. 20:42; 1 Kgs. 3:2; 8:17; Isa. 18:7; 30:27) of Yahweh.

It is also inviting to emend and restore the troublesome line 3 of the text as *wšrš . ʾly* [...] (“...and my God uproots...”)—reading *resh* for the *daleth* given in Meshel’s transcription.

It may be possible then, to translate the text as follows:

- 1 ...and when El/God went forth [with his chariotry...
- 2 ...the heights melted and the high-arched places were
 crushed...
- 3 ...and my God [uproots]...
- 4 ...Blessed is the master on the day of battle...
- 5 ...To the name of El on the day of battle...

Given the location Kuntillet ‘Ajrud within Judahite territory, the date of the texts and the Yahwistic nature of other textual fragments recovered at the site, the deity most likely to be identified with El is Yahweh. This conclusion is supported by the interchange (noted above) between these two names in Biblical psalms that bear similar imagery. While the fragmentary nature of the text requires any conclusion to be tentative, it is possible that this text provides an extra-biblical example of the manner in which El traditions were subsumed by Yahwism.

Baal-Shamem

One of the issues that bears on the question of Baal in the OT is the identity and character of Baal-Shamem. This deity is mentioned in a number of Phoenician and Aramaic texts from the tenth century BC on. While Baal-Shamem has been the subject of a number of important studies, no one view has gathered a consensus of scholarly

backing. The identity of this god, therefore, has for many remained an unsolved puzzle.¹⁰

Perhaps the best-known treatment of Baal-Shamem is that originally published in 1939 by Otto Eissfeldt. In this work, Eissfeldt suggests that Baal-Shamem was a Phoenician god of wind and weather whose worship was introduced into the northern kingdom by Ahab and who was worshipped in Judah via rooftop offerings of incense (1939:175, 88-91). Eissfeldt's main thesis has been picked up recently by Herbert Niehr (1994a:307-26), who has argued that the entire elevation of Yahweh from regional weather god to supreme deity had its impetus in Phoenician religious and political influence and the subsequent identification of Yahweh with Baal-Shamem.

W.F. Albright is another scholar to offer thoughts on the identity of Baal-Shamem. Albright suggests that Baal-Shamem be equated with Athtar, a deity known from Ugarit as the one placed on Baal's throne during the latter's time in the underworld (KTU 1.6 I.56-61)(1990:228-32)

One recent and engaging examination of Baal-Shamem is by Robert Oden Jr. (1977a:457-73). Oden argues that in many inscriptions, the qualities attributable to Baal-Shamem are parallel to those found in connection with El at Ugarit—the foremost among these being El's role as the protector of kings. As shall be noted below,¹¹ however, there are a number of difficulties with this identification which render it

10 This opinion is expressed by Cross (1973:7, n. 13), who states that, "more data is needed...before the identity of the god bearing the name *baʿl šamēm* can be ascertained". Similar sentiments are expressed by Röllig (1965a:273), Gibson (1982:19) and Lindenberger (1982:114).

11 See p. 46.

exceedingly unlikely. Rejecting the views of Oden, Lipiński argues for the identification of Baal-Shamem with the West Semitic weather god Hadad (1994:193-96).

Teixidor identifies Baal-Shamem as a divine name which usually “denotes the supreme god of any local pantheon”—the equivalent of the Greek Zeus Olympios (1977:26-27). He suggests that the term signifies the one who presides over the stars, moon and sun and who provides rain and vegetation (1977:28-29). Even so, Teixidor does not directly equate Baal-Shamem with either Hadad or El. It would seem that he sees Baal-Shamem as potentially related to either deity depending on time and place. Teixidor is, however, willing to commit to the statement that, in at least some areas, Baal-Shamem was the supreme weather god (1979:18).

The task of identifying Baal-Shamem is made challenging by the fact that this deity is mentioned only infrequently in texts that are scattered over the better part of two millennia. In addition, those references that have been preserved are often in contexts that provide little detail from which to draw a picture of the character of this god. A further consideration that must be kept in mind is the possibility that the deity referred to as Baal-Shamem may not have had the same character in all of the locations in which he was worshipped. With these limitations and cautions in mind, we now face the task of identifying Baal-Shamem.

Yehimilk (KAI 4) - 10th century BC

The name Baal-Shamem appears first in a short, tenth-century inscription from Byblos commissioned by the Byblian king Yehimilk (KAI 4).¹² Lines 3-4 of the text

12 For further discussion of this text, see Donner and Röllig (1968:6-7), Rosenthal (1969:499), Gibson (1982:17-19) and Stéphan (1985:40-41).

mention Baal-Shamem alongside the “holy gods of Byblos” (*ʾl gbl qdšm*), and either the *bʿl* or the *bʿlt* of Byblos. Although the text clearly reads *bʿl*, most interpreters correct to *bʿlt* on the basis of KAI 6 and 7 where the phrase *bʿlt gbl* appears.¹³ If this correction is valid—and most interpreters assume that it is—then the text likely refers to a god and goddess. If this is the case, then determining the identity of the *bʿlt gbl* will provide an additional line of enquiry for investigating the identity of Baal-Shamem. The close and longstanding relationship between Byblos and Egypt and the influence of the latter on Phoenician religion makes Egyptian religion particularly relevant to this discussion.

In the Amarna correspondence of the 14th century BC, the “lady of Byblos” is invoked numerous times in letters to the Egyptian Pharaoh from Rib-Hadda, king of Byblos. In at least one letter, this figure is described as, “the goddess of the king” (i.e. Pharaoh).¹⁴ On numerous occasions, the writer requests that the “lady of Byblos” grant power to the king.¹⁵ On two occasions, this same goddess is paired with the god Amun (EA 87, 95). Each of these references points to an identification of the *bʿlt gbl* with the Egyptian goddess Hathor. Hathor was a royal goddess sometimes known by the title “mother” of the Pharaoh and as such played an important role in the birth and nurturing of the monarch. In the 15th-century temple of Queen Hatshepsut, Hathor is depicted handing the princess to her “father” Amun. Elsewhere she is depicted as suckling the crown prince. In addition, Hathor guards the king for the rest of his life, granting him youth and magical powers (Bleeker 1973:51-53).

13 Albright (1947:156-57, n. 32) and Donner and Röllig (1968:6-7) note that the title *bʿl gbl* is otherwise unknown and along with Gibson (1982:19, n. 3), correct to *bʿlt*.

14 EA 102.

15 E.g. EA 68, 74-76, 78-79, 81, 83, 85, 87, 89, 92, 105, 107-109, 114, 116-19, 121-25, 130, 132.

In the 1st millennium BC, the “lady of Byblos” appears in a variety of Phoenician inscriptions. In the 5th-century BC Yehawmilk inscription from Byblos (KAI 10), this goddess is both mentioned and graphically represented on the same stela. In the relief above the inscription, the “lady of Byblos” is clearly depicted as the Egyptian goddess Hathor (Mullen 1992:264). The goddess is shown seated on a throne, wearing a vulture head-dress upon which is fixed the bovine-horn and solar disk head-dress commonly associated with Hathor (Budge 1969a:433-34). In her left hand she holds a reed staff, while above her outstretched right hand, there appears to hover the figure of a bird.¹⁶ In front of the goddess there stands a human figure—presumably the king Yehawmilk. Above both of these figures there stretches a winged solar disk. If, as has been suggested above, the divine companion of the *bʿlt gbl* is Baal-Shamem, then it is a logical conclusion that the winged solar disk is Baal-Shamem in Egyptian garb. Determining the character of the Egyptian deity represented by this winged disk may, then, help in determining the character of Baal-Shamem.

While Hathor is associated with Amun during the Amarna period, by the 1st millennium, she is most closely associated with the god Horus. In ancient Egypt, Horus was a god closely associated with the sky. The sun and moon, for example, were each referred to as the “Eye of Horus” and the sky itself as “Horus of the Two Eyes” (Budge 1969a:466-67). During this period, one important partner of Hathor is Harakhti (“Horus of the Horizon”)—a title which refers to Horus rising as the sun at dawn. Later, this deity merges with the Heliopolitan sun god to form Re-Harakhti (Hart 1986:94). As Harakhti, Horus was a solar deity known as the “Lord of Heaven” who, accompanied by the sky goddess Hathor, travelled across the heavens in his solar barque.

16 The image of the bird is not clearly visible in most photographs of the stela (e.g. Gibson 1982, Plate IV). See Gubel (1986:268, fig. 3a).

Another significant, although late, manifestation of Horus was Horus of Behdet. In addition to having solar characteristics, this deity possesses martial qualities—as is demonstrated by representations which portray him wielding a club and carrying a bow and arrow. Depictions of him with a phallus ending with the head of a lion reflect his character as a god with reproductive power. A text from his temple at Edfu describes how this god drives away the clouds, rain and storms and yearly follows his heavenly course, bringing the seasons and their produce in his train. In another text from Edfu, Horus of Behdet is seen as the son of Re-Harakhti sent out to quell a rebellion on behalf of his father. Called, the “great god, the lord of heaven” he takes the form of a winged disk and flies up to heaven whence he spies out and vigorously slays the enemies of his father (Budge 1969a:474-77). Consequently, the symbol of Horus—the winged solar disk—is placed over the gates of temples as a symbol of the protective power of the deity (Budge 1969a:48; Hart 1986:95; Armour 1986:89-92).

The fact that the symbol of Horus of Behdet was the winged sun disk and that such a symbol appears atop the Yehawmilk inscription, provides evidence for seeing this god as the Egyptian equivalent of Baal-Shamem—the partner of the “lady of Byblos”. Moreover, the picture of Horus of Behdet as a lord of the sky who could be portrayed as fertility god and club-wielding warrior points further to an identification with Ugaritic Hadad—the northwest semitic storm and fertility god often depicted in a smiting posture. A further possible connection with Baal Hadad is a parallel between that god’s battle with Yamm and Horus of Behdet’s battle with Seth. In the Ugaritic tradition, Baal defeats Yamm with the help of two magic clubs fashioned for him by the craftsman god Kothar-wa-Khasis (KTU 1.2 IV.1-40). In the story of the conflict between Horus of Behdet and Seth, the former prevails through the use of iron weapons and the assistance of the *mesniu* or *mesnitu*—figures who seem somehow to be associated with metalworking (Budge 1969a:475-76). If these figures are indeed metalworkers, then they

may be a reflection in Egyptian tradition of the composite Ugaritic craftsman god Kothar-wa-Khasis and would thus provide addition evidence for linking Horus of Behdet, Baal-Shamem and Hadad.

Zakkur (KAI 202) - 8th century BC

A further reference to a deity described as “Lord of Heaven” occurs in an 8th-century BC Aramaic inscription discovered in Syria in the early part of this century.¹⁷ The text in question was commissioned by Zakkur, king of Hamath on occasion of the dedication of a statue of the god Iluwer. In this text, the god Baalshamayn is credited with standing with Zakkur and making him king (A.2-4). When the king is attacked by a coalition led by Barhadad of Damascus, he lifts his hands in supplication to this same deity who answers him through seers and diviners and vows to deliver him (A.4-12).¹⁸ The final portion of the text includes imprecations against those who would remove or defile the statue of Iluwer. Here, Baalshamayn appears at the head of an impressive list of gods including Iluwer, Shemesh, Sahar, gods of Heaven, (gods of) Earth and a Baal of

17 On this inscription, see Donner and Röllig (1968:204-11), Rosenthal (1969:501-2), Gibson (1975:6-17), Lipiński (1978:229-32) and Layton (1988:177-78).

18 Discussing the identity of Baal-Shamem, Oden writes that this figure, “is among those deities in whose particular care is the king” (1977a:459). He then goes on to suggest that the god El was also a deity with a particular interest in kings and uses this connection to argue that El and Baal-Shamem be equated (1977a:470, 72). On this point it may simply be stated that the care of kings was a quality that could be shared by any number of gods and so is not a feature exclusive to El. The care of the king seems to fall especially within the purview of whichever deity was the patron of the royal house. In the case of Panammu I, for example, the one who placed him on the throne and gave him the sceptre of authority was Hadad (KAI 214, lines 8-9). Likewise, in the recently discovered Tel Dan inscription, the Aramaean king states, [w]yhm̄lk . hdd . ʾyty ʾnh . wyhk . hdd . qdmy (“Hadad made me king and Hadad went before me”)(lines 4-5). There is no basis, therefore, for seeing the care of monarchs as a defining characteristic of El and consequently no reason to equate Baal-Shamem with El where the former is credited with acting on behalf of kings.

unknown character. In addition, there are lacunae which indicate that two other deities were once part of this list (B.23-27).

One of the odd features of the Zakkur inscription is the overwhelming prominence afforded Baalshamayn in a text dedicated to Iluwer. This strange imbalance points to the likelihood that the two figures are related—with the latter likely being the local manifestation of the former. That this is probably the case is suggested by the content of an inscription of Panammu I (KAI 214),¹⁹ which, like the text under discussion, commemorates the erecting of a statue to a deity—in this instance to Hadad (line 1). In the rest of the inscription, the god who is credited with giving the kingship to Panammu (lines 8-9), and who receives the most attention (e.g. lines 13, 14, 16, 18, 22-23 etc.) is also Hadad. The natural correspondence between the deity to whom the statue is erected and the divine being prominent elsewhere in the dedicatory inscription argues strongly for a similar correspondence in the Zakkur inscription. If this is the case, then the identity of Iluwer (the named deity) will help shed light on the identity of Baalshamayn (the most prominent deity). On the identity of Iluwer, Dhorme noted early in this century that in several cuneiform texts, the god Hadad takes on the name *i-lu-mi-ir* or some slight variation. He goes on to note the appearance of a god *Wêr* during the time of the first dynasty of Babylon and states that, given the occasional alternation between *m* and *w* in Assyria and Babylonia, *mêr* with *wêr* should be identified one with another (Dhorme 1911:98).²⁰ The correspondence of Iluwer and Hadad along with the

19 On the Hadad inscription, see most recently Donner and Röllig (1968:214), Gibson (1975:60-76) and Layton (1988:181).

20 For evidence of the use of *Wêr* and *Mêr* as divine names and their association with Hadad see further Dossin (1940:154-57) and Edzard (1965:136). Donner and Röllig (1968:206), Gibson (1975:12) and Lipiński (1978:230) also draw attention to the similarity between Iluwer and Ilumer. From the name Ilumer, Lipiński (1978:230) suggests that he may have been a grain deity—a characteristic that would be in

probable identification of Iluwer with Baalshamayn in KAI 202, make Hadad the most likely candidate for Baalshamayn in this text. Moreover, Baal-Shamem's role in this text as one who brings about military victory comports well with the character of Ugaritic Hadad as a war god.²¹ This fact too, suggests that in this text Baal-Shamem should be related to Hadad.

Karatepe (KAI 26) - 8th-7th centuries BC

Another text in which Baal-Shamem makes an appearance is the bilingual Phoenician and neo-Hittite hieroglyphic inscription from Karatepe (KAI 26).²² This text, dated to the mid-eighth to early-seventh century, was commissioned by the king Azitiwada in order to commemorate the significant achievements of his reign, the building of the city bearing his name and the installation of the god Baal KRNTYŠ in the city. Baal-Shamem appears only once by name in the text, where he is mentioned at the head of a list of gods including, "El Creator of the Earth, the Eternal Sun, and the entire generation of the sons of the gods" (*b'šmm w'l qn ṛṣ wšmš 'lm wkl dr bn 'lm*) (A.iii.18, 19). In the hieroglyphic parallel text, the place of *b'šmm* is taken by, "Tarhui of heaven"—Tarhui being the neo-Hittite term for the weather god. A more complete

keeping with a connection with the storm and fertility god Hadad. Gibson suggests that in this text, Baalshamayn should be equated with Hadad on the grounds that in the later religion of Israel, El fused with Yahweh (Gibson 1975:13). While the latter is indeed the case, it remains that the text in question properly relates to the religion of Hamath and not that of Israel. Given this fact, Gibson's reasoning is not relevant to the text and question at hand. Despite this flaw in Gibson's approach, it in no way changes the argument for connecting Hadad and Iluwer in this text.

21 On the martial character of Hadad at Ugarit, see Miller (1973:24-48).

22 For discussion of this text, see Barnett, Leveen and Moss (1948:56-71), O'Callaghan (1949:173-205), Donner and Röllig (1968:35-43), Rosenthal (1969:499-500), Hawkins and Davies (1978:103-19), Lipiński (1978:240-43) and Gibson (1982:41-64).

picture of the character of Baal-Shamem in this text is made possible by the fact that the name Tarhui is used elsewhere in the text also as the equivalent of *b'l*. Thus, the passages of the inscription dealing with Baal should provide some insight into Baal-Shamem's character and role. The image of Baal/Baal-Shamem derived from these passages is one of a fertility and war god. In A.I.5-6, the king claims that his subjects enjoyed every good thing—satiety, well-being, and full granaries²³ (*wkn bymt y kl n'm ldnnym wšb' wmn'm wml' nk 'qrt p'r*)(A.i.5-6).²⁴ In addition to this, the king was able to acquire horses, shields and armies—all of this on account of Baal and the gods (*b'br b'l w'lm*) (A.i.6-8). As part of his rebuilding programme, the king sets up a shrine to Baal KRNTRYŠ²⁵ and commands that his subjects regularly sacrifice to the deity—once a year, and at ploughing (*wb['t h]rš*) and harvest-time (*b't qšr*)(A.ii.19-iii.; C.iv.2-6). Finally, the king blesses the city with wishes of satiety (*šb'*), new wine (*trš*), oxen (*'lpym*), sheep (*š'n*), and children in abundance (*wbrbm yld*)—all, once again, by the hand of Baal and

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- 23 *wml' nk 'qrt* - Gibson (1982:47, 57), on the basis of context and by comparison with Gen 41:47-49, suggests translating with "I filled the granaries", a rendering also adopted by Donner and Röllig (1968:36). Another possible interpretation is that of Gordon (1949:113), who initially suggested translating *'qrt* as "barren women"—an option which reinforces to an even greater extent the idea of fertility present in the passage. It may also be possible to see fertility imagery in the statement by Zakkur (A.i.3) that Baal had made him a "father and mother to the Danunians" (*p'ln b'l ldnnym l'b wl'm*). Peckham (1987:82), however, provides good reason for seeing this imagery as reflecting the king's role as protector.
- 24 Similar sentiments are repeated elsewhere in the inscription (A.ii.1-6, 11-14).
- 25 Emerton (1982:11) suggests that KRNTRYŠ is a separate deity from Baal and Baal-Shamem used elsewhere in the passage. In A.iii.4, however, Baal KRNTRYŠ is equated with the weather god Tarhunza/Tarhui which in turn appears as the Hittite translation for Baal-Shamem. This being the case, it would appear that the text sees Baal KRNTRYŠ as equivalent to, or one manifestation of, Baal-Shamem. O'Callaghan (1950:358) also argues for the identity of the two deities, noting that it was Baal who commissioned the building of the city and Baal KRNTRYŠ who was enthroned there.

the gods (C.iv.6-12). The cumulative effect of the pairing of Baal with specific blessings related to fertility, warfare and protection is to imply that the character of the deity lay in these areas. It would appear then, that the deity Baal/Baal-Shamem as depicted in the Karatepe inscription is a fertility and war god with characteristics similar to those of Ugaritic Baal.²⁶ Although at least one scholar has suggested equating Baal-Shamem in this text with El,²⁷ the fact that line A.iii.18 of the text makes mention of Baal-Shamem alongside "El, Creator of the Earth" rules this out as a possibility.

Treaty of Esarhaddon with Baal of Tyre (ANET⁸ 533-34) - 677 BC

A significant piece of evidence in determining the identity of Baal-Shamem may be found in the early 7th-century BC treaty imposed on the city of Tyre by the Assyrian monarch Esarhaddon.²⁸ In the closing section including the curses to befall treaty violators, the god Baal-sameme is mentioned alongside Baal-saphon and the unknown Baal-malage. Associated with these three gods is the curse that they should "...raise an evil wind against your ships, to undo their moorings, tear out their mooring pole, may a strong wave sink them in the sea, a violent tide [...] against you". The curses associated with these three deities clearly associates them with the sea and the forces of nature. It is

26 It should be noted that the Karatepe inscription gives, at best, indirect evidence about Phoenician religion, being the translation of a Hittite original into Phoenician. Even so, it remains significant that the Hittite deity standing behind the Phoenician Baal-Shamem is a weather god.

27 See Oden (1977a:461-63). Oden suggests that the three divine names in A.iii.18-19 should be taken as complimentary epithets of the god El. In addition, he suggests that the text shows syncretistic features that may indicate that it blurs distinctions between deities that would normally be preserved in Phoenicia proper. The fact, however, that the Hittite version has at this same point a list of three clearly independent deities, argues strongly against Oden's view that the three divine names in the Phoenician version should be taken as references to El.

28 For the latest translation of this text, see Parpola and Watanabe (1988:24-27).

clear from this text then, that Baalsameme should be identified as a storm deity. This identification is confirmed by the fact that the accompanying Baal-saphon is known at Ugarit as just such a deity. Barré has attempted to identify Baal-sameme more specifically as the god Hadad. Although Baal-saphon was already identified with Hadad at Ugarit, Barré argues that the latter underwent a change during the first half of the first millennium BC and became identified as a distinctly *maritime* weather deity while Baal-Shamem remained identified with the weather deity Hadad (Barré 1983:83). Even if one does not concur with Barré's specific identification, it remains that in this treaty text, Baal-sameme should be identified as a storm god. Dealing with this text, one must reject the view of Oden (1977a:463), who seeks to identify Baal-sameme with the head of the pantheon, El. Oden's discussion of the question entirely ignores the clear association with the storm found in the treaty curse. In addition, if one agrees with Barré that the list of foreign gods begins following mention of the Sebeti ("the Seven Gods"), then the first and most prominent Tyrian god would be Bethel—a figure whom Barré identifies as El (Barré 1983:46-50, 128-38). If this is indeed the case, then Baal-sameme cannot be identified with El.

Letter of Adon (KAI 266) - 7th-6th century BC

This fragmentary papyrus manuscript, uncovered in Egypt in 1942, is part of a letter written to the Egyptian Pharaoh by an Asiatic prince named Adon.²⁹ Threatened by the approaching forces of the king of Babylon, Adon appeals to the Pharaoh for an army to deliver him. Although the text is fragmentary, it is clear that the name Baalshamayn occurs as part of the blessing portion of the letter's salutation. In the

29 The most recent and thorough examination of the letter suggests that Adon was ruler of Ekron (Tel Migne)(Porten 1981:36-52).

reconstruction offered by Gibson (1975:114), Baalshamayn is called “the great god” and appears after a reference to the gods of heaven and earth and perhaps one other deity (line 2). In their treatment of the passage, Donner and Röllig hypothesise a reference to, “Astarte, die Herrin des Himmels und die Erde und der Gott B‘LŠMJN” (1968:312). Given the short, fragmentary nature of the letter, it is difficult to be certain about the identity of Baalshamayn.

The Sayings of Ahikar - 7th-6th century BC?

Further evidence upon which to base an assessment of the character and identity of Baal-Shamem comes from the Aramaic wisdom text known as the Sayings of Ahikar.³⁰ This narrative and collection of wisdom sayings relates the misfortunes of a member of the court of Sennacherib king of Assyria. By far the oldest text of the work is an Aramaic copy discovered in 1907 at Elephantine in Egypt and dated to the 5th century BC. Prior to the discovery of this copy, the document had long been known to scholars through late versions in Arabic, Armenian, Syriac and several other languages. One of the features of the Aramaic text is that it is missing much of the polytheistic flavour that exists in the later versions—a fact not surprising given its preservation within the context of the Jewish garrison community at Elephantine.³¹ In 6:16 of the Armenian text, Ahikar is asked to describe the Assyrian king. He complies by likening Sennacherib to, “Bêlshim and his satraps to the lightnings”. He continues by saying,

30 The most recent introduction and translation of the Aramaic text of Ahikar is by Lindenberger (1985). For a treatment of the versions in parallel columns, see Harris, Lewis and Conybeare (1913).

31 That the polytheistic outlook of the versions is original is suggested by the fact that these versions were preserved and transmitted in largely monotheistic settings—environments where the natural tendency would be to remove references to multiple gods. The fact that such polytheistic overtones remain is a strong argument for their authenticity.

When he willeth he weaveth the rain; and he shooteth out the dew on high, he sendeth it forth in his empery. He thunders, and imprisons the rays of the sun. And when he willeth, he doth bring hail and grindeth to dust tree, green herb and dry; and he makes dawn break and he smiteth the shoots of green grass.³²

Ahikar's description of the king makes it clear that Bêlshim (i.e. Baal-Shamem) is a weather deity.³³ The reference to the god's use of thunder, hail, rain and dew and the manner in which he obscures the sun corresponds in every detail to the role played by Ugaritic Hadad—the storm and fertility god who rides on the clouds and whose dew³⁴ and rain fructifies the earth. The fertility character of Baal-Shamem may also be conveyed by Ahikar's petition in 1:6 of the Armenian version that Bêlshim, Shimil and Shamin give him male descendants. The Sayings of Ahikar, then, provides additional evidence that points toward an identification of Baal-Shamem and the god Hadad.

Guzneh Boundary Stela (KAI 259) - 5th-4th centuries BC

Most of the lines in this short 5th-4th-century BC Aramaic boundary inscription³⁵ are taken up with a curse against any who would remove it. Invoked against potential violators are the gods Baalshamayn, Sahar and Shamash—the latter two deities being identified with the moon and the sun respectively. The placement of Baalshamayn

32 The translation is that of Harris, Lewis and Conybeare (1913). The Syriac (6:16) and Arabic versions (6:26) express similar views. On reading "the God of Heaven" in place of "the idol Bel" in the Syriac, see Harris, Lewis and Conybeare (1913:759, n. 3).

33 On this identification, see also Lipiński (1994:195).

34 An additional point of contact lies in the fact that among the daughters of Hadad is Tallay ("the dewy one"), "daughter of showers" (e.g. KTU 1.3 I.23-25).

35 For treatments of this text, see Donner and Röllig (1968:305), Hanson (1968:9-11) and Gibson (1975:155-56).

alongside gods representing the two most prominent celestial features implies—as does his name—his connection with the heavens and heavenly bodies. In attempting to shed light on the identity of Baalshamayn in this text, it is helpful to determine if there are other references to divine triads in ancient Near Eastern religion that include the sun and moon gods alongside a third deity. Examples of such groupings are found in abundance in Mesopotamia, to the east of where this boundary stone was discovered. Throughout the long history of this region the moon god Sin and the sun god Shamash often appear in connection with Ishtar, the goddess of love and war. Where these same two gods appear with a male deity, however, the deity associated with them is the storm god Adad—a god known in the Canaanite world as Hadad.³⁶ These three deities, for example, are listed together in the Code of Hammurabi (late 18th century BC)(*ANET*³ 163-64, 66-77), in the treaty between Marduk-zakir-šumi I of Babylon with Šamši-Adad V of Assyria (ca. 820 BC) as well as in two of the god-lists in the Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon (672 BC)(*ANET*³ 534-41). These same three deities—along with their consorts—are also mentioned together in the treaty between Assur-nirari V of Assyria and Matiʾilu of Arpad (ca. 750 BC)(*ANET*³ 532-33). Given this longstanding association of the sun- and moon-deities with the storm and war god, it would not be surprising to find these same three god-types³⁷ associated in a slightly later period in a region that had once been part of the Assyrian empire. This association makes it possible that the Baalshamayn appearing on the Guzneh boundary stone was a form of Hadad/Adad.

36 On the connection between Adad and Hadad, see Saggs (1962:334-36).

37 Some scholars maintain that at Palmyra, there existed a divine triad consisting of Baal-Shamem along with the moon god Aglibol and the sun god Malakbel (Collert 1966:333-3; Röllig 1995:286).

Cagliari (KAI 64) - 3rd-2nd century BC

The text of this short Punic inscription³⁸ reads as follows: “To the lord, to Baa(l)shamem on the isle of Hawks: pillars and *ḥmwṭm*, two items which he vowed, Baalhanno who is of Badmelqarth, son of Hanno, son of Eshmunamas son of Maharbaal son of Atash”. The lack of any accompanying divine names or relief depicting the deity leaves little on which to base any conclusions. In addition, the want of anything distinctive about the gifts in question and the general absence of detail in the text makes it of little use in determining the character or identity of Baal-Shamem.

Umm-el-ʿAwâmîd (KAI 18) - 2nd century BC

This eight-line inscription, now in the Louvre, dates to 132 BC and was discovered at a site approximately 17 kilometres south of Tyre. The text itself is a dedicatory inscription for a gate and doors built by a certain ʿABDʿLM in fulfilment of a vow made to the god Baal-Shamem.³⁹ Interesting is the individual’s desire that his works render to him, “a memorial and a good name under the foot of my lord Baal-Shamem” (*lkny ly lskr wšm nʿm tḥt pʿm ʿdny bʿlšmm*)(lines 6-7).⁴⁰ The phrase brings to mind the manner in which Anat does obeisance at the feet and footstool of El (KTU 1.4 IV.25-29). The practice of one deity prostrating itself at the feet of a superior is repeated

38 See further, Cooke (1903:108) and Donner and Röllig (1968:79-80).

39 For treatments of this text, see Cooke (1903:44-47), Donner and Röllig (1968:26-27) and Stéphan (1985:97-98).

40 Citing this text, Stéphan (1985:154) suggests that the phrase is a metaphor for vanquishing or subduing someone or something. While this use is not in dispute, it does not seem to fit the context of the passage under discussion. Not only is the tenor of the passage positive, but in this case, it is the “works”, and not the worshipper himself, that are under the feet of the god. At most, the phrase seems to be a recognition of Baal-Shamem’s authority over the supplicant. On the possible interpretation of this phrase, see immediately below.

throughout Ugaritic literature.⁴¹ Of particular interest is the fact that the act of raising his feet to his footstool is a sign that El is favourably disposed to those who approach him in supplication (*KTU* 1.4 IV.25-29; 1.6 III.15-21). It may be that a similar image is in mind here and that the offerer is hopeful that, placed before the throne and footstool of the deity, his works will always remain there to bring pleasure to the god. While the Ugaritic parallels to El might at first suggest an identification with that deity, it is important to remember that those texts predate the Umm-el-ʿAwâmîd inscription by over a millennium. In addition, it is probable that the act of raising feet to the footstool as a sign of the god's pleasure was a practice shared by a number of deities in the pantheon. In the end, the only clue to the identity of Baal-Shamem in this text is the fact that it is dated by reference to the city of Tyre (lines 5-6). If the text in question reflects the Tyrian understanding of the pantheon (as seems likely given the reference to Tyre and Umm-el-ʿAwâmîd's proximity to that city), then based on comparison with the treaty between Esarhaddon and Baal of Tyre, Baal-Shamem would correspond with a storm deity, perhaps Hadad.

The "Phoenician History" of Philo of Byblos - 1st-2nd centuries AD

As noted in chapter one, the "Phoenician History" of Philo of Byblos appears to be a euhemerising retelling of Phoenician religious traditions that was put together sometime in the first two centuries AD. The work once refers to Baal-Shamem, stating that,

...when there were droughts, they (i.e. the early inhabitants of Phoenicia) stretched out their hands to heaven, towards the sun. For (he says) they considered him the sole god, ruler

41 E.g. Kothar-wa-Khasis to El (*KTU* 1.2 III.5-6), Qodesh-wa-Amrur to Kothar-wa-Khasis (*KTU* 1.3 VI.18-20), Gupn-wa-Ugar to Anat (*KTU* 1.3 III.8-10), and Gupn-wa-Ugar to Mot (*KTU* 1.4 VIII.26-27).

of heaven, calling him Beelsamem, which means to the Phoenicians "Ruler of Heaven", but to the Greeks "Zeus" (PE 1.10.7).⁴²

The fact that Baal-Shamem's favour was sought during time of drought points toward his identification as a storm and fertility god. The fact that Philo identifies this deity with the sun has proved problematic for some—there being no other direct literary connection between the sun and this deity. For this reason, Baumgarten, following Seyrig, suggests that the identification with the sun is the work of Philo himself and is an example of "philosophical solar pantheism" (1981:149-51). While this may well be the case, it is also possible that what Philo is recalling is a Phoenician tradition linking Baal-Shamem with the Egyptian Horus of Behdet—a deity who had both solar and fertility associations.⁴³ Regardless of the authenticity of Philo's reference to Baal-Shamem and the sun, it remains that in this passage, Baal-Shamem is described as a deity who controls the rain and fertility. Such characteristics are, of course, compatible with an identification with a northwest semitic storm god such as Hadad.

Palmyra - 1st-2nd centuries AD

At the desert oasis of Palmyra, Baal-Shamem was one of a number of prominent gods and goddesses who ranked below Bol/Bel, the supreme deity⁴⁴ of the city. Inscriptions make it clear that Baal-Shamem was worshipped at Palmyra from at least as early as AD 23 (1979:18-19). On an altar in the temple of Baal-Shamem, a bilingual

42 The translation used here is that of Baumgarten (1981:141).

43 For a discussion of this relationship, see above the section dealing with the Yehimilk inscription. A possible connection of Baal-Shamem with Horus of Behdet makes unnecessary the speculation of Albright (1990:229-30) concerning the influence of Amarna Atenism on Phoenician religion.

44 There is, however, some evidence to suggest that Bel and Baal Shamin in some way merged at Palmyra; see Teixidor (1979:9).

dedicatory inscription refers in Greek to “Zeus Most High” and in Palmyrene to “Lord of eternity/the world” (*mr’ ʿlm’*)—a title also used of Bel. In another inscription mentioning Baal-Shamem, there exists a relief depicting a cluster of winged thunderbolts (Teixidor 1977:130-38; 1979:25). In reliefs, the god is depicted holding a staff in one hand and fruit-laden branches in the other (Collart 1966:327; Teixidor 1979:129, Plate VI). While the evidence from Palmyra is late, it comports with conclusions already drawn from much earlier material, namely, that Baal-Shamem was a weather and fertility deity. The testimony of the Palmyrene material then, is at least in keeping with the idea that Baal-Shamem may be identified with Hadad.

Summary

The preceding survey demonstrates that throughout the first millennium, the god known as the “Lord of the Heavens”—Baal-Shamem⁴⁵ in the Phoenician world and Baalshamayn/Baalshamin in the Aramaean and north Arabian realm—was a deity intimately connected with storms, fertility and warfare. It is also clear that this same

45 While Baal-Shamem is not mentioned directly in the OT, several allusions to this deity likely exist in the book of Daniel. During the Seleucid period, Antiochus IV dedicated the Jerusalem temple to Zeus Olympios, the Hellenistic equivalent of Baal-Shamem. In light of this fact, the use of the term *šōmēm* in contexts decrying the desecration of the temple should probably be taken as allusions to Baal-Shamem (8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). Such a use seems especially clear in Dan. 11:31 where *šōmēm* is preceded by the word for “idol”, “detestable thing” and so seems intended to form a direct parallel to the elements of the name Baal-Shamem. See Montgomery (1927:388-89), Porteous (1965:143), Hartman and Di Lella (1978:253), Goldingay (1989:212, 302), Day (1992b) and Collins (1993:357-58). Cf. Röllig (1995:287).

deity was identified in at least some localities with the god Hadad,⁴⁶ the semitic storm god best known as the aggressive young member of the Ugaritic pantheon.

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- 46 The name Hadad appears in one location in the OT in a context in which it may refer to a deity. Hadad-Rimmon combines the name of the Syrian storm god Hadad with one of his epithets—the Akkadian form of which is *rammānu*. The term occurs in Zech. 12:11 in a passage that deals with the mourning that will take place in Jerusalem when its inhabitants come to terms with how they have treated Yahweh and his messenger. On that day, “there will be great mourning in Jerusalem like that of Hadad-Rimmon in the valley of Megiddo”. Some interpreters have taken Hadad-Rimmon to be a place name and understood the mourning to refer to lamentations for Josiah who was mortally wounded in the area (Keil 1989:390-91; Achtemeier 1986:162; Meyers and Meyers 1993:343-44; Petersen 1995:122). Others (Smith 1928b:471-72; Smith 1984:27; Maier 1992c:13; Greenfield 1999:380-81) assume that Hadad-Rimmon is the name of a manifestation of the fertility god Hadad and that the reference to mourning is to an annual ritual commemorating the summertime descent of the fertility god into the underworld. The practice of Canaanite mourning rituals in the Jezreel valley is not surprising when it is realised that this area remained a Canaanite salient long after the Israelites had become ensconced in the hill country of Judah and Samaria and in the Galilee. Indeed, it has been argued that it was precisely this Canaanite presence that led Saul to his fateful campaign in the Jezreel valley (1 Samuel 28-31)(Koizumi 1976; Irwin 1988). Such traditions could only have experienced a resurgence during the exilic period. The summertime mourning of a fertility deity might also be expected to be particularly intense in a region like the Jezreel, which, with its low elevation experiences higher summer temperatures and lower levels of dew than does the neighbouring hill country. As Carol and Eric Meyers (1993:343-44) have shown, however, there is good reason to understand the verse to refer to mourning for the fallen Josiah. First, the presence of *‘al* with Hadad-Rimmon would be expected if the mourning were for Hadad-Rimmon. Its absence in the passage favours taking Hadad-Rimmon as a place name. Second, unlike the Kings account which speaks of Josiah falling “at Megiddo” (2 Kgs. 23:29), the Chronicler speaks of Josiah as being wounded *bēbiq‘at mēgiddō* (“in the valley of Megiddo”) (2 Chron. 35:22)—using the same phrase as that which occurs in 12:11. Third, the fact that Josiah’s death was an event that prompted a great outpouring of mourning in Jerusalem is emphasised by the Chronicler (2 Chron. 35:24-25). To the Meyers’ points a fourth might be added. Understanding 12:11 to refer to mourning for the Davidic monarch Josiah fits nicely the context in which it is the House of David and the people of Jerusalem who mourn their behaviour toward Yahweh and his unnamed emissary. It may have been the case that following the mortal wounding of Josiah nearby, a town in the Jezreel valley named after a fertility god and which still practised annual mourning for that deity incorporated mourning for the king into its annual ritual. Such an occurrence would mirror the

Baal-Hammon

Another deity that merits discussion in any treatment of Baal is the god Baal-Hammon. Best known from Carthage where he was the recipient—along with Tannit—of infant sacrifice, this god was worshipped also in the Phoenician motherland. The first mention of this deity is in the 9th-century BC inscription of Kilamuwa from Zinjirli.

In discussing Baal-Hammon, three issues arise: 1) the etymology of the name, 2) the identity of the god, and 3) the character of the deity and his cult. The first two questions will be treated together.

According to Starcky, Ingeholt, Albright and others, the second element of the name Baal-Hammon is derived from the semitic root *hmm* ("to be hot") so that the name means, "Lord of the Incense Altar".⁴⁷ From the Kilamuwa inscription and Philo of Byblos' discussion of human sacrifice, Albright (1990:233-34) identifies this god as a manifestation of El.⁴⁸ Like Albright, Frank Moore Cross too, regards Baal-Hammon as a form of El.⁴⁹ Unlike Albright, however, Cross rejects the connection of the name of the deity with the term "incense altar". Cross suggests instead that the name *b'l hmn* is

way in which many small towns in southern Europe have incorporated elements from a pagan past into their annual Christian celebrations.

47 For references and discussion, see Röllig (1965b:271-72) and Albright (1968:146, n. 58; 1990:144).

48 Röllig is less certain about this identification (1965b:271) while Day (1989:37-40) rejects it outright. See below, pp. 61-62.

49 Cross compares the sacrifice of infants to Baal-Hammon at Carthage with Diodorus' statement that human sacrifice was limited to the cult of Kronos (El). He also points to the passages in Philo of Byblos in which Kronos (El) sacrifices his own children. Finally, he draws attention to an Ugaritic text in which, "El the One of the Mountain" may stand in parallel with *hmn* (Cross 1973:26, 28, n. 85).

related to the root *hmn*, known as a theophoric element in names from Ugarit. This connection, he offers, renders impossible the supposed relationship between the divine element *hmn* and the Hebrew term *hmm* on the grounds that the initial consonant in the divine name goes back to a Ugaritic *h* and not *h*.⁵⁰ Cross suggests that the name *b'l hmn* means "Lord of (Mount) Amanus" (1973:24-28).

Lipiński is another scholar who sees Baal-Hammon as the "Lord of (Mount) Amanus". Lipiński's view differs from that of Cross and others, however, in that it relates Baal-Hammon not to El, but to Dagon and sees him as an ancient god related to fertility and well-being.⁵¹ The sacrifice of first-born children associated with Baal-Hammon is, according to Lipiński, one indication of the agrarian nature of the cult. One drawback to Lipiński's position is that he is able to achieve this correspondence only at the cost of ignoring the connection between Kronos and El made in the Phoenician History of Philo of Byblos.⁵² It should also be noted that Lipiński links Dagon and Baal-Hammon by identifying the former as the "Lord of (Mount) Amanus"—a conclusion too weighty for the evidence he offers.⁵³ Moreover, there is little indication in any of the

50 The word for "heat" appears in Ugaritic as *hmm* (e.g. KTU 1.2 IV.33; 1.19 I.40). Additionally, Cross argues that the doubling of the *mem* found in *hmm*, does not appear in Greek transcriptions of the god's name, thus providing further evidence against a connection (Cross 1973:27).

51 See Lipiński (1987:33-35; 1995:251-64).

52 For a critique of Lipiński's view, see Xella (1991:154-57).

53 In his discussion of Baal-Hammon, Lipiński confidently asserts, "Au II^e millénaire, comme on l'a vu, le dieu Dagan/Dagon était le maître de l'Amanus" (1995:254). In his discussion which leads to this conclusion, however, Lipiński is only able to state that in the 3rd millennium BC, the Amanus range fell within the territory in which Dagon was prominent and that at Emar of the 13th-12th century BC he was represented by an ideogram (DINGIR-KUR) that suggests the idea of a divinised mountain (1995:170, 73). In this section of his discussion, Lipiński is slightly more cautious, concluding only that, "C'est très probablement aussi sous le nom de

textual references to the worship of Baal-Hammon—save in some rather late Latin epithets of Saturn⁵⁴—that the cult had an agricultural character. To the contrary, the textual sources suggest that offerings were made to the god primarily in times of crisis.⁵⁵ Even the inscriptions on the many votive stelae found in the various Punic tophets give no hint of a seasonal aspect to the worship of the deity, but do support the idea that offerings were made to the god in thanks for “services rendered”.⁵⁶

An interesting suggestion is that of Gibson, who argues that the name *bʿl ḥmn* refers to a form of El venerated in the town of Hammon and mentioned in inscriptions from Umm-el-ʿAwâmid, a village just south of Tyre (Gibson 1982:39, 121-22). In one such inscription, the “god of Hammon” (*ʿl ḥmn*) is identified as Milkashtart—a name Gibson regards as another title for El (1982:39, 118-22).

Yigael Yadin (1970:199-239) also discusses the identity of Baal-Hammon. Yadin examines the Kilamuwa inscription from Zinjirli in which Baal-Hammon is mentioned

‘Seigneur de l’Amanus’ (*Baʿal Ḥamon*) que Dagon fut vénéré au I^{er} millénaire et jusqu’aux premiers siècles ap. J.C., tant en Syrie que dans le monde carthaginois” (1995:173).

- 54 In the North African cult of Saturn that continued the cult of Baal-Hammon in the centuries following the destruction of Carthage, the deity was known by the epithet *frugifer*—a title characterising him as the protector of harvests (Lancel 1995:197, 432-36). It should be noted that this epithet appears late and so is perhaps more likely to reflect elements of Roman religion than traditional Carthaginian beliefs about Baal-Hammon. Although little is known about the Roman god Saturn, it is interesting on this point to note that his festival, celebrated on the 17th of December, coincided with the end of ploughing and seeding.
- 55 For examples see below, p. 59.
- 56 This latter element is reflected in the formula oft repeated on stelae from Punic tophets, “To Baal-Hammon and to Tannit, Face of Baal,...because he heard the sound of my voice”. In many cases, the inscription makes it clear that the offering was made in fulfilment of a vow. For a representative sample of such dedications, see Berthier and Charlier (1955).

and notes the presence of a lunar crescent among the symbols arranged above the text. Comparing this to the presence of similar crescents on Punic stelae dedicated to Baal-Hammon and Tanit, Yadin concludes that Baal-Hammon was a moon god—a deity quite separate from the god El (1970:202-3). As to the origin of the name “Hammon”, Yadin concurs with the idea that *bʿl ḥmn* is related to Mt. Amanus (1970:215-16).

In a recent and thorough treatment of Baal-Hammon, Paolo Xella argues that the element *ḥmn* is related to an Ugaritic root *ḥym* meaning “to cover, protect, surround” and refers to a small chapel or pavilion that was the earthly projection of the heavenly residence of the deity. The name Baal-Hammon, therefore, declares the god to be “Lord of the Chapel/Shrine/Pavilion” and not the god of any particular geographic locality. The deity worshipped in such a shrine was, according to Xella, an ancestral deity similar to, although not identical with, the *ilib* and El (1991:169-70, 77, 89-90, 233). Related to the view of Xella is that of Fantar (1990:72-76) who recently has argued that the divine name means, the “Baal Our Protector”.

The origin of the name Hammon is, in the end, not the only element important to the study at hand. At least as significant is the identity of the god as well as his character and that of his cult. As others have noted,⁵⁷ the classical authors provide evidence to conclude that Baal-Hammon should be related to the Canaanite high god El. While these authors are often preserved only in later quotes or are themselves sometimes given to exaggeration, the basic fact of Carthaginian human sacrifice to which they attest is not in doubt. Philo of Byblos, purporting to translate the work of the

57 Discussions of the classical material may be found in Cross (1973:25-26), Day (1989:96-91), Brown (1991:21-26) and Xella (1991:91-105). While Xella accepts the idea that the classical authors equated Kronos-El with Baal-Hammon, he ultimately rejects the notion that the two deities are to be identified (1991:103, 233).

Phoenician Sanchuniathon, states that the deity known in the Greek world as Kronos, was known by the Phoenicians as El (*PE* 1.10.16, 44). He also records that during times of acute national distress, the Phoenicians would sacrifice their children in an effort to satisfy the gods.⁵⁸ Illustrating this practice, Philo, in euhemeristic fashion, relates how during time of war, "Kronos (i.e. El) dressed his son in noble attire, prepared an altar and sacrificed him" (*PE* 1.10.44). In another place, Kronos-El is depicted as immolating his son in an effort to stave off a plague (*PE* 1.10.33).⁵⁹

Diodorus of Sicily (1st century BC) reinforces the connection between Kronos and human sacrifice. In his discussion of the history of Carthage, Diodorus describes how, in the wake of a military defeat at the hands of Agathocles (310 BC), the people of Carthage sought to appease their long-neglected gods. As part of this effort, the citizens are said to have sacrificed 200 of their most noble sons in the fire to Kronos (XX.14.4-6). Elsewhere, Diodorus relates how, during a campaign in Sicily, the Carthaginian general Hamlicar sought to bring an end to a plague by sacrificing a young boy to Kronos (XIII.86.3). In the 3rd century BC, the Greek writer Kleitarchos states that the Phoenicians and especially the Carthaginians burned their children in sacrifice to Kronos when they were especially eager to obtain some great favour from the deity.⁶⁰ The tradition associating human sacrifice with Kronos, combined with the fact that this type of sacrifice was associated in the Punic world with Baal-Hammon, provides consistent textual evidence for believing Baal-Hammon to be a manifestation of El.

58 This same sentiment is also expressed by the 2nd-century AD Latin historian Justin in his summary of an earlier work by Pompeius Trogus (XVIII.6.9-12) as well as by Plutarch who explicitly states that these offerings were made to Kronos (*Moralia* 171C-D).

59 Note also Num. 25:6-15 where a plague is ended after the priest Phinehas executes Zimri and Cozbi in the vicinity of the Tent of Meeting.

60 *Scholia on Plato's Republic* 337A (Jacoby 1962:745, §137, Frag. 9). See, Stager (1980:6).

Iconographic evidence is another means by which a connection might be demonstrated between Baal-Hammon and El. The fact, however, that it is not always possible to establish the identity of a depicted figure with certainty means that this approach be adopted with some caution.⁶¹ In the case of Baal-Hammon, iconographic evidence comes from a number of sources including a relief and a terra cotta figure that are assumed by some to be representations of the god.⁶² Both figures are depicted seated on a cherub-throne, right hand raised in blessing and the left hand extended. Both gods are bearded⁶³ and dressed in a long robe. In the case of the stela, the deity is flanked by what appear to be pillars and is surmounted by a winged sun-disk. Certain key elements of these two depictions match elements found at Ugarit in what are commonly taken to be depictions of El.⁶⁴ In one bronze statue, a deity in long robe is depicted seated with the right hand raised in blessing and the left extended in a grasping posture (ANEP §826).⁶⁵ In another 13th-century BC relief, a bearded, long-robed god is pictured seated beneath a winged disk, left hand raised in blessing and the right extended,

61 For a discussion of various suspected representations of Baal-Hammon, see Foucher (1968-69:131-39) and Xella (1991:114-40).

62 The stela was excavated at the tophet at Sousse (Hadrumetum) south-east of Carthage and dates to the 5th-4th century BC. The terra cotta figurine is late, dated to the 1st-2nd century AD and was found in the remains of a temple at Thinissut east of Carthage. See Foucher (1968-69:132-33, Ph. 131, 134) and Lancel (1995: 197-98, Fig. 104).

63 At Ugarit, El's grey beard marks him as aged and wise (KTU 1.3 V.33; 1.4 V.3-5). A common epithet for El at Ugarit is *ʾlm* —the "Ancient/Eternal One".

64 Such, for example, is the identification offered by Keel (1985:205-6).

65 In the spring of 1988, an almost identical bearded, seated figure was discovered at Ugarit. This limestone statue was made with sockets for attachable arms—now missing. The posture of the upper arms suggests that the right hand was originally raised and the left either extended or lowered. Based on the appearance of the statue and a comparison with the bronze and gold statuette mentioned above, the excavator has identified it to be a representation of El. See, Yon and Gachet (1989:349).

grasping a small container (*ANEP* §493).⁶⁶ The points of similarity between these late 2nd-millennium representations of El and the later western Phoenician/Punic depictions of Baal-Hammon provide supplementary evidence for identifying the latter as the Iron Age manifestation of the former.⁶⁷

Additional evidence for understanding Baal-Hammon to be related to El comes in the form of some Punic inscriptions. One 2nd-1st century BC Greek inscription from El-Hofra reads, ΚΡΟΝΩΙ ΘΕΝΝΕΙΘ ΦΕΝΗ ΒΑΛ ΕΘΥΣΕ[ΕΝ Α]ΛΚΙΜΗΔΗ[Σ] ΚΑΙ ΕΠΗΚ[ΟΥ] [ΣΕ]ΤΗ[Ν] "To Kronos (and to) Tanit, Face of Baal. Alkimedes sacrificed and he heard his voice".⁶⁸ The substitution of Kronos in place of the expected Baal-Hammon is in keeping with the testimony of Philo and Diodorus that Kronos was the deity to whom the Carthaginians sacrificed their children. In keeping with the connection between El and Baal-Hammon is the testimony of an inscription which mentions both deities, one after the other. The text *CIS* 4943 reads, *l'l lb'l hmn wlrbt ltnt pn b'l* "to El, to Baal-Hammon and to the Lady, to Tanit, Face of Baal". While it is possible that here *l* may be taken as a common noun,⁶⁹ in light of the other evidence connecting Baal-Hammon and Kronos, its appearance in this context as a proper noun should not be surprising.

In his study on Molek, John Day (1989:37-40) offers a brief but compelling critique of the widely accepted view that Baal-Hammon was related to El and argues

66 This relief is the subject of a careful study by Wyatt who concludes that, "we may take it as a reasonable working hypothesis that we have here a representation of El" (Wyatt 1983:227).

67 On the parallels between these Punic and Levantine images see further, Cross (1973:35-36) and Mettinger (1982:131-34).

68 On this inscription, see Donner and Röllig (1968:164) and Berthier and Charlier (1955:168-69).

69 Such, for example, is the conclusion of Xella (1991:63).

instead that Baal-Hammon was a form of Baal. Such an identification is made possible, he maintains, by the fact that the element Baal appears in the name of the god itself and by the fact that the Carthaginian inscriptions never refer to Baal-Hammon as El. Concerning the classical testimony that equates Kronos with El, Day cites several classical authors who state that Kronos could refer to either El or Baal. A further indication that Baal-Hammon is a Baal figure is found by Day in the Treaty of Hannibal with Philip V of Macedon where Zeus (a figure usually associated with Baal) appears—at the head of the Carthaginian gods.⁷⁰ Day also notes a text from Sarepta in Phoenicia that refers to a compound deity Tinnit-Astarte—a name combining the name of Baal-Hammon's consort with that of Baal's consort. Although Day has not proved his case conclusively, his suggestion does mean that the widely held Baal-Hammon = El equation may no longer be treated as established fact. Indeed, given the popularity of Baal-type deities in the 1st millennium and the relative obscurity of El during this same period, the identification of Baal with Baal-Hammon must be considered a distinct possibility.

In light of the foregoing, we may revisit the question of the etymology of the name of Baal-Hammon. Recent interpreters are almost certainly correct in setting aside the long-proposed connection with the Hebrew root *hmm* ("to be hot, warm").⁷¹ It appears most likely that the *hmn* of Baal-Hammon should be related to the Ugaritic word *hmn*. Two factors suggest this equation. First, *hmn* appears at Ugarit as the divine element in a number of theophoric names (e.g. *'bdhmn*). Second, the Phoenician and Hebrew consonant *h* corresponds to Ugaritic *h*, thus permitting a linguistic connection

70 Cf. Barré (1983:46-50).

71 Among those who reject this equation on the basis of consonantal correspondence are Cross (1973:26-2; 1974:248) and Xella (1991:152-70).

between the Phoenician divine name *ḥmn* and the Ugaritic divine name *ḥmn*. If Phoenician *ḥmn* and Ugaritic *ḥmn* are related, then the fact that at Ugarit *ḥm* ("heat") is cognate to Hebrew *ḥmm* means that there can be no connection between Baal-Hammon and the idea of "heat" or "burning" and that the deity cannot be regarded as "Lord of the Brazier/Incense Burner".

Another suggestion that must be regarded as unlikely is Gibson's proposal that this god drew its name from the village of Hammon south of Tyre. While there is no real etymological objection to this equation, it should be noted that in the texts Gibson cites, the deity in question is given the proper name Milkashtart and is described as *ʾl ḥmn*, ("god of Hammon"). Where the term *bʿl ḥmn* is used, the reference is not to a deity, but to a citizen or citizens of the town. A parallel expression is used in the same sense in several OT passages.⁷² If the deity worshipped at Umm-el-ʿAwâmîd was in some way related to Baal-Hammon, it was likely as a result of the assonance between the town name and that of a deity already well-known and worshipped in other areas. A parallel to this is seen in the way in which the Egyptian god Amon worshipped at Silwa oasis was, in late antiquity, identified with the god Baal-Hammon worshipped elsewhere in North Africa.⁷³

One widely accepted view of the meaning of the name Baal-Hammon is that which sees it as meaning "Lord of (Mount) Amanus". This position has been championed most recently by F.M. Cross (1973:24-28; 1974:248-49). Cross argues that the second element of the name *bʿl ḥmn* is reflected in the theophoric element *ḥmn* appearing in some Ugaritic personal names. Additionally, he suggests that *ḥmn* is

72 E.g. Josh. 24:11; Judg. 9:2ff, 20:5; 1 Sam. 23:11-12; 2 Sam. 21:12.

73 See Harden (1963:87), Moscati (1968:138) and Lancel (1995:198).

related to the mountain *Ḥamānu* (Mount Amanus). Cross even proposes to find an Ugaritic reference to El as, “the One of the mountain Haman”. Seeing Baal-Hammon as one who lives on Mount Amanus comports well with statements from Ugaritic and the OT which place the abode of El in the far north (1973:27-2; 1974:248). Cross’ view has been most vigorously criticised by Paolo Xella (1991). Xella argues that in one Ugaritic letter, Mount Amanus is identified by *ḡr amn*.⁷⁴ Based on this conclusion, Xella asserts that “...si le *amn* de la lettre ugaritique désignait l’Amanus, la graphie avec *aleph* initial serait absolument inconciliable avec le *ḥ* de l’ug. *ḥmn* et avec le *ḥ* du prétendu correspondant phénico-punique *ḤMN* ” (Xella 1991:161-63). Xella continues by maintaining that no god was clearly associated with Mount Amanus and that at no time did this mountain match Mount Saphon in the role the latter played in semitic religious tradition (1991:163-64). On the basis of the linguistic evidence then, it does not appear that Baal-Hammon can be designated as the “Lord of the Amanus”. This being the case, the meaning of Hammon must be sought elsewhere.

An initially attractive understanding of Baal-Hammon is found in the proposal by Fantar (1990:72-76) noted above. Fantar suggests that the term Hammon comes from a semitic root meaning “to protect” which appears in BH as the word for “wall” (*ḥômâ*). While Fantar’s offering of “the Lord Who Protects Us” is attractive, it faces, as Xella has already pointed out, the difficulty of being incompatible with the representation of

74 Cross argues that this term refers not to Mount Amanus, but to another feature, Mount ʿAmmana, located—as he puts it—“in the same general region” (1973:27). In response to this, Cogan (1984:255-59) has convincingly argued that Mount ʿAmmana is correctly placed, not near Mount Amanus, but north-west of Damascus. The mention of *ḡr amn* in the context of the territory of Mukiš makes it almost certain that *ḡr amn* refers to Mount Amanus in the same locality. For expressions of this view, see Cogan (1984:257), Pardee (1984:216) and Caquot (1989:329-31).

Baal-Hammon known from Greek and Latin vocalisations (Xella 1991:166). There is an additional, etymological difficulty in seeing the term Hammon as being derived from the semitic root *hmy*. Fantar (1990:74) notes that this root carries the idea of protection and is related to BH *hômâ* ("wall"). While this is true, it should be noted that the Ugaritic cognate for this Hebrew term is *hmt* ("wall") (with *h*, not *h*)⁷⁵ —a fact that suggests it to be unrelated to the Ugaritic divine element *hmn* (the presumed cognate of the Phoenician divine element *hmn*). This etymological fact suggests that Fantar's proposal of "the Lord Who Protects Us"—while attractive as the name of a prominent deity—is nonetheless unlikely. Even if *hmn* of Punic *bʿl hmn* could be related to the root *hmy*, there remains the problem of the final *nun*. Rather than seeing the final *nun* of the divine name as the 3rd person plural suffix as does Fantar, a better solution would be to take it as an example of the nominal affirmative *-ôn* often found in proper and common nouns in Phoenician and Hebrew.⁷⁶

Given all of the available evidence, the most convincing etymology for Baal-Hammon is one that takes the second element of the name as coming from the root *hmy/hym*, which according to Xella means "to cover, protect, surround".⁷⁷ Based on this root Xella argues that the name Baal-Hammon means "Lord of the Chapel/Shrine/Pavilion". Xella's proposal makes full use and sense of the Ugaritic use of this term and provides an explanation for the depictions of small shrines found on

75 See, Al-Yassin (1952:56, §193), Aistleitner (1974:104-5, §944). It is presumably a typographical error in Tomback (1978:108) that is responsible for relating Hebrew *hômâ* with Ugaritic *hmt*.

76 For examples of this usage, see Harris (1936:5) and Gesenius, Kautzsch and Cowley (1910:§85u).

77 Xella (1991:170). Aistleitner (1974:113, §1039) lists a nominal form of this root as meaning "Zelt" ("canopy, tent"). See also, Al-Yassin (1952:58, §209).

many stelae dedicated to Baal-Hammon and Tanit.⁷⁸ Although Xella does not mention it, understanding Baal-Hammon as the “Lord of the Shrine” fits well with Barré’s contention that in the treaty between Hannibal and Philip V of Macedon, this deity is known as *Beth-El* (Barré 1983:46-50). A problematic element in Xella’s understanding is his belief that Baal-Hammon was an ancestral or family deity similar, but unrelated to, the *ilib* or El. Indeed, where Xella’s construal may be faulted is in the manner in which he downplays the evidence from classical and other sources noted above which seem to favour to a connection between Baal-Hammon and El.

On the whole, however, Xella’s proposal to relate *ḥmn* of *bʿl ḥmn* to the Ugaritic *ḥmn* makes good etymological sense. This term appears in nominal form in both Ugaritic and Arabic as “tent” (Aistleitner 1974:113, §1039). The name *bʿl ḥmn*, therefore, could easily carry the meaning “Lord of the Shrine/Tent/Pavilion”.⁷⁹ Given, however, that in Arabic the infinitive of this same root has the meaning of “to remain, dwell, abide”,⁸⁰ then the name of this deity could also be rendered the “Lord Who Abides”. Rather than identifying the god as an ancestral deity—as does Xella—the name *bʿl ḥmn* may be better suited as a term emphasising the divine presence with his worshippers.

78 Xella (1991:131-40). One advantage of Xella’s view is that his explanation compliments the testimony of Diodorus who remarks that among those items sent to Tyre by the people of Carthage were small shrines with their idols (XX.14.2-3). This is in keeping with the fact that some cippi from the tophet at Carthage depict small shrines of Egyptian style. Later stelae continue the tradition with images of shrines in Greek style (Picard 1964:60, Bisi 1968-69:119-22). It has been suggested by a number of scholars that these depictions are based on Phoenician precursors. See, for example, the two Phoenician naoi from the 5th century BC showing small shrines (Keel 1985:160-62, figs. 221-22). For a survey of the stratigraphy of the tophet at Carthage as understood by various excavators, see Brown (1991:77-82).

79 Such a designation comports with the Ugaritic material which may indicate that El lives in a tent (e.g. KTU 1.3 V.8. Smith 1997:116; Wyatt 1998:84; cf. Gibson 1978:53, nn. 4-5).

80 Lane (1984:837).

In this sense, Baal-Hammon may stand as a more intimate manifestation of El, a god who at Ugarit—although kindly and wise—is depicted as an aloof deity whose dwelling place is far off at the source of the two primeval deeps. If this was the case, then the worship of Baal-Hammon may have been directed toward ensuring the divine presence among, and therefore protection of, his worshippers. The fact that sacrifice to Baal-Hammon seems to have occurred during moments of crisis is in keeping with this understanding of the god's name and character. This role as protector is further implied by the tradition related in the Heidelberg manuscript that the account of Hanno's perilous journey along the western coast of Africa was inscribed on plaques and hung in the temple of Baal-Hammon in Carthage.⁸¹ The connection between Baal-Hammon/Kronos/El and this concept of protection is further strengthened by the euhemeristic remark by Hesiod that the reign of Kronos was a time marked first and foremost by freedom from ills and concerns.⁸² If Baal-Hammon was a protector deity, then he bears more than a passing similarity to Yahweh, whose presence with his people through the tabernacle is directly tied to his protection of them (2 Sam. 7:5-11; 1 Chron. 17:4-10).⁸³

Something may also be said of the regions in which Baal-Hammon was worshipped. The Zinjirli inscription has long demonstrated that Baal-Hammon was worshipped in the eastern Mediterranean during the Iron Age. In addition to this, a text recently published by Bordrueil shows that this same god was also worshipped in

81 Lancel (1995:102-9). For a translation of this text, see Sznycer (1968-69:146-47).

82 *Works and Days* 111-20. This statement links Kronos primarily with protection from misfortune. Only secondarily is Kronos connected with fruitfulness and prosperity.

83 The use of the image of the tent to relate the concept of divine intimacy is familiar to NT readers from Jn. 1:14 where the closeness of God is related in the expression the one "who dwelt (i.e. tented) among us".

Phoenicia proper. The text in question comes in the form of an amulet on which was engraved the inscription, *lbʿl ḥmn wlbʿl špn k ybrknn* "to Baal-Hammon and to Baal-Saphon because they blessed me". Discovered in the region of Tyre in 1982, this amulet provides evidence to show that the cult of Baal-Hammon was known in the Phoenician motherland.⁸⁴ Additional evidence of the worship of Baal-Hammon in Phoenicia may exist as the result of a rescue excavation at the site of what may prove to have been the Tophet of Tyre. This site has already yielded at least 200 inscribed and uninscribed stelae as well as numerous jars containing cremated remains.⁸⁵ Unlike the stelae from the North African and Western Mediterranean tophets, the finds at Tyre have not yet yielded any dedicatory formulae mentioning the god Baal-Hammon, although the name Tanit does appear. In addition, a number of the stelae bear what appears to be the crescent and disk symbol so prominent at Punic tophets. Moreover, among the personal names found on the Tyrian stelae is *grḥmn*, which has been interpreted as, "the client of (the god Baal) Hammon" (Sader 1991:111-13). These two discoveries confirm the testimony of classical sources which attest to the religious connection long-maintained by the people of Carthage with the Tyrian homeland. Diodorus, for example, records how, having been defeated by Agathocles in Libya, the Carthaginians sent offerings and a large sum of money to Tyre along with golden shrines and their associated images

84 Bordreuil (1986:82-86) and Xella (1991:157). Ferjaoui presumably is alluding to this same inscription when he states that "... nous savons, à présent, que *Baʿal Ḥammon* était vénéré à Tyr" (1993:345).

85 Unfortunately the vast majority of these stelae were uncovered in illegal excavations with the result that only a handful have been saved and studied. On the rescue excavation and its results, see Sader (1991:101-26) and Seeden (1991:39-87).

(XX.14.1-3).⁸⁶ Other classical authors are more direct in saying that the practice of human sacrifice originated in Phoenicia proper and was taken from there to Carthage.⁸⁷

The iconography associated with Baal-Hammon may also reveal further details about his character. The lunar crescent ubiquitously associated with stelae dedicated to Baal-Hammon implies that some lunar characteristic was associated with the god.⁸⁸ Xella downplays the idea of a lunar character for the god by pleading that the whole area of iconography is ground too unstable upon which to make assertions as to the character of a deity (Xella 1991:109-10).⁸⁹ Despite the need to approach the iconographic evidence with caution, it remains that by their very nature, divine symbols must exhibit some meaningful connection to the gods they represent. In the case of the lunar crescent and disk, the consistency with which it is associated with Baal-Hammon points toward

86 It is important to note that Diodorus' testimony shows not that the Carthaginians had abandoned religious contact with their mother-city, but only that by the time of the conflict with Agathocles had come to support the temples of Tyre less generously than had once been the case.

87 The 1st-century AD author Quintus Curtius Rufus states that the practice of child sacrifice was something handed down to the Carthaginians by the Tyrian founders of the colony. He also remarks that during the siege of Tyre, some of the city elders proposed renewing the long-abandoned practice of human sacrifice as a means of preventing their defeat (*History of Alexander* IV.3.23). Porphry as preserved by Eusebius states that the sacrifice of humans to Kronos was a Phoenician practice (*PE* 4.16.6). Kleitarchos speaks of the Carthaginians and the Phoenicians as those who practise human sacrifice (*Scholia on Plato's Republic* 337A).

88 On the connection between Baal-Hammon and the moon, see Yadin (1970:199-231). While Yadin emphasises the lunar character of Baal-Hammon, it is not clear that the crescent and disk are both lunar representations. It may well be that the disk is a solar emblem and that the two combined imply the deity's status as lord of the universe. It may also be that the crescent and disk symbolises Baal-Hammon and Tanit as a divine pair.

89 Similar caution is exercised by Brown (1991:136-37) who provides a succinct discussion of the various meanings attributed to the crescent and disk symbol.

at least some celestial aspect to the deity. It may be that such a lunar quality is reflected in the fact that sacrifices to Baal-Hammon were sometimes nocturnal ceremonies.⁹⁰

Concerning the worship of Baal-Hammon, Diodorus mentions that in Carthage there was a bronze statue of Kronos which depicted the deity with hands extended and sloping toward the ground. Infants placed in the arms of this statue would thus roll forward into a pit in which a fierce fire had been kindled (XX.14.6).⁹¹ Even if the depiction of the means of sacrifice contains elements of melodrama and exaggeration,⁹² the basic facts about a shrine to Baal-Hammon where children were sacrificed are not to be doubted. It may also be the case that small shrines were associated with the worship of Baal-Hammon. Diodorus mentions also that the people of Carthage sent golden shrines and their idols to Tyre and refers also to a fire that accidentally consumed the "sacred hut" of the Carthaginian army (XX.14.2-3; 65.1).⁹³

90 A Latin inscription on a stela from Ngaus, for example, commemorates a "great nocturnal sacrifice" to the "holy Lord Saturn"—the successor to Baal-Hammon in Roman North Africa (Cross 1994:102). In addition, Diodorus records how, following a skirmish with the army of Agathocles in Libya, the Carthaginians planned to celebrate their victory by the nocturnal sacrifice of the fairest of their prisoners of war. Although Baal-Hammon is not specifically mentioned, it is certain that he is to be included among the gods to whom the sacrifice was made (XX.65.1).

91 A similar description is given by Kleitarchus (*Scholia on Plato's Republic* 337A).

92 One of the difficulties with Diodorus' description of events lies in the fact that having sacrificial infants roll into a fiery pit does not seem to be compatible with the collection of their bones and their interment in jars. If the ritual took place as Diodorus indicates, then the collection of bones would have required the cumbersome process of having to extinguish the sacrificial fire after each offering in order to retrieve the bones of the victim. A more likely scenario would see the offerings made on an altar whence the bones could easily be retrieved.

93 The presumption being that in this hut there was a small shrine to the deity.

Ugaritic Baal

Since the discovery of the Ugaritic tablets at Ras Shamra in the early part of this century, most of the work on Baal undertaken by Biblical scholarship has relied heavily upon parallels with the Baal of Ugarit—a tendency due mostly to the vast amount of relevant material uncovered at that site. So important have been these mythical and ritual texts for understanding Canaanite religion that fertility cults throughout the ancient Near East are often studied and understood by comparison with this deity. It is important to remember, however, that as valuable as the Ugaritic texts may be, they represent Late Bronze Age religious traditions that stand at a significant temporal distance from the written Biblical texts. While it is likely that much was shared between Canaanite religion of the 2nd and 1st millennia, it is also possible that the characteristics of individual gods, their relative placement in the pantheon and the advent of new deities were areas in which development occurred between the two eras. Since the discovery of the Ras Shamra tablets, the general character of the Ugaritic Baal has been well-covered in numerous dissertations and monographs.⁹⁴ In the pages that follow, certain key characteristics of Ugaritic Baal will be outlined and problem issues examined in order to determine what contribution an understanding of this deity may make to the study of Baal in the OT.

The deity identified at Ugarit by the term *bʿl* (“master, lord”) was also known by a variety of other names and epithets.⁹⁵ The recent discovery of the term *bʿl* in texts from the 3rd millennium BC and the recognition that scribes differentiated between the use of

94 Among the most significant of these are, Kapelrud (1952), Haddad (1960), Mulder (1962), Habel (1964), Oldenburg (1969), van Zijl (1972), Anderson (1975), L’Heureux (1979) and Smith (1994a).

95 On the titles of Baal in the Ugaritic texts, see Wyatt (1992b).

the term as an appellative and as a divine name⁹⁶ may indicate that at Ugarit—where *bʿl* is by far the most common means of referring to the deity—*bʿl* was not merely a title, but functioned as the personal name of the god.⁹⁷ Regardless of whether or not the term *bʿl* at Ugarit functioned as a title or proper name, it is certain that the deity to which it refers is one associated with the Syrian storm god Hadad and his Mesopotamian counterpart Adad (Haddad 1960:19-33; 44, 152-72; Greenfield 1995). In a significant number of cases⁹⁸ Baal is identified as *hd* or *hdd*. The use of this semitic root *hdd* identifies Baal as “the thunderer” and points toward him as a god of the storm (BDB 1952:212c-d; Haddad 1960:18-19; de Moor and de Vries 1988; Wyatt 1992b:412).

Among the other titles used of Baal are *bʿl arṣ*, *zbl bʿl*, *bʿl ṣpn*, and *aliyn bʿl*, each of which seems to highlight a different aspect of his character. The title Baal-Zaphon connects Baal with Mount Casius just to the north of Ugarit (Albright 1950). The presence of Baal-Zaphon alongside Baal-Shamem in the Treaty of Esarhaddon with Baal of Tyre identifies Baal-Zaphon as a having a connection with maritime storms.⁹⁹ The exalted status of Baal within the pantheon is expressed in his title *zbl bʿl* (“Prince/Ruler Baal”). One scholar has gone so far to say that Baal wins the title *zbl* only after victory over Yamm is achieved.¹⁰⁰ On several occasions, *zbl* appears as part of the title *zbl bʿl arṣ*—a label that identifies Baal (by virtue of his role in agriculture) with the terrestrial

96 See Pettinato (1980) and Herrmann (1995a:249).

97 For discussion and bibliography, see Anderson (1975:48).

98 Wyatt (1992b:412) notes 24 occurrences of the terms *hd* or *hdd* with reference to Baal.

99 This connection is also evident in the fact that Zeus Casius was a god favoured by mariners (Albright 1950:11-13; Haddad 1960:99-104; van Zijl 1972:332-34).

100 Wyatt (1992b:416). Wyatt adds, however, that the fragmentary nature of the Ugaritic texts make such a conclusion tentative. On this title, see also van Zijl (1972:340).

realm, but which may also connect him with the underworld.¹⁰¹ The exalted status of Baal within the pantheon at Ugarit is also reflected in the title *aliyn b'l*. This frequently occurring designation is defined variously as “Mighty Baal” (Haddad 1960:52; van Zijl 1972:341-45), “Valiant Baal” (Wyatt 1992b:404) and “Victor/Victorious Baal” (Day 1992b:545; Herrmann 1995a:250). Most interpretations of this title understand it to come from the root *lʿy*, “to prevail, be strong”.

The character of Baal as a god who controls the storm is unmistakable. Montalbano (1951) and others have argued that Baal’s title *bn dgn* may be taken to mean “Rainy One”.¹⁰² In a similar vein, the oft-occurring designation of Baal as *rkb ʿrpt* (“Rider of the Clouds”)¹⁰³ singles him out as one whose realm is the heavens and whose transport is the source of rain. Baal’s sometime designation as *bʿl špn*¹⁰⁴ also identifies him as a deity connected with the storm. In the Treaty of Esarhaddon with Baal of Tyre (ANET³ 533-34), a form of this same name is used to identify a god with responsibility for maritime storms and travel. Baal’s connection with storms is also indicated by the window that Kothar-wa-Khasis insists on adding to Baal’s palace—an aperture that surely corresponds to the windows of heaven through which Baal pours his rain (KTU 1.4 VI.3-6). Once this window is installed, Baal thunders through its opening (KTU 1.4 VII.25-37). In addition, it is probably significant for the function of Baal that the name of at least one of his three daughters may be understood as inspired by meteorological

101 Haddad (1960:53); Dietrich and Loretz (1980); Herrmann (1995a:256). See also Wyatt (1992b:416-17).

102 Montalbano (1951). Wyatt (1980:377) echoes Montalbano’s view that *dgn* is related to Arabic *dagana* “to be cloudy, rainy”. In addition, he argues that the unique form *hṭk dgn* (KTU 1.10 III.32-36) is a title of Baal meaning “Ruler of the Rain” (1992b:415-16). Cf. Ringgren (1978:140); Healey (1995:407, 10-11).

103 E.g. KTU 1.2 IV.8; 1.3 II.40; 1.4 III.18; V.60; 1.19 I.43-44.

104 E.g. KTU 1.16 I.6-7; 1.39 I. 10; 1.46, I. 14; 1.47 I. 5; 1.109 II. 9, 29.

phenomena.¹⁰⁵ Baal claims to possess the secret of thunder (KTU 1.3 III.20-21; IV.14-20). Baal's connection with the sky is presupposed in KTU 1.19 III.1-3 where Daniel looks to him for help in capturing the birds suspected of bearing the remains of Aqhat. Finally, the name of Baal's binomial attendant Gupn-wa-Ugar ("Vine and Field") suggests that Baal is connected with fertility—a natural consequence of his character as a rain god (KTU 1.3 III.36).¹⁰⁶

A significant issue surrounding Ugaritic Baal is his parentage. This problem arises from the fact that the Ugaritic texts describe Baal as both *bn dgn* ("son of Dagan") and *bn ʾl* ("son of El").¹⁰⁷ Dagan is a major east Semitic deity that may not have been native to Ugarit (van Zijl 1972:338; Handy 1992a:2). So intimately connected is he with agriculture that his name is adopted in west semitic as the term for grain (*dgn*) (Wyatt 1980:377; Healey 1995:410; 1996:70). As is well known, El is the venerable head of the Ugaritic pantheon, husband of Athirat and the father of at least seventy sons. There are three options that provide a likely solution to the problematic testimony of the Ugaritic materials. First, it is possible that the conflicting references to Baal's parentage may be

105 *fly* ("Dewy One") (KTU 1.3 III.5-8; V.41-43; 1.4 IV.54-57; 1.5 V.10-11). Gibson (1978:46, n. 7) understands *ar* in *pdry bt ar* to connect *pdry* with "mist", but most scholars differ and take *ar* as "light".

106 The obvious association of Baal with weather and fertility has led some scholars to interpret the Baal cycle as a seasonal myth (e.g. de Moor 1971). Such a view, however, presumes an overall coherence to the "Baal cycle" that is not yet certain. For a critique of this view, see Grabbe (1976) and Smith (1986:314-16). As Smith notes, a fundamental problem for this view is the seven-year drought occasioned by the death of Baal (KTU 1.6 V.7-9).

107 Baal is described as *bn dgn* in KTU 1.2 I.19, 35; 1.5 VI.23-24; 1.6 I.6, 51-52; 1.10 III.12, 14; 1.12 II.26; 1.14 II.25; IV.7 and *bn il* in KTU 1.17 VI.29. Baal is also sometimes identified by the phrase *il abh* ("El his father") (KTU 1.2 III.21; 1.3 V.35; 1.4 IV.47 etc.). On the problem of Baal's parentage, see further van Zijl (1972:337-39), Anderson (1975:49-52) and Handy (1992a).

evidence of a confluence of religious traditions (del Olmo Lete 1999:51-52). It is conceivable that the Ugaritic storm god was a composite deity who combined the qualities of an earlier native storm god associated with El and another imported deity connected with Dagan. Support for a multiplicity of Baal traditions might be found in the fact that some of the Ugaritic pantheon lists catalogue seven Baals (KTU 1.47 ll. 5-11; 1.118 ll.4-10; 1.148 ll. 2-4; RS 20.24 ll. 4-10).¹⁰⁸ It might be the case that these seven figures represent different manifestations of the storm god each with slightly different traditions as to character and background.¹⁰⁹ Second, it is possible that Baal was a true son of Dagan who found his way into the Ugaritic pantheon and that the phrase *bn ʾl* is a functional designation that identifies him simply as a member of the pantheon. The weakness of this proposal, however, is the fact that in eastern Syria where both Dagan and Hadad¹¹⁰ were prominent deities, no evidence has yet surfaced that specifically connects them in a father-son relationship (Fleming 1993:89).¹¹¹ Third, is the possibility

108 In each case the first Baal figure is *bʿl špn* and the other six are listed only as *bʿlm*. For recent discussion of these lists, see Wyatt (1998:36-62) and del Olmo Lete (1999:71-78).

109 Alternatively, it may be that the seven figures of the lists should somehow be connected with the seven “lightnings” of the deity (KTU 1.101 l. 3) or with some of the other Baal names known from the Ugaritic texts (e.g. *bʿl ugrr*, *bʿl ḥlb*, *bʿl šd*, *bʿl ʿrkm*).

110 Hadad being a deity with whom Baal is identified.

111 A variation of this approach has been put forward recently by Niehr (1994b) who suggests that Dagan and El were each independently associated with the Hurrian high god Kumarbi—a deity who was father of the storm god Teššub. By way of these two separate syncretisms, suggests Niehr, the storm god at Ugarit came to be seen as having two fathers, El and Dagan. Among the difficulties with this proposal is that it depends on an acceptance of Hittite parallels as critical to a reconstruction of Ugaritic mythological traditions—a view that has been rejected by most scholars. See below (pp. 77-78) the discussion on the hypothesised conflict between El and Baal at Ugarit.

that *bn dgn* is a functional designation, identifying Baal as a fertility god¹¹² and that *bn ʾl* refers to his parentage. Problematic for this view is the fact that Baal is sometimes labelled *hṯk dgn* which most scholars have taken to mean “scion of Dagan”. Wyatt (1980:377-78), however, has suggested that since the verbal form of *hṯk* can mean “to rule, hold sway, dominion”,¹¹³ the phrase *hṯk dgn* may be understood as a title, “Ruler of the Rain”. Understanding Baal as the son of El explains the obvious affection that El has for this deity¹¹⁴—a disposition that is problematic if Baal is the offspring of a foreign interloper. Telling in this regard is the fact that El weeps and performs cultic acts of mourning at news of Baal’s death (KTU 1.5 VI.11-25) and rejoices at the first indication of his resurrection (KTU 1.6 III.14-21). When a replacement for the dead Baal is

112 For an argument for *bn dgn* as a functional title as opposed to a filial designation, see Wyatt (1980; 1992b:408).

113 E.g. KTU 1.108 ll. 8, 10. This meaning explains the use of this term in parallel with *ab* (“father”) in KTU 1.1 II.17-18—a context in which “your ruler” provides better sense than “your scion, progeny”. Having said this, however, there are some contexts (e.g. KTU 1.14 I.21-22) where “progeny” is the more appropriate meaning. It should be noted that the title *hṯk dgn* is not a problem for accepting El as father of Baal under the first option discussed.

114 Two items are potentially problematic for this view of the relationship between El and Baal. First is Smith’s interpretation of KTU 1.1 V. Smith (1997:87) places this column at the beginning of the Baal cycle and sees it as an interchange between El and perhaps Yamm in which the two plot an attack on Baal. The text is extremely fragmentary, however, and even the identity of the participants is unclear. El himself is mentioned only once (*tr il*, “Bull El”, l. 22) and Yamm is not specifically mentioned at all. The reference to a doe (*aylt*) in l. 19 as well as to the passing of days (ll. 15-16) may indicate that the passage refers to a hunting trip. On the difficulties and dangers of basing too much on this passage, see Wyatt (1998:51, n. 59). Second is KTU 1.12 and the account of creatures belonging to El that meet and fight with Baal. Unknown is whether the creatures are created specifically to destroy Baal and if so, what motivates El’s actions. Also unclear is how this fragmentary text relates—if at all—to the Baal cycle. If, as some believe (Wyatt 1998:167), the final lines (KTU 1.12 II.58-61) of the text refer to royal libations in the temple of El, then it is difficult to imagine that the text recounts the killing of Baal—the apparent patron of Ugarit—by agents of El. On this text, see further Parker (1997:188-91) and Wyatt (1998:162-69).

discussed, El waxes poetic about Baal's strength and skill in a manner that is typical of a father boasting about his son. Speaking of the proposed replacement, El remarks, "a weakling cannot run like Baal, or release the spear like the son of Dagan..." (KTU 1.6 I.49-52). It is less likely that El would express such admiration and affection for Baal if he were not his father.

Totally unlike El's fondness for Baal is the attitude of Athirat toward Baal. In contrast to El's sadness at Baal's demise, Athirat appears to rejoice that Baal's death has left the kingship vacant. After retrieving the corpse of Baal, Anat addresses El and says, "Now Athirat and her sons may rejoice—the goddess and her gang of dependants. For mightiest Baal is dead, the Prince, the Lord of the earth, perished" (KTU 1.6 I.39-43). Athirat also appears to fear Baal. In one passage in which she observes Baal and Anat approaching, Athirat's first thought is that they have come to murder her and her sons (KTU 1.4 II.12-26). Although she later intercedes with El as part of Baal's effort to win approval for a palace (KTU 1.4 IV.40-57), it would seem that Athirat agrees to do this only because she receives a payment of silver and gold from Anat and Baal (KTU 1.4 II.26-29). In her plea to El, Athirat speaks as if Baal is not one of her sons (KTU 1.4 IV.62-V.1). The sense of estrangement that seems to characterise Baal's position within the pantheon at Ugarit and the undercurrent of animosity that appears to exist between his party and Athirat and her sons may be explained by the hypothesis that Baal was a son of El, but not of Athirat. If such a situation is the case, then it would parallel that of Heracles in Greek mythology—an instance in which an illegitimate son was doted on by an aged father and head of the pantheon but despised and hounded by a scorned "step-mother".

The observations made above regarding El's fondness for Baal demonstrates the implausibility of the notion that El and Baal were in a state of conflict at Ugarit. This

idea, introduced by Kapelrud (1952) and judiciously framed by Pope (1955), was subsequently developed and vigorously advanced by Oldenburg (1969). The idea that El had fallen from power at Ugarit was thoroughly critiqued and rejected by Anderson (1975:90-116) in his unpublished Th.D. dissertation and later by L'Heureux (1979:4-28). Both Anderson and L'Heureux demonstrate that while El may delegate much responsibility to Baal, he nonetheless retains overall control of the cosmos. In his contribution to the discussion, Lewis (1980:92-101) critiques the supposed Greek and Hittite parallels upon which Oldenburg's reconstruction largely depends.

In addition to revealing Baal to be a storm and fertility deity, the Ugaritic materials show him also to be either a war god or patron of the city. *KTU* 1.119 ll. 26-36 contain a sacrificial rite designed to compel Baal to protect the city from attackers. While the specific nature of the sacrifice has been the subject of debate,¹¹⁵ it is nonetheless clear that the text casts Baal in the role of one who comes to the aid of a city under military attack. This fact suggests that part of Baal's role at Ugarit was that of protective deity or war god. That the weather god Baal should also be a war deity is not at all surprising given the connection often made in the ancient Near East between the violence of the storm and the advancing army. In both Egypt and Assyria, for example, monarchs were not averse to likening their fearsome military presence to the

115 In her initial publication of this text (RS 24.266), Herdner (1978:36) offered the possibility that the sacrifices offered to Baal in ll. 31-32 (Herdner's ll. 14-15) were human. Since the initial publication, most scholars, however, have rejected Herdner's reading of *[b]kr* ("first-born") in l. 31, preferring instead to read *[d]kr*. In his discussion of the tablet, Margalit (1986:62, n. 3) suggests the occurrence of a scribal error and reads *htk* ("child") for the clearly visible, but mysterious *htp* (l. 32). Sasson (1987:15) rightly questions the methodological wisdom of such a step. With Wyatt (1998:422, n. 43), one may conclude that the idea of human sacrifice in this passage remains "unproven rather than impossible". See also, Heider (1985:144-47) and Ahituv (1994:261, 75-76).

thundering of the storm god from heaven. In Egypt, the pharaohs of the 19th dynasty often described their military presence by comparing themselves to the storm god Seth.¹¹⁶ On a prism now in the collection of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, Sennacherib makes a similar boast; "Against all of the hosts of wicked enemies I raised my voice, rumbling like a storm. Like Adad I roared. At the word of Assur, the great lord, my lord, on flank and front I pressed upon the enemy like a raging storm" (Oriental Institute Prism V.74-77; Luckenbill 1924:44-45; de Moor and de Vries 1988:176-77).

An aspect of Baal's character that is still unclear is the extent to which he may be described as a chthonic deity. Although such a quality may seem foreign to a god like Baal, a chthonic aspect is quite possible given Baal's own death and resurrection and his eventual defeat of Mot. A chthonic aspect to Baal's character is an established fact for those who regard Rapiu in *KTU* 1.108 as an epithet of Baal.¹¹⁷ According to this view, Baal is the "Healer" or "Saviour" by virtue of the fact that he himself emerged from the underworld. Having overcome the ultimate disease—death—Baal is seen as well-equipped to function as a chthonic-healing deity. The difficulty with seeing Baal as a chthonic deity, however, is that it is by no means certain that he should be identified with Rapiu. Indeed, L'Heureux (1979:213:44) has shown that many of the arguments adduced by de Moor as evidence of an identification of Rapiu and Baal are also valid

116 For example, it is said of Rameses III that "His battle cry is like (that of) Baal in the Heavens" (Edgerton and Wilson 1936:94 [Pl. 87, ll. 2-3]). See below, the section on Seth (pp. 81-88).

117 This position is well-laid out by de Moor (1976) and Spronk (1986:177-89; 1995) and is endorsed by Healey (1978:91).

for an identification with El.¹¹⁸ Meanwhile, Parker (1972) despairs of connecting Rapiu with any of the major deities at Ugarit. Even Heider (1985:118-23)—whose predominant interest is with evidence for underworld deities at Ugarit—is cautious about the identity of Rapiu. One possibility is to see Rapiu as the underworld superintendent of the Rephaim and—with Pope (1977:170-71)—to identify him with the Ugaritic deity *mlk*. The most attractive proposal, however, is del Olmo Lete's (1999:184-98) suggestion that Rapiu in *KTU* 1.108 does not refer to a member of the pantheon but to a deified king of Ugarit. According to this view, the text is an installation hymn celebrating the investiture of a former king of Ugarit as a *rpu* or one of the Rephaim. Building on the general approach of del Olmo Lete, lines 1-3 may be understood to announce the change in status and may be translated:

Behold, a *rpu*, an eternal king, is established.¹¹⁹
 A powerful and noble¹²⁰ god is established.
 A god (now) dwells in *atrt*;
 A god (now) judges in *hdy*.

This new member of the Rephaim is fêted in lines 3-5, while in lines 18-27 the wish is expressed that he intercede¹²¹ from beyond on behalf of the city he formerly ruled. Ultimately, all efforts to answer the question of Baal's chthonic aspect are hampered by the fact that critical sections of *KTU* 1.108 (ll. 10-20, 16-24) are too fragmentary to

118 Cross (1973:20-22) and Ahituv (1994:277-307) also identify Rapiu as an epithet of El. While L'Heureux's point is instructive for the purposes of critique, it is not automatically the case that *il* in this text should be interpreted as a proper noun.

119 Here, *yšt* is taken to be related to the Hebrew root *šyt* which can have the meaning "appoint, fix" (BDB 1952:1011). For a discussion of this term and possible meanings including the one adopted here, see del Olmo Lete (1999:184, n. 52).

120 The translation "powerful and noble" for *gtr wyqr* follows a suggestion made by Avishur (1994:280, 83-86) and accepted by Wyatt (1998:395).

121 Intercession may be in view if l. 17 may be reconstructed to read *[a]rš lb'l* ("ask of Baal") (Wyatt 1998:398; del Olmo Lete 1999:189).

provide a basis for confident pronouncements. If, as has been suggested above, *KTU* 1.108 does not refer to an independent deity named Rapiu, then there is no basis for an identification with Baal (or any other member of the pantheon) and consequently little reason to suppose that Baal had a well-developed chthonic aspect.

From this brief survey of Baal at Ugarit, it is evident that Baal is predominantly a storm and fertility god who also had responsibilities as either a city patron or god of war, or both. While there is reason to suspect that Ugaritic Baal may have had a chthonic aspect to his character, there is as yet no solid evidence to confirm this. While Baal seems to have been the most prominent deity at Ugarit, there is no reason to conclude from this that he was in conflict with the high god El.

Seth

The Egyptian deity Seth figures in this study of Baal in the OT because he was at times equated by the Egyptians with Canaanite Baal.¹²² Seth was understood to be a god of the desert, foreign lands, thunder and the storm. In his work on Seth, te Velde (1967:27) characterises the deity as the “god of confusion”. The history of Seth in Egyptian religion is one in which conflicting traditions regarding the god and his relationship with other deities rise and fall according to developments in the social, political and religious spheres. Thus, in times when Seth increased in popularity, ancient traditions favourable to him could be revived and those that denigrated him minimised.

122 For a general discussion of Seth, see Mercer (1949:48-61, 84-96), te Velde (1967) and Watterson (1984:112-22).

Throughout much of Egyptian history, Seth is represented by a peculiar animal with a body like that of a greyhound, a long upright tail and a head with an aardvark-like snout and stiff, rectangular ears. All efforts to identify this creature with a known animal have met with failure. In light of this, it seems reasonable to conclude that the “Seth-animal” was an artificial composite incorporating the features of a number of animals (te Velde 1967:13-26). The use of a “mythical” animal to represent Seth is understandable given his character as a god of the desert—a region that to the inhabitants of the Nile valley was hostile and unknown.

Seth is best known as the murderer of Osiris and one who fought with that god’s son, Horus. The “Contendings of Horus and Seth” describes how Seth plots against Horus in an effort to gain kingship solely for himself—an enterprise in which he is ultimately unsuccessful. The “Contendings” reveal Seth as the enemy of Horus and provide a mythical basis for the revulsion with which he was held throughout much of Egyptian history. In this work, Seth’s efforts at plotting against his rival are frustrated in a manner which portrays Seth as something of a buffoon (Goedicke 1961:154). Attempting, for example, to humiliate Horus by an act of sodomy, Seth is ultimately deceived into ingesting Horus’ seed—an outcome that earns him the ridicule of the other gods.¹²³

The worship of Seth appears to originate in Upper Egypt in the pre-dynastic period. Here he was characterised as the god of the desert or “red land” (*dšrt*)(te Velde 1967:7-12). Seth’s character as god of the desert made him ideally suited to be a god of foreign lands. For the Egyptians foreign lands were territories which lay beyond the

123 Papyrus Chester Beatty I, “Contendings of Horus and Seth” 11.1-13.1. For a translation, see Lichtheim (1976:219-20).

protective boundaries of the desert. This identification made it natural, in the Second Intermediate period (ca. 1786-1558 BC), for the Egyptians to identify Seth with the chief deity of the Hyksos—an Asiatic group that during this period crossed the Sinai and conquered much of the Nile delta.¹²⁴ One Egyptian source post-dating the Hyksos period claims that the Hyksos worshipped Seth alone among Egyptian gods and sacrificed to him early each morning, approaching him with garlands.¹²⁵ The identification with Baal was no doubt helped by the fact that already in the Middle Kingdom, Seth was understood as a god of the northern horizon who could sometimes be described in bovine terms.¹²⁶

During the Hyksos period and later, the worship of Seth flourished. In the 19th dynasty, for example, two pharaohs bore Seth-names (Seti I and Seti II) and a major unit within the army was named for him (te Velde 1967:129). During this period, older traditions more favourable to Seth achieved new popularity.¹²⁷ One tradition that flourished during this period saw Seth riding at the prow of the solar barque of Re,

124 Although both the Canaanite Baal worshipped by the Hyksos and the Egyptian Seth have storm characteristics, the fact that Seth was also identified with the Libyan god Ash (who ruled the western desert)(Morenz 1973:233) would suggest that a major reason Seth was identified with Baal was because the latter was a god from beyond the desert and thus a foreign deity. On the rise of Seth worship during the Hyksos period, see van Seters (1966:97-103, 171-75) and Redford (1993:117-18, 231-35).

125 *Papyrus Sallier I*, "Quarrel of Apophis and Seqenenre". For a translation, see Redford (1997:17-18). For a discussion of this text and its import for reconstructing Hyksos religion, see van Seters (1966:171-72), te Velde (1967:121) and Morenz (1973:238).

126 E.g. "...Seth, Lord of the Northern sky" (CT 203 [III, 138]); "...O Seth [possessed of your] power, Great Longhorn dwelling in the northern sky..." (CT 408 [V, 225]); "I am bound for the northern sky and I will dwell in it with Seth" (CT 581 [VI, 196]); "I know the air by its name of Seth" (CT 630 [VI, 253]); "The air is in N's nose like Seth" (CT 633 [VI, 255]).

127 On the popularity of Seth during this period, see Vandier (1969) and Nibbi (1983).

doing battle with the Apophis serpent who threatened the sun god (*BD* 108; *CT* 160 [II, 373-80]; "400-year Stela" l. 11).¹²⁸ In this capacity, and as the patron of elements of pharaoh's army, Seth's qualities of aggression and strength were put to productive use. The tradition of Seth's battle with Apophis is in some ways similar to the conflict of Baal with Yamm. As te Velde (1967:99) notes, however, this tradition predates the Hyksos period when Egypt had its closest contacts with Asiatic religion. Moreover, it is clear that other deities sometimes take on the role of opponent of Apophis (Oden 1979:358). Even if there is no dependence one way or another between the two traditions, the similarity between this pair of mythic elements in all likelihood reinforced the identification of Seth with Baal. Given the influence Egypt exerted over Palestine during the 19th and 20th dynasties (1303-1085 BC) and the temporal proximity of this era to the Biblical period, it is most likely that if Seth traditions did affect Canaanite and Israelite conceptions of Baal, they were those that were prominent at this time.

The wide-ranging identification of Canaanite Baal and Egyptian Seth that took place during the 19th and 20th dynasties is reflected in both literary and iconographic sources. Representations of Seth in this period frequently depict him as a bearded, striding deity thrusting a spear into the horned serpent Apophis. The god is often winged and wears a head-dress resembling the crown of Upper Egypt fitted with a long tassel (e.g. Nibbi 1983:56, fig. 4). In depictions of Seth on stelae and scarabs, the head-dress worn by Seth regularly has protruding horns familiar from Canaanite depictions of Baal (te Velde 1967:125, fig. 15; Keel and Uehlinger 1998:76-77, fig. 87a).¹²⁹ In the "Contendings of Horus and Seth" the assembly of the gods seeks to mollify Seth by doubling his possessions and giving him the goddesses Anat and Astarte (Lichtheim

128 For a translation of the "400-year Stela", see Redford (1997:18).

129 On representations of Seth in the New Kingdom, see Vandier (1969).

1976:215)—the same deities who are Baal's partners at Ugarit. In another text, Seth is described as having intercourse with Anat. Oden (1979:358), noting that the verb (*nk*) used here usually refers to the "mounting" of animals, suggests that this is another example of Seth's sexual abnormality. It is far more likely, however, that the use of this term is merely a reflection of the accretion to Seth of Canaanite traditions concerning Baal's sexual activity as a young bull mounting a heifer (*KTU* 1.5 V.17-22; 1.10 III.1-37). The Canaanite tradition of Baal's mountain home also appears in Egyptian texts from this period. In Rameses II's poetic account of the campaign against the Hittites at Kadesh on the Orontes, the pharaoh likens himself to Seth, claiming to be, "Great of awe, rich in glory, as is Seth upon his mountain" (Lichtheim 1976:63).

Although in Palestine it was natural for a storm god to have responsibility for fertility, this seems not to have been the case in Egypt. In Egypt, fertility came with the annual inundation of the Nile; nowhere in Egypt did rain figure prominently in the agricultural cycle.¹³⁰ In addition, Seth's ancient character as a god of destruction and death rendered him generally unsuited to be a fertility god—a fact made plain in the following excerpts from the Coffin Texts: "I shall not die, Seth shall not have power over me" (CT 251 [III, 349]); "Save me from the god who takes souls, who laps up corruption, who lives on putrefaction, who belongs to darkness, who is of dusk, of whom those who are among the languid ones are afraid. As for that god who takes souls, who laps up corruption and lives on putrefaction, he is Seth" (CT 335, II [IV, 320]). A few passages, however, do show that Seth was understood to control the weather. In the "Story of Wenamun",¹³¹ the hapless Egyptian envoy explains the

130 Cf. Wainwright (1963:19) who argues that in the Naqâda I-II period (4000-3500 BC) a moister climate provided the impetus for the development of Min and Seth as storm and fertility gods.

131 For a translation, see Lichtheim (1976:227).

turbulence of the sea by observing that, "Amun makes thunder in the sky ever since he placed Seth beside him" ("Story of Wenamun" 2,19). When Rameses II sends envoys to meet the Hittite delegation bringing his new bride, he prays to Seth asking, "Mayest thou [delay] to make the rain, the cold wind and the snow until the marvels which thou hast assigned to me shall reach me"¹³² There is no clear evidence that Seth's power over the storm was understood by Egyptians as bestowing upon Seth the status of a fertility god.¹³³

Where reference is made to Seth and the storm it is generally as a sign of the god's power and military presence. In a spell from the Book of the Dead, for example, the power of Seth is invoked to ward off the serpent Rerek: "No evil opposition has come forth from thy mouth against me (or resulted) from what thou <hast> done against me. I am Seth, who causes storms and cloudiness (when he circles) about the horizon of the sky" (BD 39 § S 8).¹³⁴ In the "400-year Stela", Seth is described as being in the sky "felling the enemies at the prow of Re's boat, with a mighty roar" (l. 11).¹³⁵ On the mortuary temple of Rameses III at Medinet Habu, it is said of pharaoh that, "His

132 Quoted in Wilson (1951:250).

133 In a thorough study entitled "Seth als Sturmgott", Zandee argues in part that "Seth ist Fruchtbarkeitgott" (Zandee 1963:153). While Zandee gathers numerous references that reflect Seth's control of the storm, and provides evidence for Seth's prodigious sexual appetite, he does not succeed in demonstrating that Seth was understood in Egypt to be connected with agricultural or human fertility. Zandee suggests that the removal of Seth's testicles by Horus is proof of his reproductive power, but surely this suggests exactly the opposite! Zandee's observation that Seth is sometimes identified as an ox or bull may be understood as a means of symbolising the great strength for which he is well known and need not be understood in terms of fertility. Perhaps a distinction should be made between Seth as a deity who enjoyed sexual activity and a deity dedicated to bringing fertility to creation.

134 Here and elsewhere quotes from the Book of the Dead are from the edition by Allen (1974).

135 See Redford (1997:19).

battle cry is like (that of) Baal in the Heavens" (Edgerton and Wilson 1936:94 [Pl. 87, ll. 2-3]). In the Amarna letters, Abi-Milku of Tyre writes to pharaoh and describes the Egyptian monarch as one "who gives forth his cry in the sky like Baal, and all the land is frightened at his cry" (EA 147:14-15). In all of these cases, it is clear that Seth's thunder is first and foremost a sign of his strength.¹³⁶ Elsewhere, the emphasis is also on Baal's power as a warrior deity. In his account of the campaign against Megiddo recorded on Pylon IV at Karnak, Thutmose III is described as having "...the strength of [Seth pervading] his limbs" (Lichtheim 1976:32). Similarly, in the account of Rameses II's campaign against the Hittites at Kadesh, it is said of pharaoh that, "His majesty was like Seth, great-of-strength" (Kadesh Campaign Bulletin of Rameses II, B 95-100; Lichtheim 1976:62). Attacking the enemy, Rameses is described as "like Baal in his hour" and being "before them (the enemy) like Seth in his moment" (Kadesh Campaign Poem of Rameses II, P 75-80, 130-35; Lichtheim 1976:64, 66). Finally, the connection the Egyptians drew between Seth's character as a storm god and his role as a warrior deity is clearly seen in a stela picturing Rameses II, Astarte and Seth and bearing the inscription, "Words spoken by Seth, the great god, lord of the heavens, beloved of Re, 'I give you courage and strength'" (Vandier 1969:195).¹³⁷

136 Although Seth often was seen as malevolent and destructive, he was nonetheless acknowledged as the strongest of the gods. For this reason, his power could be invoked when circumstances demanded. The Middle Kingdom Coffin Texts, for example, show that this strength could be called upon during the journey through the underworld: "I have put the awe of you into the spirits like Seth among the gods" (CT 694 [VI, 327]); "...you have the strength of Seth" (CT 857 [VII, 59]); "My strength is Seth" (CT 945 [VII, 161]).

137 Even the statement by Wenamun that, "Amun makes thunder in the sky ever since he placed Seth beside him" (Lichtheim 1976:227), points to the disruptive potential of Seth, by blaming Seth for rough seas. Even here, there is no indication that Seth's powers have anything to do with fertility.

In Egyptian literature, Seth is associated with the awe-inspiring power of the storm, not with its life-giving rains. In Palestine, the picture of Seth was probably slightly different. There, in a land dependent upon the storm for its fertility—and where the god Baal was predominant—it is much more likely that Seth took on the mantle of a true fertility god.

Melqart

The character of the god Melqart has been well-treated in scholarly literature—especially so since the publication in 1988 of Corinne Bonnet's dissertation on the subject.¹³⁸ The first extant mention of Melqart is in the 9th-century BC Aramaic stela of Bar-Hadad of Damascus (*KAI* §201) discovered at Aleppo.¹³⁹ This five-line inscription identifies Melqart as the patron of Bar-Hadad, king of Aram. Most important for understanding the nature of Melqart, however, is the representation of the deity that dominates the stela. In this relief, Melqart is depicted as a bearded and kilted god with horned, conical hat and bearing a fenestrated axe. Such a depiction has much in common with west-semitic storm and fertility gods and points toward a general association of Melqart with this class of deities (Clifford 1990:57; *ANEP* Pl. 499). Further, the depiction of a 2nd-millennium type axe on a 1st-millennium monument (Culican 1960-61:41) suggests that Melqart traditions may extend back into the Bronze Age despite the absence of inscriptional evidence for this.

138 See also Dussaud (1946-48, 1957), Culican (1960-61), Röllig (1965c), Lipiński (1995:226-43), and Ribichini (1995).

139 See further, Cross (1972), Lipiński (1978:228-29) and Bonnet (1988:132-36).

A further clue to Melqart's character is found in the 7th-century BC vassal treaty between Esarhaddon of Assyria and Baal of Tyre (*ANET*³ 533-34). In the treaty, various gods are invoked as witnesses who threaten a specific curse should the king of Tyre violate the treaty terms. The curse associated with the god Melqart is one that identifies the god as a being concerned with agriculture and fertility of the land (Clifford 1990:60).

May Melqart and Eshmun deliver your land to destruction,
your people to be deported; from your land [. . .]. May they
make disappear food for your mouth, clothes for your body,
oil for your ointment (*ANET*³ 534).

The reference to food, clothes and oil corresponds well with the different areas of the agricultural economy—the production of grain, fruit and animals for food, flax and wool for clothing and olive oil for food, fuel and unguents. Here Melqart seems to be identified as a god whose primary concern is related to fertility and prosperity.¹⁴⁰

References in classical sources also point toward an association between Melqart and fertility. In the *Phoenician History* of Philo of Byblos (*PE* 1.10.27), Melqart is identified with Heracles and is described as the son of Demarous—a name that at Ugarit is an epithet of the storm god Baal. Late classical tradition identifies Tyrian

140 The identity of Melqart as a deity concerned with prosperity is perhaps also suggested by the religious practices of the Punic colonies. Discussing Carthaginian practice, Polybius makes the general statement that for many years the people of Carthage sent an offering of first-fruits to the gods at Tyre (*Histories* XXXI.12.11-12)(Elayi 1981:20). Diodorus (XX.14.1-3) compliments this statement with his remark that the people of Carthage traditionally sent one-tenth of their public revenue annually as an offering to Heracles at Tyre. If the reference to the offering of first-fruits may be understood in terms of agricultural products, then it is likely that the deity or deities to whom they were offered had some fertility (and therefore weather) characteristics. Even if the offerings mentioned by Polybius and Diodorus are not to be taken as entirely agricultural, the consistent transfer to Melqart/Heracles of such wealth suggests that the people of Carthage saw this deity as the one responsible for their prosperity.

Heracles as the offspring of Zeus (often associated with Baal) and Asteria (a hellenised form of Astarte, partner of Ugaritic Baal)(Bonnet 1988:20).¹⁴¹

A 2nd-century BC Punic inscription from Malta calls Melqart the “Baal of Tyre” (*bʿl ʕr*)(KAI §47 l. 1) and so suggests that the deity occupied a prominent place in the pantheon of that city.¹⁴² The Greek portion of this bilingual inscription identifies Melqart with Heracles and describes him as the founder of Tyre. The identification of Melqart as the Tyrian Heracles seen here and above is at once both helpful and problematic. The enormous popularity of Heracles in the Mediterranean basin ensured the development of a rich tradition connected with the hero. This abundance of information, however, also makes it difficult to determine which traits of Heracles derive from associations with Melqart and which might originate with other sources.¹⁴³

A rather compelling piece of evidence relating Melqart to weather comes in the form of the Greek tradition of Ino and her son Melicertes. According to several writers, Ino leapt into the sea with her son who was in turn carried to Corinth by a dolphin and deified as Palaemon (Παλαίμων). As Palaemon, he was worshipped alongside Poseidon and was responsible for fair weather for sailors (Pausanias, *Description of Greece* I.xliv.7-8; II.i.3; ii.1; Nonnos, *Dionysiaca* IX.78-91). Two factors suggest that the above tradition represents an authentic, if somewhat confused, recollection of a Tyrian or Punic

141 Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* III.42; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists* IX.392d.

142 While Melqart may have had a prominent role at Tyre as patron of the ruling dynasty, Baal-Shamem appears—from the arrangement of gods in the Esarhaddon treaty—to have held a more prominent place in the local pantheon. See Peckham (1987, n. 25). A similar situation appears to have obtained at Ugarit where Baal may have been patron of the ruling dynasty even while El was head of the pantheon.

143 Some of these other sources are Mesopotamian. For attempts at addressing this issue, see Levy (1934), Brundage (1958) and Burkert (1987:14-19).

tradition about Melqart. First, the close similarity of the names Melicertes and Melqart makes a connection between them all but certain. Second, the name Palaemon seems likely to be a slight corruption of the name Baal-Hammon.¹⁴⁴ Although the name of the Greek deity begins with a *P* rather than *B*, this is not a problem given the interchange of these letters between the Greek and semitic languages. The rest of the spelling of the word corresponds almost exactly to forms of the name known from sites such as El-Hofra where it appears in Greek as BAL AMOUN and in Punic and Neo-Punic as *bʿl ʿmn* (Baal-ʿAmmon).¹⁴⁵ If Melicertes is connected with Melqart, then it is significant that the former is a deity related to weather and travel. Such a connection comports with the mention in Heliodorus (*Ethiopian Story* IV.17.1) of Tyrian sailors doing homage to Tyrian Heracles (Melqart) and with the prominent place enjoyed by Melqart in the far-flung Tyrian-founded coastal colonies. Diodorus of Sicily (XX.14.1) may also point toward an understanding of Melqart as a deity connected with maritime travel when he describes the Tyrian Heracles as the “protector of the colonists” (τὸν παρόντα τοῖς ἀποίκους).

If Melqart was associated with sea-faring, then this would suggest a fair degree of overlap with Baal-Shamem. This latter deity, as the Esarhaddon treaty makes clear, was important to the Tyrians as a god of maritime storms and navigation (Mazar 1986:80).

144 Contra Astour (1967:210) there is little evidence to justify equating Melqart and Baal-Hammon. Both deities seem to have had separate temples at Carthage (Lancel 1995:102, 8, 205) and would seem to be mentioned separately in the treaty between Hannibal and Philip V of Macedon (Barré 1983:40-57, 74). Furthermore, Astour is incorrect in taking *bʿl-ḥmn* (which he transcribes incorrectly as *Baʿal-hāmôn*) to mean “lord of multitude” and therefore a synonym to Melqart, “king of the city”. On the meaning of the name Baal-Hammon, see above, chapter two.

145 See Berthier and Charlier (1955:§II. 46-47, 81, 99, 101, 119, 130, 140-42, 151, 167, 173, 183, 187, 190, 193, 214, 220, 222 and §III.1-2).

May Baal-sameme, Baal-malage and Baal-saphon raise an evil wind against your ships, to undo their moorings, tear out their mooring pole, may a strong wind sink them at sea, a violent tide [. . .] against you (ANET³ 534).

This similarity between Melqart and Baal-Shamem and the prominence of both at Tyre makes it possible that they both were divergent forms of what had once been a single storm deity.

One area in which Melqart apparently differs from Baal-Shamem is in the chthonic aspect that is attached to the cult of the former. Josephus (*Against Apion* I.118-19; *Antiquities* VIII.146) preserves material ostensibly originating in the Tyrian annals that identifies Hiram of Tyre, contemporary of Solomon, as one who demolished older temples in order to build new ones to Heracles and Astarte. Hiram is also credited as the one who first celebrated the ἔγερσις or “awakening” of Heracles. This latter notation points toward Melqart as one of a class of dying and rising vegetation deities that includes Eshmun and Adonis. Both de Vaux (1971b:247-48) and Lipiński (1995:238) suggest that individuals known from inscriptions who bear the title *mqm’lm* were “rousers of the god” who were involved in the cult of Melqart.¹⁴⁶ In a number of these inscriptions, theophoric names based on the elements Melqart and Eshmun (another dying and rising deity) dominate the text.¹⁴⁷ It has also been suggested (Lipiński 1995:229; Ribichini 1995:1056) that the element *mlk* in the name Melqart may ultimately link this deity with other chthonic figures such as the *mlkm*—the departed royal

146 Also Bonnet (1988:174-79, 333) and Ribichini (1995:1055). A depiction of the immolation and resurrection of Melqart may well be depicted on a four-sided stone bowl from Sidon discussed by Barnett (1969:9-11, Pl. IV; see also Smith 1990b:590).

147 See, for example, *KAI* §§70, 90, 93.

ancestors known at Ugarit.¹⁴⁸ Such an underworld character is reflected in many traditions associated with Heracles including one in which the Tyrian Heracles was murdered and then brought back to life with the aroma of roasting quail (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* X.47.392d; Zenobius, *Paroemiographi* 5.56).

Herodotus also speaks of the temple of Heracles at Tyre, remarking that he visited the site and saw its two pillars (Herodotus, *Histories* II.44). These twin pillars may be the ones illustrated in an Assyrian relief now preserved only in the sketch made by Layard. In the surviving illustration, a Tyrian temple is shown with twin pillars flanking its entrance in a manner well-known from reconstructions of the temple of Solomon in Jerusalem (Barnett 1969:6, Pl. I).

The character of Melqart as patron of a ruling house is reflected in the title ἀρχηγέτης—translated by Ribichini (1995:1054) as “tutelary hero”, “eponymous ancestor”—that is given to the deity in the bilingual inscription from Malta (KAI §47). Bonnet (1988:245-46) remarks that this term is, “une appellation réservée aux héros fondateurs ou éponymes, liés à l’institution royale, protecteurs de la cité ou ancêtres présumés”. This character as a dynastic patron is further reflected in the 3rd-century BC Lapethos inscription (KAI §43) in which a certain Yatonbaal, one of a long line of hereditary governors, remarks on how he sacrificed to Melqart in order to ensure the wellbeing of himself and his descendants (KAI §43 ll. 9-11, 15-16). Finally, the nature of

148 The relationship, if any, between Melqart and *mlk-štrt*, a deity worshipped at Umm-el-‘Awâmid and elsewhere throughout the Mediterranean (e.g. KAI §§19.2-3, 71.2, 119.1), is not yet known. This deity is most likely a development of the underworld figure *mlk b’ttrt* known from the Ugaritic texts (KTU 1.107 l. 42; also KTU 1.108 ll. 1-2). Some scholars have seen in *mlk-štrt* another name for Baal-Hammon worshipped in the Punic sphere (Gibson 1982:120; Peckham 1987:80; Müller 1995b:1008-10).

Melqart as a deity intimately associated with the royal house at Tyre is perhaps also suggested by the prominence the deity enjoyed at Tyre and the manner in which Hiram of Tyre is said to have taken a leading role in establishing his worship there.

Given the above, it may be concluded that Melqart was a deity concerned with the storm—especially as it affected maritime travel—and with fertility and prosperity. These aspects of the god's character ideally suit Melqart as the patron deity of Tyre, a city that prospered from the overseas trade of agricultural and other goods. As a deity that was "awakened", Melqart presumably had a connection with the underworld, although the details of this aspect of his character are not well understood. If the chthonic character of the god is related to 2nd-millennium underworld figures such as the *mlkm*, then Melqart may also have had a role as a dynastic patron—perhaps as one with whom a reigning monarch might have been identified.

Having clarified the character of a number of the storm and fertility gods with which Israel might be assumed to have had some acquaintance, we turn to the next chapter in our study, a morphosyntactical study of the term *ba'al* in the OT.

Baal and Yahweh in the Old Testament – Chapter Three

The Meaning and Significance of References to *habba'al/habbē'ālîm* in the OT

Before it is possible to study the Biblical passages in which Baal appears, it is necessary to understand how the term *ba'al* functions on a morphosyntactic level. As a means to this end, comparative material in the form of other deity terms will be examined in order to determine what patterns may exist with regard to the use or non-use of the article. This chapter will conclude by examining the various forms of the term *ba'al* with and without the definite article in order to develop an understanding for how the term is used and to prepare the ground for the study to be undertaken in chapter four.

In order to appreciate the meaning of a term like *habba'al*, it is important to understand something of the use of the definite article. The article serves several functions in Biblical Hebrew. Most obviously and frequently, the article determines, specifies or makes definite a substantive (Barr 1989:307-9; Waltke and O'Connor 1990:§§13.2; 13.5; GKC 1910:§§125a; 126d). A related use of the article is its sometime role as a demonstrative. Thus, in Gen. 19:34, the phrase, *hallaylâ* may be translated, "this night". In a similar way, in 1 Sam. 24:19, *hayyôm* stands for, "this day" (Williams 1976:§87; GKC 1910:§126b; Waltke and O'Connor 1990:§13.5.2b; Joüon 1993:§137f). The article may also mark an individual addressee and so function as a vocative.¹ To return

1 See, for example, 2 Sam. 14:4 (*hōšî'â hammelek* - "save [me], O King!") and 1 Sam. 17:58 (*ben-mî 'attâ hannā'ar* - "whose son are you, O young man?") (Waltke and O'Connor 1990:§13.5.2c; GKC 1910:§126e; Williams 1976:§89; Joüon 1993:§137g; cf. Barr 1989:319-22).

to the article's role as something that determines substantives, several uses deserve noting. The definite article can, for instance, be used to identify a class or species. Joüon (1993:§137i) observes, "When a plural noun is thought to comprise all of the individuals of the class or of the species, it takes the article". Among the examples Joüon cites are, *hakkôkâbîm* ("the stars")(Gen. 1:16) and *haggôyim* ("the nations")(Gen. 10:32). In addition, the nominal predicate—usually indeterminate—may sometimes take the definite article. With adjectives, this often creates a comparative or superlative (Joüon 1993:§137l).² In the case of substantives, the resulting emphasis can be one of primacy or singularity.³

One grammatical form that regularly eschews the definite article is the proper noun. In Hebrew grammar, a proper noun makes reference to something that is unique and therefore determined in and of itself; thus, proper nouns normally appear without the definite article or a pronominal suffix (GKC 1910:§125a, d; Waltke and O'Connor 1989:§13.4b, c; 13.6; Joüon 1993:§137b). The presence of what appears to be a 3ms pronominal suffix with *šrth* at Kuntillet 'Ajrud seems to defy this convention and so has been the catalyst for much scholarly debate.⁴ In the case of Baal, the presence of the definite article attached to what most English translations take to be a divine name also calls out for attention. In the pages that follow, a number of deity names in the MT will

2 E.g. Exod. 9:27, *yhw hššaddîq* ("Yahweh is the righteous one"); 1 Sam. 17:14, *wědāwid hû' haqqāṭān* ("David is the smallest"). To these may be added Gen. 27:1, *ēšāw bēnô haggādôl* ("his oldest son Esau"), Gen. 48:14, *ēprayim wēhû' hššār* ("Ephraim, the younger one").

3 Joüon (1993:§137l) cites Gen. 42:6, *wěyôsēp hû' hššallîṭ* ("Now Joseph was the governor") and 1 Sam. 17:8, *ānōkî happēlišṭî* ("I am the Philistine").

4 See below, pp. 121-24.

be examined in order to determine what role the definite article plays when it is used in conjunction with *baʿal* and *bēʿālîm*.

Yahweh

The first and most obvious name to examine is Yahweh. That the MT considers Yahweh to be a proper noun is clear from Exod. 6:3 where the god of Israel, speaking to Moses, announces that he would henceforth be known by the name Yahweh (*wāʿērāʾ ʿel-ʾabrāhām ʿel-yiṣḥāq wəʿel-yaʿāqōb bēʾēl šaddāy ûšēmî yhwh lōʾ nôdaʿtî lāhem*, “I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as El Shadday, but by my name, Yahweh, I did not make myself known to them”). Quite apart from legitimate questions about the date of this passage and its role in the history of Israelite religion,⁵ it is clear that the writer intends to make the point that the personal name (*šēm*) of the god of Israel was Yahweh.⁶ This being the case, it is no surprise that throughout the Hebrew Bible, Yahweh always appears without the definite article. This pattern carries over to the Mesha inscription (KAI 181, line 18) and all other known inscriptional uses of *yhwh*, where the term also appears without the definite article. It is safe to conclude, therefore, that Biblical Hebrew understands *yhwh* to be a proper noun and so renders it without the definite article as it does other proper nouns.

5 The consensus in scholarship has long assigned Exod. 6:3 to the Priestly source. See Childs (1974:111-14) and Garr (1992:385-87).

6 Cross' (1973:60-71) contention that the name Yahweh evolved from one element in a liturgical epithet, *dū yāhwī šabaʾôt* (“He who creates the [heavenly] armies”) (perhaps originally an El-name) remains speculative and unverified. Even if correct, it is clear that by the time of the Hebrew Bible, Yahweh stood on its own as a personal name.

Kemosh

Another deity name worth noting is that of Kemosh, the Moabite god known from the Mesha inscription (KAI 181) and one mentioned eight times in the MT. In each of its appearances in the MT, context suggests that the MT understands Kemosh to be a proper noun. In several passages (1 Kgs. 11:7, 33; 2 Kgs. 23:13), for example, Kemosh is stated directly to be the deity of a specific region—Moab. In other passages, this fact is made clear from the context (Num. 21:29; Jer. 48:7, 13, 46). Further indication that Kemosh is a proper noun is the expression *ʿam-kēmôš* (Num. 21:29; Jer. 48:46), a phrase parallel to *ʿam-yiśrāʾēl* (Josh. 8:33; 2 Sam. 18:7; 19:41; 1 Kgs. 16:21; Ezra 2:2; 9:1; Neh. 7:7) and *ʿam-yhwh* (Num. 11:2; 16:41; Judg. 5:11, 13; 1 Sam. 2:24; 12:6; 2 Sam. 1:12; 6:21; 2 Kgs. 9:6; Ezek. 36:2; Zeph. 2:1; Pss. 108:3) where *ʿam* is paired with a proper noun. In all of its occurrences in the MT, Kemosh never appears with the definite article. The same holds true for the use of this word in all known inscriptional material including the Mesha inscription.⁷ The use of this name too, corresponds to the idea that Biblical Hebrew renders proper nouns that are divine names without the definite article.

Nehushtan

In 2 Kgs. 18:4, reference is made to the bronze serpent said to have been fashioned in the wilderness by Moses. Although it is not specifically stated that this item represented a deity, it is condemned by the Deuteronomist as something that was worshipped by the Israelites.⁸ That the term Nehushtan was understood as a proper

7 E.g. KAI 181, ll. 3, 5, 9, 12-14, 17-19, 32-33.

8 On the possibility that Nehushtan was a low-ranking healing deity within the Israelite pantheon, see Handy (1992b:1117).

noun is clear from the statement that the Israelites named it such.⁹ Given this, it is no surprise that Nehushtan appears without the definite article.

Adam

An entry point for examining the meaning associated with forms of nouns that function also as proper names can be had by examining the use of the term *ʾādām* in Genesis 1-5. One recent examination of this very question is by Richard Hess (1990).¹⁰ As noted by Hess, the term *ʾādām* occurs 34 times in Genesis 1-5—22 times with the definite article (Hess 1990:1). Within these chapters, *ʾādām*—when it appears without the definite article—can function as a common or proper noun. When it appears with the definite article, the same term almost always functions as a title. Although Hess (1990:4) explains the change in use on form-critical grounds, the shift between the forms and their different meanings is just as likely to be a response to developments in the narrative.¹¹

In 1:26, *ʾādām* appears without the definite article in a context where it can only mean “humankind” or “human race”. This same meaning obtains for the use of the word in 1:27, where it appears with the definite article. In both cases, context demonstrates the noun to refer to the species as a whole—both male and female. The

9 *wayyiqrāʾ-lô nēhūštān*, “...and they called it Nehushtan”.

10 The rise of feminist interpretation and the corresponding interest in the Biblical text and gender issues has focused much attention on the use of *ʾādām* in the first chapters of Genesis. See, Tribble (1978:1-30), Hayter (1987:7-44) and Clark (1980:10-28).

11 See below, pp. 100-1.

use of the definite article in 1:27 is anaphoric, connecting as it does the *ʾādām* of v. 27 with that already mentioned in v. 26.¹² The meaning of *ʾādām* in 2:5, where it appears without the definite article, is uncertain. Hess (1990:2-3) has argued that since the task of cultivation is given to “the Man” (*hāʾādām*) in 2:15, the same understanding is intended here. Since, however, humans are not yet created by 2:5, it is unlikely that a specific human is intended. More likely is the possibility that the term refers to the absence of any human to work the ground (Lussier 1956:137). Within the block of material formed by 2:7-4:1, *hāʾādām* appears 21 times as a title distinguishing “the Man”¹³—first as the sole example of the class *ʾādām*, and then from the woman created to complement him. Within these verses, there are only three occurrences of *ʾādām* without the definite article (2:20; 3:17, 21)—all of them involving the *lamed* prepositions. Given the unique character of these occurrences and the possibility that the presence of an original definite article may have been obscured by later Massoretic pointing, Lussier

12 See GKC (1910:§126d), Williams (1976:§83), Waltke and O'Connor (1990:§13.5.1d) and Joüon (1993:§137f).

13 See Waltke and O'Connor (1990:§13.6), GKC (1910:§126e) and Williams (1976:§88). This use falls under Waltke and O'Connor's classification of “intrinsically definite nouns with the article”, whereby, “the article not only points out a particular person or thing, but it also elevates it to such a position of uniqueness that the *noun + article* combination becomes the equivalent of a *proper name*”. Although *hāʾādām* in this passage is the only one of his kind and might technically take the article in the same way as unique items like *šemeš* (Joüon 1993:§137h; GKC 1910:§126d; Waltke and O'Connor 1990:§13.5.1b), it is more likely the case that it takes the article because it refers to the primary example of what the editor knows to be a class.

(1956:137) and Hess (1990:3) are probably correct in suggesting that the definite article should be restored here.¹⁴

The final occurrence of the form *hāʾādām* is at 4:1a, where the Man is accompanied only by the woman (*ʾiššā*) and—being *ʾš*—is thus still unique among the creatures fashioned by Elohim. With the birth of Cain in 4:1b, however, this uniqueness is lost. In the presence of another like being, this use cannot be sustained and so the title with its definite article gives way to a personal name, *ʾādām* (“Adam”)(4:25; 5:5:1a, 3-5). The only other use of this form in 4:2-5:32 is at 5:1b and 5:2, where *ʾādām* appears once more in the sense of “humankind”. The different meaning attached to *ʾādām* in these verses is due to the fact that 5:1-2 harks back to creation and so forms—as Hess (1990:5) notes—an *inclusio* with 1:26.

What the use of *ʾādām* shows is that in certain contexts, a term most often occurring as a common noun may with the addition of the definite article be elevated to the status of a title identifying a unique or premier example of the class described by that common noun. Thus, in most of its occurrences in Genesis 1-5, *hāʾādām* denotes the primary example of the category *ʾādām*.

14 At each of these verses, the oft-maligned textual notes of BHS also suggest repointing to add the definite article. The LXX is of no help in determining if the definite article should be read at these points for, from 2:16-5:32, it always (save 2:18 and 5:1a) has Αδὰμ (“Adam”) where the MT reads *hāʾādām*.

Elohim

A more complicated case is that of *ʾēlōhîm*. This word occurs in a variety of forms and can refer to “gods” (e.g. Deut. 13:8, the deities of the peoples around Israel), a single deity unacceptable to the writer (e.g. Judg. 16:23, Dagon; 1 Kgs. 11:5, 33, Ashtoreth) or the god of Israel (e.g. Hos. 3:5; 7:10; 12:9; 13:4). In the vast majority of cases the term occurs without the definite article¹⁵ in contexts where it refers to the God of Israel. The interest of the present examination is to determine the role played by the definite article when applied to the form *ʾēlōhîm*.¹⁶ What follows, then, disregards cases in which *ʾēlōhîm* appears as the absolute element in a construct phrase (e.g. *ʾîš-hāʾēlōhîm*, “man of God; *ʾārôn hāʾēlōhîm*, “ark of God”; *bērît hāʾēlōhîm*, “covenant of God; *gibʿat hāʾēlōhîm*, “hill of God” etc.). Although the definite article appears in such cases, it does so as part of the construct phrase and so does not provide an unambiguous sample for analysis.

There are approximately 142 occurrences of *hāʾēlōhîm* in the MT where the form appears independently. Generally speaking, the definite article indicates determination¹⁷ and thus specification—hence, *hāʾēlōhîm* denotes not just any god, but a particular god. In almost every instance of its use in the MT, *ʾēlōhîm* with the definite

15 The exact form, *ʾēlōhîm*, appears 803 times compared to the form *hāʾēlōhîm* which occurs only 375 times.

16 Forms of *ʾēlōhîm* that are determined by the addition of a pronominal suffix instead of the definite article, therefore, do not form part of this examination.

17 Although Barr (1989) has noted that the definite article does not always coincide with determination, it is nonetheless true that this is the most common function of the definite article. For a recent response to Barr, see Müller (1991).

article refers to the God of Israel.¹⁸ In some of these cases, the definite article's use is prompted by a preceding reference to *ʾēlōhîm*—*hāʾēlōhîm* is used to indicate "the *ʾēlōhîm* just mentioned".¹⁹ This anaphoric sense explains a significant number of the occurrences of the definite article with *ʾēlōhîm*.²⁰ More often than not, however, determination is prompted by the broader context of a passage. These cases are often ones in which the use of *ʾēlōhîm* without the definite article might be ambiguous or potentially

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- 18 Of the 142 occurrences alluded to above, there are at least five cases in which *hāʾēlōhîm* does not refer to the god of Israel. In 1 Sam. 4:8, *ʾēlōhîm* appears with the definite article twice in reference to multiple gods. In the first occurrence, the definite article is expected because of the use of the demonstrative *hāʾēlleh* (GKC 1910:§34; Lambdin 1971:§40; Seow 1987:60-61). In the second occurrence in this same verse, the article occurs to specify that the gods in question are the ones that defeated the Egyptians. In 1 Kgs. 18:24, the form *hāʾēlōhîm* specifies the one deity who will answer by fire. In Judg. 10:14 and Jer. 11:12, the form is used to specify a certain group of deities the Israelites had chosen and to which the Judahites burned incense. In addition to the above, there are three occurrences (Exod. 21:6; 22:7-8) in which it is unclear whether *hāʾēlōhîm* refers to judges, gods, or the God of Israel. While the God of Israel could easily be in view in Exod. 21:6, the occurrence of *hāʾēlōhîm* with the plural *yaršîʿûn* ("they shall condemn") in Exod. 22:8 makes identification more difficult. It is possible that these passages reflect broader, Canaanite traditions and that the use of *hāʾēlōhîm* in these contexts refers to household deities before whom an oath is made (Gordon 1935; Draffkorn 1957). This is most likely to be the case in Exod. 21:6, where the doorpost in question is more likely to be that of the house of the slave owner than that of the sanctuary (thus providing a graphic demonstration of the slave's desire to be permanently attached to his master's household).
- 19 Examples include, Num. 22:10 (where *hāʾēlōhîm* is used to specify the deity who appeared in 22:9), 1 Sam. 10:3 (where the same form is used to specify the god whose shrine was at Bethel), and Neh. 4:9 (where the form specifies the god to whom Nehemiah had prayed in 4:3). See also, Gen. 17:18; 22:1; 21:33; 35:7; 41:16, 25, 28, 32; 48:15; Exod. 3:11; 24:11; Jon. 1:6; Neh. 9:7 and 1 Chron. 28:3.
- 20 On the anaphoric use of the definite article see, Waltke and O'Connor (1990:§13.5.1d); Joüon (1993:§137f) and GKC (1910:§126d).

misleading.²¹ In these instances, *ʾēlōhîm* is determined in order to draw attention specifically to the fact that the figure intended is the God of Israel and not some other deity or deities. This use of *ʾēlōhîm* + the definite article to designate a unique referent²² is found in the following contexts:

1. When an Israelite is speaking to, or with regard to, a non-Israelite. In this kind of situation, *hāʾēlōhîm* is employed to specify that the entity being described is not the god of the foreigner, but the god of Israel. Examples of this use include Gen. 20:6, where the narrator relates that the God of Abraham appears in a dream to Abimelek, king of Gerar. A further example is Gen. 41:25, 28, 32, where Joseph relates to Pharaoh of Egypt what God has communicated in the king's dream. This same form is also used in 44:16, where Judah speaks to Joseph (who is in the guise of an Egyptian) and acknowledges that God has uncovered the brothers' iniquity.²³ The concern noted above also seems to motivate the use of *hāʾēlōhîm* when Abraham wishes that Ishmael follow God (Gen. 17:18) and when Jacob pronounces his reduced blessing on Esau (Gen. 27:28).²⁴

2. When Israelites are in a "pagan" milieu. Closely related to the first body of occurrences, *hāʾēlōhîm* is employed in these cases to specify the god of Israel where it is

21 In such contexts, however, the form *ʾēlōhîm* (without the definite article) is not always absent. Where the identity of a deity as the God of Israel is established by use of *hāʾēlōhîm*, the form *ʾēlōhîm* may subsequently be used without fear of misunderstanding (e.g. Judg. 6:36, 39-40; Exod. 1:17, 20; 2:23-25; Exod. 18:19, 21, 23; 1 Sam. 14:37-3).

22 This use focuses attention on the God of Israel as the one true deity. See, Waltke and O'Connor (1990:§13.6a), Williams (1976:§88) and GKC (1910:§126e).

23 See also, 2 Kgs. 5:7.

24 Esau being associated in late tradition with the nation of Edom.

possible that *ēlōhîm* alone might cause confusion with the local deity or deities. Genesis 20:17, for example, notes that during his time in Gerar, Abraham prayed to *hā'ēlōhîm* that Abimelek and his family might be healed. In Gen. 35:7, immediately after Jacob's family rids itself of its "foreign gods", Jacob builds an altar at Luz (Bethel) in honour of *hā'ēlōhîm*. When Daniel—in the court of Nebuchadnezzar—rejects the king's food, he receives blessing from *hā'ēlōhîm* (Dan. 1:8). In Exod. 1:17, 21, the Israelite midwives who rescue the Israelite infants from the Egyptians do so because they feared *hā'ēlōhîm*. Similarly, it is noted that while in Egypt, the prayers of the enslaved Israelites went up to *hā'ēlōhîm* (Exod. 2:23). The death notice of the priest Jehoiadah contrasts his faithfulness with the idolatry of his protégé, Joash, by noting that the former did well by *hā'ēlōhîm*. When the errant king is criticised by Jehoiadah's son, Zechariah, the resultant condemnation is specified as a message from *hā'ēlōhîm* (2 Chron. 24:16, 20).²⁵ This type of use also includes cases in which the god of Israel is intended in speech by foreigners. Occurrences of this type of use are found in Jethro's words to Moses (Exod. 18:19), Balaam's prayer to God (Num. 22:10) and the Midianite's discussion of a dream foretelling Gideon's victory (Judg. 7:14). In the book of Jonah, this use is found in the proclamation of the penitent king of Nineveh (Jon. 3:9-10).²⁶

3. When the use of *ēlōhîm* would be potentially ambiguous or where actions by the god of Israel might be seen as theologically problematic. An example of the first use is 1 Chron. 14:11, 14-16, where possible confusion about the identity of the deity

25 See also, Gen. 42:18; 45:8; Exod. 3:6, 11-13; Judg. 6:36, 39 (cf. v. 31 where Baal is called simply, *ēlōhîm*); 1 Sam. 14:36; Dan. 1:17; 2 Chron. 13:12, 15; 18:5 (where the prophets of Ahab purport to speak on behalf of Yahweh).

26 See also, Job 2:10; Neh. 4:9.

associated with Baal-Perazim is avoided by linking the site with an act by *hā'ēlōhîm*. In the antediluvian era, the special attention given to Enoch (Gen. 5:22, 24) and Noah (Gen. 6:9) is attributed to the fact that they walked with *hā'ēlōhîm*. In other contexts, *hā'ēlōhîm* is used to demonstrate that, despite the nature of the actions involved, the god of Israel is indeed intended. The form *hā'ēlōhîm* is used, therefore, in Gen. 22:1, 3, 9 to identify the god of Israel as the one who demands the sacrifice of Isaac. The same term appears in 1 Chron. 21:8, 15, 17 to identify the god who dispatches the angel to destroy Jerusalem following the census of David. In 2 Chron. 10:15, Rehoboam's stubborn refusal to listen to wise advice is said to have been brought on by *hā'ēlōhîm*. Later, another national disaster results when *hā'ēlōhîm* lures Amaziah of Judah into battle against the more powerful Joash of Israel (2 Chron. 25:20).²⁷

4. When attention is drawn to the one god of Israel. An example of this use is found in 2 Chron. 9:23, where *hā'ēlōhîm* is employed to specify the god of Israel as the source of Solomon's wisdom—admired as it was by the kings of the world. Other cases include Exod. 19:3, 17, 19-21 and 24:10-11 where the newly encountered deity of Mount Sinai is identified as the one God of Israel.²⁸ A large concentration of uses of this type occurs in Ecclesiastes, where the cynical, yet monotheistic, author uses *hā'ēlōhîm* to identify the one true god.²⁹ The use of this form in Ecclesiastes is attributable to the detached, philosophical approach adopted by its author—an approach that is largely

27 See also, 2 Sam. 6:7; 12:16; 2 Chron. 32:31.

28 See also, Deut. 7:9; Josh. 22:34; 1 Sam. 10:7; Ezra 1:3; Neh. 5:1; 7:2; 1 Chron. 15:26; 17:2, 21, 26; 22:1; 2 Chron. 13:12; 19:3; 29:36; 30:19; 33:13.

29 See, Eccles. 3:11, 14-15, 17-18; 5:2, 6-7, 18-20; 6:2; 7:14, 29; 8:12, 15; 9:7; 11:19; 12:7, 13-14.

incompatible with use of the more personal name, Yahweh. A significant subset of this general category is the body of cases in the MT where *hāʾēlōhîm* is used in statements of the incomparability of Yahweh or in declarations denying the existence of other deities. Typical of these is the declaration of Deut. 4:35 that, *yhwh hûʾ hāʾēlōhîm ʾên ʿôd milbaddô* ("Yahweh, he is God—there is no other besides him"). A further example is 1 Kgs. 18:21, 24, (also 37, 39) where the one deity who answers by fire can lay claim to the title, *hāʾēlōhîm*. Other passages using *hāʾēlōhîm* to tout the incomparability or exclusivity of Yahweh include Deut. 4:39; 2 Sam. 7:28 (N.B. v. 22); 1 Kgs. 8:60; 2 Kgs. 5:7; 19:15; Isa. 37:16; 45:1; Neh. 12:43; 1 Chron. 17:21, 26.

Satan

The word *śāṭān* is another term that can appear as a common noun and as a noun specifying an individual. The term *śāṭān* occurs 33 times in the MT with seventeen of those occurrences having the definite article. When used without the definite article, the term is usually a common noun referring to a human adversary. Instances where this is the case include 1 Sam. 29:4; 2 Sam. 19:22; 1 Kgs. 5:4; 11:14, 23, 25.

In her published dissertation on *śāṭān* in the Hebrew Bible, Peggy Day (1988:39) concludes that no evidence exists for an office of accuser in ancient Israel. Rather, the evidence that does exist suggests that citizens took their own cases before the legal authorities without aid of counsel (Num. 5:11-31; Ruth 4:2, 9-11; 1 Kgs. 3:16-28; KAI 200 [Yavneh Yam]). Nonetheless, the indication in Zech. 3:1 and Ps. 109:6 that the accuser stands at the right hand of the accused may well reflect—if not an office—at least the

traditional arrangement of participants when one Israelite accused another before the judge (de Vaux 1965a:156). That this is likely to have been the case is also suggested by the fact that the form *haššāṭān* occurs only in contexts where the divine courtroom or human legal affairs are in view.³⁰ If this is the case, then *šāṭān* with the definite article in Job and Zechariah may be understood as a label³¹ attached to the role—if not to the office—of accuser. In the passages examined above, *haššāṭān* functions in much the same way as *hā’ādām* in Genesis 1-5 and *hā’ēlōhīm*.

Tammuz

An interesting passage that may at first seem to be an exception to the rule that proper nouns are undefined is Ezek. 8:14. Here, many interpreters see a direct reference to the Mesopotamian fertility deity Tammuz (Cooke 1936:96; Eichrodt 1970:125-26; Wevers 1982:69; Ackerman 1989:79-93; Handy 1992c:318; Allen 1994:144). In this passage, the prophet describes women sitting at the northern entrance to the temple of Yahweh, “weeping for Tammuz” (*mēbakkôt ’et-hattammûz*). Block (1997:294-95) takes exception to this understanding, maintaining that this generally accepted translation does not properly render the MT in which Tammuz bears the direct object marker and the definite article. He suggests that the phrase in question is best translated as “weeping the Tammuz” with “the Tammuz” being a form of mourning ritual that the prophet found unacceptable. While Block’s suggestion is an attractive possibility, there

30 In Zechariah 3, the context is that of the divine court where Joshua the High Priest is acquitted by Yahweh. The divine court also provides the backdrop for every use of the term *haššāṭān* in Job (chs. 1-2).

31 Mullen Jr. (1980:275) understands *haššāṭān* to be a title on the basis of the definite article alone.

is another way to understand the phrase. Despite Block's objections, the direct object marker can be used with a verb like *bkh* in the sense of weeping for someone or something. Examples of this use may be found in Gen. 50:3, Num. 20:29 and Deut. 21:13. What remains unusual, then, is the use of the definite article with what most take to be a proper noun indicating a foreign deity.³² The context of the passage, however, suggests that the women are worshipping Yahweh, not a foreign deity, and that here, the term *hattammûz* functions as a title for some form of Yahweh.³³ Three details suggest this to be the case.³⁴ First, the women condemned for weeping "for the Tammuz" do so at the entrance of the gate of the temple of Yahweh (*petah ša'ar bêt-yhwh*). This in and of itself suggests that some Yahwistic ritual is in view. Second, in the cult of the deity Tammuz, weeping was the activity that commemorated the deity's death and departure into the underworld. That such an activity takes place immediately after the elders' statement that Yahweh has "left" (*ʿāzab*) the land/earth (Ezek. 8:12) and immediately prior to the departure of the *kēbôd yhwh* (Ezek. 10:18), suggests that they are weeping for Yahweh, not a foreign god.³⁵ Third, the departure of Tammuz into the underworld was

32 A problem noted also by Greenberg (1983:171).

33 The possibility that Tammuz is a title for Yahweh is raised also by Brownlee (1986:136). That Tammuz may here be a common noun is raised (cautiously and in passing) by Halpern (1993a:125, n. 44).

34 While both Greenberg (1983:171) and Block (1997:195-96) make reference to facts two and three (see immediately below), neither uses them in service of the conclusions presented here. On aspects of the cult of Tammuz, see Brownlee (1986:136), Ackerman (1989:79-93) and Handy (1992c:318). For a treatment that questions the interpretation of Tammuz as a rising god, see especially, Yamauchi (1965, 1966).

35 That the date formula, the elders' statement, the mourning for Tammuz and the departure of the glory may be read together is the view of a number of scholars. Zimmerli, for example, sees the date formula of 8:1 as belonging to the "original substance of the prophet's words" (1979:9; also Ackerman 1992:46, n. 41).

marked in the month of *Tammuz* (June/July). The fact that the women undertake their ritual in the sixth month (*Elul*–August/September)³⁶ suggests that they are not worshipping a Mesopotamian deity. These facts make it possible that in condemning the women in the temple complex, the prophet was decrying the fact that they were likening the departure of the *kābôd* to Yahweh's death—a conclusion that was diametrically opposed to his message.³⁷ The use of the article in Ezek. 8:14 suggests that

Moreover, all of the elements noted above form part of Zimmerli's reconstructed *Urtext* of chapters 8-11 (1979:233-34). Likewise, both Greenberg (1983:192) and Block (1997: 272-74) point to the frame provided by 8:1-3/4 and 11:22-25 as being an editorial invitation to read 8:1-11:25 as a single composition. While this block of material may include originally independent units, their present form exhibits a strong unity. For example, the narrative sequence including mention of the *kābôd* at the temple (8:4), the discovery of idolatry in the temple (8:5-18), the command to defile the temple by slaughtering the unfaithful (9:1-11) and the departure of the *kābôd* from the temple (10:18-22) forms a natural progression that suggests that the parts are to be understood together. This progression, the reference to *kābôd* in 8:4 and 10:18, and the temple setting throughout suggests that the elements constituting 8:4-10:22 are intended to be read as a unity informed by the introduction (8:1-4).

- 36 See 8:1. The slightly different date given in the LXX ("the sixth year, in the *fifth* month, on the fifth of the month") does not affect the argument made above, for—like the date preserved in the MT—the LXX date (the month of *Ab*) does not correspond with the month of *Tammuz* (the fourth month) when rituals for *Tammuz* were normally carried out. On accepting the MT date as original, see Wevers (1982:67), Zimmerli (1979:216), Greenberg (1983:166) and Block (1997:276, n. 13). Cf. Eichrodt (1970:108, 21).
- 37 Despite the focus on Jerusalem, the message of Ezekiel is directed toward those in exile. The image of the wheeled throne atop all-seeing cherubim (Ezekiel 1, 10) rising and moving to the east is one way in which the prophet makes the point that the exiles, despite their displacement from the land, could still have a relationship with the omnipresent Yahweh—a god who was in no way confined to Jerusalem. This emphasis runs counter to the despair of the elders and the women in the passage under discussion. Contrary to their understanding, the perils facing Jerusalem were not evidence of Yahweh's death or absence, but the manner in which he had chosen to judge Israel and so reveal himself to his people (33:27-29).

hattammûz is being used as a title designating a specific individual of the class, “Tammuz”. Details of the passage suggest that the deity so labelled may have been Yahweh.³⁸

Ashtoret and Ashtarot

The term Ashtoret/Ashtarot provides further opportunity to examine the use of divine names with and without the definite article and in the singular and plural. In the three occurrences of the singular form *ʿaštōret*, the definite article is absent (1 Kgs. 11:5, 33; 2 Kgs. 23:13).³⁹ In each of these cases it is clear that the term is used as a proper noun to refer to a particular national deity—in each case to a goddess of the Sidonians (Halpern 1993a:119-20). In five of the six occurrences of the plural form, the term bears the definite article and appears in contexts which show *hāʿaštārôt* to be a collective common noun for goddesses worshipped by the unfaithful Israelites (Halpern 1993a:120).⁴⁰ In Judg. 10:6, for example, the form is used alongside *habbēʿālîm* and is set in apposition to a list including the gods of Aram, Sidon, the Ammonites and the Philistines.⁴¹ In 1 Sam. 7:3, the term is paired with “foreign gods” to designate those

38 Another case of a “foreign” deity being identified with Yahweh is detected in this same context by Taylor (1993:147-58) who argues that those who worship the sun in Ezek. 8:16-18 do so in the belief that they are venerating Yahweh.

39 A ground-breaking morphosyntactical study of divine names in the MT has been published recently by Baruch Halpern (1993a). The analysis offered below owes much to this insightful work.

40 Judg. 2:13; 10:6; 1 Sam. 7:3-4; 12:10. This use corresponds exactly to Joüon’s (1993:§137i) category in which a plural noun takes the definite article when the noun comprises all of the individuals of a class or species.

41 *wayyaʿabdû ʿet-habbēʿālîm wəʿet-hāʿaštārôt wəʿet-ʾēlōhê ʾārām wəʿet-ʾēlōhê šîdôn wəʿet-ʾēlōhê mōʾāb wəʿet-ʾēlōhê bēnē-ʿammôn wəʿet-ʾēlōhê pēlišṭîm.*

deities that Israel needed to renounce if they were to be saved from oppression.

Elsewhere, the term is paired with “the baals” to refer to all of the other deities—male and female—that Israel had served (1 Sam. 7:4; 12:10).⁴² The only anomalous use of the term is in 1 Sam. 31:10 where the plural appears without the definite article (*bêt ʿaštārôt*). Here, the reference to a single specific temple and the absence of the definite article suggest that the term is a proper noun referring to a specific goddess and that the plural form is the result of scribal error. What prompted the error in 1 Sam. 31:10 is uncertain. Perhaps the presence of an original *bêt ʿaštōret* in close proximity to the place name *bêt šan* caused the scribe to think of the place name *ʿaštārôt*.⁴³

Molek

The uses of the term *mōlek* are similar to those noted above. The term *mōlek* occurs eight times⁴⁴ in the MT with seven occurrences having the definite article. In the

42 On the use of *hāʿaštārôt* alongside the singular *habbaʿal* in Judg. 2:13, see below, p. 138.

43 This odd use of *ʿaštārôt* is noted also by Halpern (1993a:120, n. 16). Halpern, however, suggests that the text refers to the Transjordanian place name Beth-Ashtarot (MR 243-244) (Josh. 21:27) and that as a place name it stands in parallel with Beth-Shan. It is unlikely, however, that—with messengers carrying the news of victory over Saul throughout Philistia—Saul’s armour would be sent in the opposite direction, to a site north-east of the Israelite stronghold of Jabesh-Gilead (MR 214-201). Klein’s (1983:289) suggestion that the plural is used to show disdain for the location is possible only if this temple was in an Israelite community (i.e. in a town where it would be a disgrace to find a “temple of Ashtarot”)—an unlikely event given that war booty was customarily taken to the land of the victor (e.g. 1 Sam. 21:9-10). Attractive for its simplicity is Driver’s (1913:230) suggestion that the frequency of the plural led to a scribal error in which an original singular was incorrectly read as the plural.

44 Lev. 18:21; 20:2, 3, 4, 5; 1 Kgs. 11:7; 2 Kgs. 23:10; Jer. 32:35.

one instance in which the term is undefined, it is clear that the author or editor is using it as a proper noun to refer to a specific Ammonite god—Milkcom.⁴⁵ That the editor omitted the article in the one instance in which *mōlek* clearly stands in for a proper noun suggests that something else is intended where the term does take the article. One possibility arising from this is that *hammōlek* functions as a title describing a particular deity that was known formally by another name. Support for such a suggestion may be found in the LXX which only twice renders *mōlek* by transcribing it as a name (2 Kgs. 23:10, Μολόχ and Jer. 39:35 [Heb. 32:35], Μολοχ βασιλει). In most cases, the LXX renders *mōlek* with a common noun—ἄρχων “ruler” (Lev. 18:21; 20:2, 3, 4, 5) or βασιλεύς “king” (1 Kgs. 11:5). Given the above and the presence of the article, the form *hammōlek* is unlikely to be a proper noun, but may, like *hā’ādām* and *hā’ēlōhīm* (and perhaps *hattammuz*), be a form that identifies a specific member of a larger class—in this case, the divine ruler *par excellence*.

Some speculation may be offered as to the identity of this putative “Ruler”. In every use of *mōlek* with the definite article, the context is the religious practice of the Israelites. In addition, several of the passages hint at a relationship with Yahweh. In

45 In 1 Kgs. 11:7, the term *mōlek* appears where *milkōm* is expected (cf. 11:5, 33). Gray (1970:272-73) and Montgomery (1951:231) both see verse 7 as part of the book’s “original tradition”. Most English translations choose to retain Molek at v. 7 (NRSV, NJPS, NASB, NIV). Among the versions, the Lucianic recension of the LXX seems alone in correcting the verse to read Μελχομ. Despite the possibility that the reading Molek is a scribal error, it is significant that Massoretes chose not to point it in conformity with every other occurrence of the term in the Hebrew Bible. That the Massoretes here overcame the natural temptation to render Molek with the definite article suggests that they were following a convention on the rendering of proper nouns. This in turn suggests that where they render Molek with the definite article, they intend it to be a common noun, not a proper noun.

Lev. 18:21 and 20:3 the offering of children to *hammōlek* is said to “profane” (*ḥll*) the name of Yahweh and “defile” (*ṭmʾ*) his sanctuary—consequences that are possible only if worshippers understood the worship of *hammōlek* to be related to that of Yahweh.⁴⁶

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- 46 While the connection between Yahweh and the sacrifice at Tophet has been accepted by a number of scholars, it has been emphatically rejected by John Day (1989:65-68). Day rejects such a connection for four reasons. First, Biblical passages condemning Molek worship speak of the offering of male and female children and do not mention the firstborn. This, Day maintains, points to a different ritual than the offering of the firstborn to Yahweh which was restricted to males (Exod. 13:2, 12-13, 15; 34:19-20). Second, Molek was an underworld deity, while Yahweh does not have chthonic associations. Third, the localisation of Molek worship at Tophet suggests a deity distinct from Yahweh who was worshipped in the temple. Fourth, use of the phrase, “which I have not commanded”, is not significant for it appears also in relation to worship of the sun, moon and host of heaven—entities which are not associated with Yahweh.

The following may be said in response to Day’s four points. First, the differences between the offering of the firstborn and offerings to Molek, are not so significant as they might first appear. Even in the offering of firstborn, substitution was permitted that altered the appearance of the sacrifice (Exod. 13:13; 34:20). Such substitution occurred also in Punic sacrifices to Baal-Hammon, where animals could be substituted for humans and underclass children for the offspring of the gentry (Mosca 1975:4-6, 14-15, 61, 73, 100-1). The differences present in descriptions of Molek worship, therefore, may simply reflect such substitutionary practice. It would not be surprising for such a harsh and grisly demand to have become relaxed over time. Regarding Day’s second point, it should be noted that even deities like Shamash who are most readily associated with the living were thought to spend half of their time in the underworld (Astour 1980:232; Healey 1980; Wiggins 1996:330-38). Furthermore, recent studies that see an association between Yahweh and the sun (Smith 1990a:115-24; Taylor 1993) at least make it possible that some Israelites attributed chthonic qualities to their god. Day’s third objection related to locale, overlooks the fact that one and the same deity (or different manifestations of the same deity) may be worshipped at widely separated shrines, as the worship of the northern Yahweh at Dan and Bethel aptly demonstrates. The localisation of the worship of Molek to the Hinnom valley, therefore, may imply a distinct manifestation of Yahweh or simply reflect a shrine set up for a specialised form of worship. This, for example, is exactly what seems to be taking place where Jeremiah condemns the burning of children to “the Baal” in the Hinnom valley and the presentation of fragrant grain offerings to this same figure in the streets of Jerusalem (Jer. 11:13; 19:5). Day’s fourth complaint, namely, that the phrase, “which I have not commanded”, is used in relation to the sun,

The most obvious way for Yahweh himself to be so profaned or his sanctuary so defiled is if worshippers were somehow implicating or invoking Yahweh in their veneration of *hammōlek* or conducting their practices in locations that were known as Yahwistic centres. This fact strongly suggests that the Israelites worshipping *hammōlek* were using this term, not as a proper noun referring to a foreign deity, but as a common noun serving as a title for a form of Yahweh—"the Ruler".

Asherah

The various uses in the MT of the divine term "asherah"⁴⁷ are not so easy to assess as the terms encountered thus far. This difficulty arises from the fact that, in addition to the possibility of being a proper noun or a title, the term asherah can also

moon and host of heaven (entities which he maintains are not to be associated with Yahweh) is partially answered by the existence of a solar Yahwism noted above. In addition, it should be noted that a strong association also exists between Yahweh and the moon. The new moon was an occasion when worship was offered to Yahweh (Isa. 66:23; also Ezek. 46:3). Indeed, this monthly festival was observed as a Sabbath (2 Kgs. 4:23; Amos 8:5; also Ezek. 46:1, 3) that included special sacrifices (Num. 29:6; 1 Chron. 23:31; 2 Chron. 2:4; 8:13; 31:3; Ezra 3:5; also Ezek. 45:17; 46:6). Moreover, Yahweh's declaration that the people's new moon observance meant nothing to him, strongly implies that the people saw some form of connection between Yahweh and the moon (Isa. 1:13-14). (On the possible one-time existence of the moon as an iconographic symbol of Yahweh, see Schmidt (1995). The host of heaven, while not strictly identified with Yahweh himself, were intimately associated with him by virtue of their position as his divine council (1 Kgs. 22:19; Mullen Jr. 1980:205-7, 31). In addition to all of the above, dedications to Yahweh and Molek share in common the fact that the verbal form *h'byr* occurs in connection with both the offering of the firstborn (Exod. 13:12) and Molek worship (Lev. 18:21; 2 Kgs. 23:10; Jer. 32:35). Given the above, Day's rejection of a possible connection between Yahweh and the practice of child sacrifice at Tophet may be judged unconvincing.

47 For an overall assessment of the term asherah, see Maier (1986), Olyan (1988), Day (1992a:483-87) and Halpern (1993a:118-21).

denote a cult object dedicated to a goddess (Halpern 1993a:120). This additional possibility means that the sense of the term cannot be discerned solely on the presence or absence of the definite article. Given this fact, context at times weighs heavily in determining how the author employs the various forms of the term.

The most common form of the term under discussion is the masculine plural *ʾāšērīm*. An examination of the use of this form shows that in every one of its twenty occurrences—with or without the definite article—it refers to cult objects connected with a goddess or goddesses.⁴⁸ This use is entirely in keeping with Hebrew practice whereby a common noun may be defined or undefined depending on context (Joüon 1993:§137a). The status of “asherim” as cult objects of some kind is aptly demonstrated by the fact that they are often mentioned in parallel with other cult objects like *maṣṣēbôt* and *bāmôt* (e.g. 1 Kgs. 14:23) and are objects that can be cut down, burned, planted and set up (e.g. Exod. 34:13; Deut. 12:3; 16:21; 2 Kgs. 17:10).⁴⁹

At least one scholar has noted that the rarity of the feminine plural *ʾāšērôt* is unusual when compared to the preponderance of Biblical references to *ʾāšērīm* (Lindars 1995:130). The frequent use of the masculine plural to refer to cult objects that in the singular are always feminine, suggests that attention should be paid to contexts in which the feminine plural occurs. An examination of this latter form suggests that the

48 Exod. 34:13; Deut. 7:5; 12:3; 1 Kgs. 14:15, 23; 2 Kgs. 17:10; 23:14; Isa. 17:8; 27:9; Jer. 17:2; Ezek. 27:6; Mic. 5:13; 2 Chron. 14:2; 17:6; 24:18; 31:1; 33:19; 34:3-4, 7.

49 While strands of Mishnaic tradition (*Orlah* 1:7-8; *Sukkah* 3:1-3; *Abodah Zarah* 3:7, 9-10; *Meilah* 3:8) identify an asherah as a sacred tree, at least one strand and some Biblical passages suggest that the tree could be a related, but separate, feature beneath which the cult object itself was erected (*Abodah Zarah* 3:7; 1 Kgs. 14:23; 2 Kgs. 17:10).

different genders may signal a slight variation in meaning. While the masculine plural refers everywhere to cult objects, the feminine plural may denote a class of goddesses. Of the three occurrences of this form present in the MT, two have the definite article. In Judg. 3:7, the author relates how Israel forgot Yahweh and instead worshipped other gods—"the baals" and "the asherot".⁵⁰ The pairing of the term *hāʾāšērôt* alongside *habbēʿalîm* as something "served" (*ʿbd*) by the people may suggest that a class of deities and not a cult object is in view.⁵¹ In 2 Chron. 19:3, Jehoshaphat is credited with removing "the Asherot" (*hāʾāšērôt*) from the land. Here the context is ambiguous for it is not immediately certain if *hāʾāšērôt* in this passage refers to cult objects or a class of

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- 50 Some medieval Hebrew manuscripts, the Syriac and the Vulgate read, "Ashtarot". In favour of the MT reading is the fact that the LXX at this point has the root ἄλσος ("grove")—a term it regularly uses for Hebrew asherah/im. In most cases where the MT has Ashtarot, the LXX generally has a divine name Ἀστάρωθ/Ἀστάρτη. On three occasions, however, the LXX reads ἄλσος where the MT has ashtarot (1 Sam. 7:3-4; 12:10). The general approach of the LXX seems to be to render by a divine name any occurrence of ashtarot that unambiguously refers to a goddess (Judg. 2:13; 10:6; 1 Sam. 31:10; 1 Kgs. 11:6 [Heb. 5], 33; 2 Kgs. 23:13) and to use "grove" where association with a deity is not overt (1 Sam. 7:3-4; 12:10). The difficulty the LXX has in dealing with this term is exemplified by 1 Sam. 7:4, where it reads, τὰ ἄλση Ἀστάρωθ ("the groves of Ashtarot") where the MT and most other versions presume *hāʾāštārôt*. On the whole the MT reading is to be preferred.
- 51 That in Judg. 3:7, *ʾāšērôt* refers to a deity or deities and not a cult object is the view of Moore (1906:86), Dever (1984:31), Gray (1986:248), Smith (1990b:86, 91), Day (1992a:485) and Halpern (1993a:118, n. 13). While the distinction between deities and the images which represent them is a fine one (e.g. Deut. 4:28; 28:36, 64), it is nonetheless worth noting that when the verb *ʿbd* is used in a cultic context it refers primarily to devotion to Yahweh or other gods (at least 90 occurrences of this verb refer to either Yahweh or other gods (e.g. Exod. 3:12; 23:25; Deut. 7:4, 17; 28:14; 29:25; Josh. 24:2, 15-16, 18; Judg. 10:13; 1 Sam. 8:8; 26:19; 1 Kgs. 9:16; Jer. 5:19; 2 Chron. 7:19; 34:33 etc.). By comparison, the term is used only rarely in connection with cult objects such as idols (Exod. 20:4-5; Deut. 28:64; 2 Kgs. 17:12; 21:21; Ezek. 20:39; Ps. 97:7; 106:36; 2 Chron. 33:22). The term is never used in connection with altars.

divinities. While it may at first appear that the verb *bʿr* “to burn” points toward the former, it should be noted that this verb does not appear elsewhere with any form of the word *asherah*. Indeed, in cases where the cult object is burned, the verb *šrp* is used (Deut. 12:3; 2 Kgs. 23:5). On the other hand, in the case of 2 Chron. 19:3, the *piʿel* form of *bʿr* could well refer to the removal of goddesses. Elsewhere in the MT, this form of the verb appears most often in the sense of “purge” or “remove”—with its objects including evil, blood-guilt, a royal house, evil-doers and spiritists (Deut. 13:6; 21:9; 2 Sam. 4:11; 1 Kgs. 14:10; 22:46; 2 Kgs. 23:24). In addition, the absence in this verse of any term that is used elsewhere in connection with the removal or destruction of a cult object also makes it attractive to take this use of *hā-ʾāšērôt* as a reference to a class of goddesses.⁵² The use of the feminine plural to indicate a class of goddesses corresponds to the use of the feminine plural *ʾāštārôt*, where this form also indicates female deities of a particular type.

An examination of occurrences of the feminine singular form, *ʾāšērâ*,⁵³ reveals that—with or without the definite article—it may refer to an object that is the representation of a deity. In most cases the presence or absence of the definite article is prompted by whether or not the common noun is understood as specific. In a few instances, however, the definite article + *ʾāšērâ* may also stand as the title of the deity

52 This conclusion differs from that of Halpern (1993a:118, 19, n. 14) who contends that the feminine plural of *asherah* can refer to objects dedicated to a goddess. Halpern’s conclusion is based in part on the appearance of *ʾāšērôt* as an object that is “made” (*ʿšh*) by Manasseh in 2 Chron. 33:3. The use of the singular *ʾāšērâ* in the parallel passage in 2 Kgs. 21:3, however, suggests that the singular should also be read in 2 Chron. 33:3.

53 Deut. 16:21; Judg. 6:25-26, 28, 30; 1 Kgs. 15:13; 16:33; 18:19; 2 Kgs. 13:6; 18:4; 21:3, 7; 23:4, 6-7, 15; 1 Chron. 15:16.

herself. Under the former usage, Deut. 16:21 forbids the planting of “an asherah” (omitting the article) or any kind of tree/wooden thing (ʿēṣ) beside the altar of Yahweh, while Judg. 6:25 records the command to cut down a specific “asherah” (with the article) beside a specific altar. A variety of passages make it clear that the term can refer to a cult image or object of some kind. An ʾāšērâ, for example, is something that can be “made” (śh) (1 Kgs. 16:33; 2 Kgs. 21:3), “planted” (nṯh) (Deut. 16:21), “crushed” (dqḡ) (2 Kgs. 23:6), “cut down” (krt) (Judg. 6:25-26, 28, 30; 1 Kgs. 15:13; 2 Kgs. 18:4; 2 Chron. 15:16) or “burned” (šrp) (1 Kgs. 15:13; 2 Kgs. 23:6, 15; 2 Chron. 15:16). Closely related to these occurrences, however, are those that further identify the ʾāšērâ as the representation of a deity. This is plain from the actions carried out toward this object. In 2 Kgs. 23:4, for example, vessels (kly) are made for “the A/asherah”, “the Baal” and “the Host of Heaven”. The pairing of lāʾāšērâ with figures that are deities suggests that here, “the asherah”, is a title identifying a deity, and not merely a common noun denoting a cult object. In the same chapter (2 Kgs. 23:7), clothes or woven hangings are specially made for the ʾāšērâ. Here too, the likelihood is that the term is a title referring to the goddess or her image, for it is doubtful that such gifts would be prepared for a utilitarian cult object.⁵⁴ Other examples of this use include, 1 Kgs. 15:13, where the queen mother Maacah is said to have made, “a disgraceful image of/for the Asherah” (miplešet lāʾāšērâ)⁵⁵ and 2 Kgs. 21:7, where reference is made to “the carved image of the

54 I.e. something akin to an altar or shrine. On the reasons for reading *battîm** (from Arabic *battun* “woven garment”) instead of *bâtîm* (“houses”) in 2 Kgs. 23:7, see Jones (1984b:619).

55 The translation adopted by the NJPS (“an abominable thing for [the goddess] Asherah”) and the NRSV (“an abominable image for Asherah”) is much to be preferred over that of the NASB (“a horrid image as an asherah”) and NIV (“a repulsive Asherah pole”).

Asherah which he [the king] had made" (*'et-pesel hā'āšērâ 'āšer 'āsâ*). Similarly, 1 Kgs. 18:19 refers to "400 prophets of Asherah" (*ûnēbî'ê hā'āšērâ 'arba' mē'ōt*)—functionaries that are more likely to be attached to a goddess or her image than to an installation.⁵⁶ Here as well, the most sensible conclusion is that "the A/asherah" is a title referring to a deity. The connection between object and the title associated with it is evident in 2 Kgs. 18:4, a verse that recounts the destruction of a number of cult objects, including "the A/asherah". Appended to this list is Nehushtan. Although this object had a Yahwistic history, it too was destroyed because it had come to be worshipped as a deity.⁵⁷ The criterion given for Nehushtan's inclusion within this list suggests that the other items (the standing stones of the high places and the A/asherah) were also objects that represented deities.

A helpful addition to the question of whether "asherah" represented a goddess or was simply a cult object is the recent study by Othmar Keel (1998:15-57). By a thorough study of iconographic material, Keel demonstrates the interchangeability between depictions of tree and goddess and convincingly argues that the former was a representation of the latter. The idea that the sacred tree is a representation of the goddess is further demonstrated by imagery in the Song of Songs where a woman is described in arboreal terms. In Song of Songs 7:6-8, the lover's sexual desire for his

56 Smith's objection (1990b:89) that this verse is probably a polemic against Astarte is flawed on the grounds that the figure mentioned is not Astarte, but "the asherah". A polemic against Astarte would be more effective if it actually mentioned the name of the deity targeted. For reasons why this reference should not be dismissed as a gloss, see pp. 148-50.

57 That Nehushtan was understood to be a deity is clear from the fact that it receives offerings and is given a name.

beloved is graphically described as his desire to climb a date-palm and eat of its fruit.⁵⁸ This sexually-charged language corresponds precisely to the interchangeability in the ancient Near East between representations of the tree or tree featuring breasts and the goddess or pubic triangle.⁵⁹ All of the above points toward the conclusion that, while the term *ʾāšērâ* is most often a common noun referring to a cult object, the object so identified was the image of a goddess that could be addressed by a title, “the Asherah”.

If certain occurrences of *hāʾāšērâ* may be understood—from context and by analogy to the terms discussed thus far—to be a title for a particular deity, it remains to comment on what that title might convey. One option is to understand the term to mean “the Blessed One”.⁶⁰ As a common noun functioning as a title, *ʾāšērâ* could be expected

58 The passage in question reads as follows,

How beautiful and how delightful you are,
My love, with all your charms!
Your stature is like a palm tree,
And your breasts are like its clusters.
I said, ‘I will climb the palm tree,
I will take hold of its fruit stalks.’
Oh, may your breasts be like clusters of the vine,
And the fragrance of your breath like apples (NASB).

59 On the connection between goddesses, trees and the latter as a symbol of divine eroticism, see Keel (1994:242-46).

60 As a title given to the consort of Yahweh, “the Asherah” could well have been understood as “the Blessed One” (from *ʾešer**, “fortunate”, “blessed”). Parallel for this use is found in the variety of titles given to Yahweh in the OT. These appellatives, are not, strictly speaking, divine names, but do identify the deity by focusing attention on one particular quality.

Recently, Olyan (1988:29-31) has argued that Beck’s (1982:27-31) work showing the characters on pithos A at Kuntilet ʿAjrud to be Bes figures demonstrates that the term *ʾšrth* in the inscription should be taken to be a cult symbol and not a goddess.

to take the definite article. Such a situation helps solve—as Halpern (1993a:124) observes—the conundrum posed by the presence of the 3ms pronominal suffix in *ʾšrth* at Kuntillet ʿAjrud.⁶¹ Indeed, based on the Biblical examples examined thus far, there is no reason to believe that at Kuntillet ʿAjrud, *ʾšrth* is a proper noun.⁶² Noting the 3ms

It is doubtful, however, that the drawings and inscriptions should be read together. Indeed, as Hadley has suggested, the gate-room locus in which the pithos was discovered and the fact that it was covered with drawings, suggests that it was an object on which passing travellers left graffiti (Hadley 1987b:207-8). This suggests that it is unlikely that the drawings were originally intended to illustrate the inscriptions. The identification of *ʾšrth* with the consort of Yahweh, therefore, is not dependent on an association of the inscription with the pithos drawings.

- 61 The possibility of a pronominal suffix appearing with a word that is clearly a personal name has been raised to explain the appearance of *krtn* in KTU 1.16 I.39 (Gibson 1978:95). As Gibson himself (1987:95, n. 7) notes, however, Ugaritic proper nouns can appear with or without an affirmative-*nun*—as the forms *ytpn* and *ytp* demonstrate (KTU 1.18 IV.6-7, 11, 16). More likely than Gibson’s rendering, “Our Keret”, is the probability that here the affixed-*nun* conveys a special sense in the way that it can by marking the diminutive in Biblical Hebrew (GKC 1910:§86g; Waltke and O’Connor 1990:§5.7b; Joüon 1993:§88Mf; also de Moor and Spronk 1982:183). On the presence of affirmative-*nun* with proper nouns in Ugaritic, see Segert (1984:§43.27).
- 62 The form *ʾšrth* has prompted much debate and as a consequence, other interpretations are by no means lacking. Next to the suggestion offered above, the most attractive of these proposals is Hess’ (1996) suggestion that the *he* in *ʾšrth* is not a pronominal suffix, but a vowel letter preserving a final -*a* vowel. Building on a suggestion first made by Zevit (1984), Hess examines the spelling of *asherah* in a number of cognate languages. Among personal names in the Amarna correspondence, he cites the name of a ruler of Tyre that appears most often as, *abdi-a-ši-ir-ta*. Hess finds Iron Age evidence for the preservation of a final -*a* vowel on feminine singular nouns in two place names from the Shishak city list and in at least one personal name from the OT (*maḥla*; Num. 26:11, 33; 27:1; Josh. 17:3; *maḥālat*, Gen. 28:9 and *māḥālat*, 2 Chron. 11:18). Somewhat problematic for this view, however, is the fact that the recent Tel-Miqne inscription reads *lʾšrt*, where the divine name appears alone and—as expected—unsuffixed (Gitin, Dothan and Naveh 1997).

suffix, it is far easier to assume that *ʾšrth* is a title for a female deity associated with Yahweh—presumably as his consort and perhaps known as “his Blessed One”. A parallel to this usage is found in the divine titles that identify the gods of the Patriarchs. In these cases, an El deity is identified by a common noun standing in a genitival relationship with the name of an individual.⁶³ This is similar to the use of Asherah at

Most scholars have been content to see the final *he* in *ʾšrth* at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qom as the 3 ms pronominal suffix and have interpreted the combination as a reference to a cult object. See, Emerton (1982:15), Lemaire (1977:607; 1984b:47, 50), Day (1986:392), Hadley (1987a:59), Olyan (1988:33-34), Smith (1990a:86-89) and Hestrin (1991:56-57). As Hess (1991:18-19; 1996:216) has noted, however, the appearance of *lʾšrth* in parallel with *lyhwh* suggests that it is best understood as a deity and not as a piece of religious paraphernalia.

Dever (1982, 1984) attempts to argue that *ʾšrth* at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud is the name of the goddess Asherah, but does so by attempting to connect the pithos’ text and pictures—a perilous assumption given presence of Bes figures and a number of other discrete illustrations on the vessel. A growing list of scholars are of the opinion that the text and drawings represent disconnected graffiti (Meier 1986:170-71; Hadley 1987b:207; Keel 1998:33). Weinfeld (1984:122-25) appears to assume the form at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud to be a divine name, but offers no explanation for the presence of the pronominal suffix.

Finally, as noted by several scholars (Emerton 1982:16-18; Lemaire 1977:604-7; 1984b:50; Meier 1986:169; Olyan 1988:28; Smith 1990a:87), the proposal that *lʾšrth* be interpreted on the basis of Ugaritic *ʾštr*, Akkadian *ašru*, and Phoenician *ʾšr* (“sanctuary”) and understood as, “by his sanctuary” (Lipiński 1986b) has against it the fact that this meaning is not reliably attested in Biblical Hebrew.

63 E.g. *paḥad yiṣḥāq* (“Fear of Isaac”) (Gen. 31:42, 53) and *ʾābīr yaʿāqōb* (“Mighty One of Jacob”) (Gen. 49:24; Isa. 49:26; 60:16; Ps. 132:2, 5). For the view that the Patriarchs were worshippers of El, see Eissfeldt (1956:25-37), Cross (1973:71-73), Wenham (1980:183-85) and Mettinger (1988:78).

Kuntillet 'Ajrud where a deity appears to be identified by a common noun in a relationship of possession with another individual—in this case, Yahweh.⁶⁴

In addition to the above, it is valid to ask if the term *asherah* appears in the MT as a proper noun referring to a goddess, *Asherah*. Based on the form of other clearly identifiable divine names in the MT (e.g. *Yahweh*, *Kemosh*), *Asherah* as a divine name would appear as a singular noun without the definite article. Of the four occurrences of this form in the OT, all clearly refer to a cult object (Deut. 16:21; 2 Kgs. 17:16; 21:3; 23:15). Given this, there would appear to be no cases in the MT where *Asherah* appears as the proper name of a goddess.

To summarise, concerning the various forms of the term *asherah*, the following may be said. The MT employs the feminine singular or the masculine plural with or without the definite article to identify an individual cult object ("*asherah*") or multiple cult objects ("*asherim*") dedicated to a goddess. The MT sometimes also uses the feminine singular form with the definite article as a title of a particular goddess ("the *asherah*"). This use may be distinguished from references to a single cult object by context. In addition, the MT appears to use the feminine plural with the definite article to indicate the title of a class of goddesses ("the *asherot*"). Finally, the MT does not seem to use "*asherah*" as a proper noun, a term which nonetheless bears an obvious and close relationship to the proper name of the northwest semitic goddess *ʾṯrt*.

64 The "his *Asherah*" being the logical parallel of "*Asherah* of *Yahweh*" (compare with "*Fear* of *Isaac*").

The examination of the deity names conducted above suggests that in rendering divine terms, the authors and editors of the Hebrew Bible consistently followed certain conventions. When dealing with divine terms that were true proper nouns, these writers followed normal Hebrew practice and avoided the definite article. Where these same writers used divine terms with the definite article, these terms seem to be common nouns that function as divine titles or epithets (Fig. 1). In at least some of the cases examined above, these titles perhaps refer to Yahweh himself by drawing attention to some aspect of his character.

Fig. 1 - Deity Terms in the MT with and without the Definite Article

	WITH DEF. ART.		WITHOUT DEF. ART.	
	SINGULAR	PLURAL	SINGULAR	PLURAL
ASHERAH	<i>hāʾāšērā</i> (title, "The Blessed One"?; cult object)	<i>hāʾāšērôt</i> (class of goddesses)?; <i>hāʾāšērîm</i> (cult objects)	<i>ʾāšērā</i> (cult object)	<i>ʾāšērîm</i> (cult objects)
ASTARTE		<i>hāʾāštārôt</i> (class of goddesses)	<i>ʾāštōret</i> (proper noun)	<i>ʾāštārôt</i> (place name)
KEMOSH			<i>kēmôš</i> (proper noun)	
MOLEK	<i>hammōlek</i> (title, "The Ruler"?)		<i>mōlek</i> (proper noun)(an exceptional use; ⁶⁵ generally, Milkom)	
NEHUSHTAN			<i>nēhūštān</i> (proper noun)	
TAMMUZ	<i>hattammûz</i> (title)			
YAHWEH			<i>yhwh</i> (proper noun)	

65 1 Kgs. 11:7.

Baal

Before proceeding to an examination of the various forms of the word *ba'al*, it is helpful first to review the conclusions of Halpern's (1993a) morphosyntactic study of the same term. Halpern surveys the use of *ba'al*, *habba'al*, and *habbē'alîm* and comes to the following conclusions. Beginning with Jer. 44:15-18 and other passages,⁶⁶ Halpern develops the idea that the deuteronomic and prophetic condemnation of "the baals" as foreign is a late polemic and that many of these figures were, in fact, traditionally Israelite. Opposition to the worship of these figures, Halpern maintains, appears at the same time as does opposition to the worship of the "Host of Heaven" and he takes this coincidence to indicate that the two groups were substantially related (1993a:115-18).

Turning his attention to the various forms of the term *ba'al*, Halpern concludes that when, "*ba'al* in HB refers to immortals, it is without exception a determined noun" (1993a:118). More specifically, Halpern contends that—whether singular or plural—*ba'al* with the definite article is not a proper noun or name, but a title that is attached to various figures. The term *ba'al* may also be used as a title where it is defined by a genitive in construct. Thus, the combination *ba'al bē'rît* is not a proper noun but a title indicating a particular deity of the class, baal (1993a:120-21). Halpern's view is summed up with his statement that the term, *habba'al*, "does not refer to a single god, Baal, by name but is a title, specifically 'master, lord'" (1993a:122). As a title, *habba'al* may sometimes refer to Yahweh (e.g. Isa. 1:3; 1 Chron. 12:6; Hos. 2:18). Halpern concludes that, "until the seventh century, at least, Yhwh was probably 'the baal' par excellence in

66 1 Kgs. 11:1-10; Judg. 1:1-3:5.

the Israelite pantheon of baals" (1993a:123). Starting in the eighth century, "the baal" appears alongside the plural "the baals". The regularity with which these two terms accompany one another in these later texts leads Halpern to conclude that "the baal" came to be a collective term that was identical to the Host of Heaven and "the baals" (1993a:126-30).⁶⁷

While there are cases in which *habba'al* is used as something akin to a collective, there are reasons to express caution about just how widespread this use is. First, there is no obvious reason why the Biblical writers should suddenly and widely adopt a new use for the term "the baal" when the terms "the baals" and "Host of Heaven" were already in extensive use. Second, while the terms "the baal" and "the baals" are found together in some eighth-century texts (Halpern 1993a:126-27), not all of these pairings point naturally or exclusively to the conclusion that the former is a collective for the latter.⁶⁸ Third, the idea that "the baal" is often a collective for "the baals" sometimes forces Halpern to conclusions that are not in keeping with the tenor of the text. Difficult to accept, for example, is Halpern's (1993a:149) contention that "the baal" of the Mount Carmel incident (1 Kings 18) was not an individual deity, but a group of gods "virtually

67 Much of Halpern's position is based on his understanding of passages such as 2 Kgs. 23:5; Jer. 7:31-8:3; 19:4-15; 32:31-35 and Zeph. 1:4. For a full discussion of these passages, see chapter four.

68 Halpern (1993a:127) argues that in Jeremiah 2, the mention of "the baals" (v. 23) after a notice regarding those who prophesy "by the baal" (v. 8) suggests that the two terms are synonymous. While such a possibility should not be excluded, it is also possible that in his use of plural and singular forms of baal in the same chapter, the prophet is referring to different entities. In examining the appearance of these terms in a book with a literary history as complex as that of Jeremiah, it is also important to determine if the references appear in contexts that belong to the same literary unit.

indistinguishable from the Israelite pantheon at the time, but with a Tyrian twist".⁶⁹ A better explanation is to understand that while the cult of "the baal" perhaps included homage to "the host" and "the baals" (perhaps as retinue of "the baal"), the term "the baal" itself was not merely a collective for these deities. Thus, on some occasions, a writer such as the Deuteronomist could include alongside his attack on, "the baal", an eschewal of figures and practices affiliated with this deity (2 Kgs. 23:5). If "the baal" was the most prominent of "the baals"—as seems logical given the terms used—then it should not be surprising to find the latter sometimes indicated by reference to the former.⁷⁰ In this sense, "the baal" may occasionally appear as a collective.

In light of the above, we now turn to a re-examination of the term *ba'al* in the Hebrew Bible. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, it is a basic rule of Hebrew grammar that proper nouns do not occur with the definite article or suffixes—a convention confirmed by the examination conducted above.⁷¹ Thus, it is no surprise to discover that where *ba'al* is shown to be a proper noun referring to a place (Josh. 13:17;⁷² 1 Chron. 4:33) or a person (1 Chron. 5:5; 8:30; 9:36) it appears without the definite

69 In some passages, Halpern is forced to conclude that "the baal" does indeed represent an individual deity. Concerning Judges 6—in contrast to his general view—Halpern concludes that "the baal" is used as a genuine singular (1993a:133).

70 A parallel to this use is found in the way in "the Kaiser" was often used as a collective for the forces of the German Empire during the First World War.

71 See, GKC (1910:§125a, d); Waltke and O'Connor (1989:§13.4b, c; 13.6); Joüon (1993:§137b).

72 Some translations (e.g. NASB, KJV) understand *bāmôt ba'al* at Num. 22:4 to refer to a cult installation ("high places of Baal") and so be a reference to the deity by name. Comparison with the Reubenite territorial list from Josh. 13:17, however, shows that the Numbers occurrence should be treated as a place name Bamoth-Baal rather than a distinct reference to the god Baal.

article.⁷³ As Halpern (1993a:121) has observed, where baal appears without the article, but is defined by another term in construct, the resulting term can be the title of a particular deity of the class “baal” (e.g. Baal-Peor - Num. 25:3, 5; Deut. 4:3b; Pss. 106:28; Baal-Berith - Judg. 8:33; 9:4; Baal-Zebub - 2 Kgs. 1:2-3, 6, 16). The only circumstance in which a defined form of *ba'al* becomes a proper noun is when certain compound baal titles become place names (e.g. Baal-Peor - Deut. 4:3a; Hos. 9:10; Baal-Perazim - 2 Sam. 5:20; 1 Chron. 14:11).

The masculine plural⁷⁴ form of *ba'al* appears eighteen times in the MT and always with the definite article. In each of these occurrences, context shows that the use conforms to Joüon's (1993:§137i) category in which a plural noun may take the article in order to refer to all of the individuals of a particular class. In each of these occurrences, *habbē'alîm* is best taken to identify a class of deities the Biblical writers feel is incompatible with Yahwism.⁷⁵ The character of *habbē'alîm* as a term for a class of deities

73 A problem in examining the occurrence of the definite article in the Hebrew text is the fact that apart from instances in which the letter *he* is present, the definite article is known only from the much later massoretic pointing. A comparison of the MT with the LXX, however, shows that the LXX translators' use of the definite article with forms of Βααλ almost always matches that of the Massoretes. This fact suggests that where the Massoretes pointed various prefixes with the definite article, they were in all likelihood faithfully preserving an ancient tradition.

74 Judg. 2:11; 3:7; 8:33; 10:6, 10; 1 Sam. 7:4; 12:10; 1 Kgs. 18:18; Jer. 2:23; 9:13; Hos. 2:15, 19; 11:2; 2 Chron. 17:3; 24:7; 28:2; 33:3-4. The feminine plural (*bē'alôt*) occurs only twice (Josh. 15:24; 1 Kgs. 4:16)—both times as a place name.

75 In places, the Biblical writers portray *habbē'alîm* as “foreign” gods. In 1 Sam. 7:3, Samuel commands the people to remove “the foreign gods” (*ʾēlōhê hannēkār*) from among them. The compliance of the people is recorded in the following verse with the words that the people, “removed the baals and the ashtarot and served Yahweh alone”. That the prophets saw “the baals” as incompatible with Yahwism is self-evident. Among the criticisms the prophets level is that the Israelites

is evident where it is used synonymously with other terms denoting general groupings of gods. Thus, when the Israelites are commanded to remove the “foreign gods” (*ʾēlōhē hannēkār*) and the “ashtarot” (*hāʾaštārôt*) in 1 Sam. 7:3, their obedience is recorded in the following verse by the acknowledgement that they removed “the baals and the ashtarot” (*ʾet-habbēʿālīm wēt-hāʾaštārôt*). This use is also found in several other passages where “serving the baals” is described as following “other gods” or the gods from the nations who lived around Israel (Judg. 2:11-12; 3:6-7; 10:10, 13). That “the baals” identifies a class of deities is clear from Judg. 8:33 which laments that after the death of Gideon, Israel turned to “the baals” and so made Baal-Berith their god.⁷⁶ By acknowledging worship of “the baals” and then specifying a particular Baal figure, this passage shows that “the baals” refers to a class of gods. A similar example is Yahweh’s statement in Hos. 2:19—“I will remove the names (*šēmôt*) of the baals from her mouth”. The fact that the figures labelled “the baals” were known by other names shows that “the baals” is a common noun describing a class of deities.

Despite frequently and bluntly labelling “the baals” as “foreign”, the MT at certain points seems to reflect a subtle admission that a relationship existed between

“awhore after” (*znh*) (Judg. 8:33), “serve” (*ʿbd*) (1 Sam. 12:10; Judg. 10:6) and “walk/go after” (*hlk*) (1 Kgs. 18:18; Jer. 9:13) “the baals”. Israel is also condemned for building altars (*mzbh*) (2 Chron. 33:3; 34:4) and offering sacrifices (*zbh*) (Hos. 11:2) to these same deities. Although the editors sometimes cast the baals as “foreign”, other passages suggest that the entities so-labelled were local deities that the editors considered non-Yahwistic. This seems to be the case, for example, in Judg. 10:6 where the baals and the ashtarot are listed alongside other deities that are each specified by the name of a people group.

76 *wayyiznû ʾahārē habbēʿālīm wayyāšîmû lāhem baʿal bērit lēʾlōhîm*, “they prostituted themselves after the baals and they made Baal-Berith their god”.

this class of gods and Yahwism.⁷⁷ While the Biblical writers and editors are one in likening worship of these figures to an abandonment of Yahweh (Judg. 2:11; 3:7; 10:6, 10; 1 Sam. 12:10; 1 Kgs. 18:1; Hos. 2:15; 2 Chron. 17:3), a few passages imply that these deities were considered by others as both traditional and compatible with Yahwism. That this may be the case is suggested by Jer. 9:13, where Yahweh charges that the people were taught to follow “the baals” by “their fathers”. In Jer. 2:9-22, the prophet accuses the people of being unfaithful to Yahweh—hewing “broken cisterns” (v. 13), worshipping at various cult sites (v. 20) and ultimately becoming a “foreign vine” (v. 21). All of this culminates in the charge—presupposed in 2:23—that by engaging in these activities, the people had gone after “the baals”. The fact that the people deny this charge suggests that they do not consider “the baals” to be foreign or themselves to be a “foreign vine”. Several references suggest that “the baals” were local Canaanite rather than external deities.⁷⁸

There is good reason to relate “the baals” with the “host of heaven” and to assume that the group to which they refer was an ancient element within Israelite religion. In Jer. 19:13, the “host of heaven” appears in parallel with “other gods”—a term used in the DH as a synonym for “the baals” (Judg. 2:11-12).⁷⁹ The “host of

77 See above, note 75.

78 In Judg. 3:5-6, the Israelites are said to have intermarried with the peoples of Canaan and worshipped their gods. The summary statement in 3:7, “so the Israelites did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh, and forgot Yahweh their God, and served the baals and the asherot” suggests that the Canaanite deities so attractive to Israel were “the baals” and “the asherot”.

79 Still elsewhere in the DH, “the baals” are considered “foreign gods” (*ʾēlōhê hannēkār*) (1 Sam. 7:3-4).

heaven" (*šēbā' haššāmayim*) also arises as part of Yahweh's heavenly court in the vision of Micaiah ben Imlah (1 Kgs. 22:19; 2 Chron. 18:18).⁸⁰ Elsewhere, the Deuteronomist distances this group from Yahweh by suggesting that the host were the gods ordained to rule over the nations around Israel (Deut. 4:19; also Deut. 29:26).⁸¹ Similarly, Psalm 82 appears to record the ouster of this group when it describes their failure to judge rightly and their consequent loss of divine status.⁸² As children of Elyon (Ps. 82:6-7), this group stands in parallel to the seventy children of El and Asherah (*KTU* 1.4 VI.46)—a connection strengthened by the fact that elsewhere members of Yahweh's council are called *bēnē 'ēlīm* or *bēnē 'ēlōhīm* ("sons of God").⁸³

Given the foregoing, the reference to seventy children at various points in the OT probably does not just represent, "a conventional number for a large group" (Smith

80 The tradition of the divine court persists in the Christian era in the form of the twenty-four elders who are seated around the throne of God (Rev. 4:4) and the seventy-two princes of the world who sit in judgement as part of God's court (3 Enoch 30:1-2).

81 The tradition that each nation has its own divine representative finds expression in the role of angels in Daniel (Dan. 10:13) and Jewish apocalyptic literature (3 Enoch 30:1-2). A late manifestation of this idea is found in the Midrash and Targums (*Midr. Ex. R.* 21:5; *Midr. Lev. R.* 29:2; *Midr. Deut. R.* 1:22; *Midr. Song of Sol.* 8:14.1; *PRE* 24; *Tg. Ps.-J.* 11:7-18).

82 A late reflection of such a tradition may be preserved in 1 Enoch 6-8 where the fall of the angels is described. Each of these beings is responsible for a specific aspect of human development or technology. Most of these figures bear El names and a significant number have an astral character (see especially 8:3-4). In 3 Enoch 14:4-5, angels superintend the astral and meteorological workings of the universe, including control of the sun, moon and stars. The association of angels with the heavenly bodies suggests that they represent the survival of traditions related to the host of heaven.

83 For references and a discussion of the term "host of heaven" see, Mullen Jr. (1992:302).

1997:134, n. 135), but rather an attempt to elevate the group in question by inviting comparison with a divine family unit.⁸⁴ That this is the case is suggested especially by the reference to the clan of Jacob which descends to Egypt numbering seventy persons and emerges as numerous “as the stars of the heavens” (*kěkôkěbê haššāmayim*)(Deut. 10:22). A reflection of the heavenly host may also appear in the ten lampstands (*měnôrôt*) of the *hêkāl* that were part of the cultic apparatus of the temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem (1 Kgs. 7:4; 2 Chron. 4:7)(Bloch-Smith 1998). These lampstands stood outside the *děbîr*—five to the left and five to the right. Assuming that each supported a seven-spouted lamp like those discovered in several Iron II cultic contexts (Meyers 1992:14; Biran 1998:39-40)(in parallel with the seven-branched lampstand of the tabernacle), the picture is of seventy twinkling lights flanking the throneroom of Yahweh. Such an image gives substance to Micaiah’s vision of the heavenly host and suggests that the host were symbolically represented within the Jerusalem temple at an early period.⁸⁵ A significant body of evidence from a variety of periods, therefore, points toward the conclusion that “the baals” and “the host” were identified with one another and occupied a traditional place in Israelite religion as members of Yahweh’s retinue.

References to *habbaʿal*⁸⁶ are found mainly in the DH, its parallels in Chronicles and in Jeremiah and Hosea.⁸⁷ Given the examination of deity names made thus far, a

84 E.g. the descendants of the patriarch Jacob (Exod. 1:5; Deut. 10:22); the children of the judge Gideon (Judg. 8:30); the descendants of the judge Abdon (Judg. 12:13-14) and the children of the monarch Ahab (2 Kgs. 10:1).

85 A further reflection of the role of the host as Yahweh’s court may exist in the way in which the seventy elders of Israel are—along with Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu—are permitted to see Yahweh (Exod. 24:1, 9-11) and receive a visitation of Yahweh’s spirit at the tent of meeting (Num. 11:16-17, 24-25).

86 I.e. masculine singular with the definite article.

form like *habba'al* would be expected to be a title for a god that might formally be known by another name.⁸⁸ In addition to the above, the status of "the baal" as a title may be reflected in the way in which Jeremiah uses it as a substitute for the title, "the molek" (Jer. 19:5; 32:35), and by its use alongside the titles, "the asherah" and the "host of heaven" to describe what the DH sees as an idolatrous Israelite pantheon (2 Kgs. 23:4). Instructive also is the fact that "the baal" is never used alongside forms such as Ashtoreth, Milkom and Kemosh that are clearly understood by the DH as personal names rather than titles (1 Kgs. 11:5-7, 33; 2 Kgs. 23:13).

Given the likelihood that "the baal" in the OT is used as a title and not a proper noun, it is not clear at the outset if the term always identifies the storm god Baal-Hadad as some scholars have assumed.⁸⁹ Indeed, it is possible that the term may refer to several different figures at different points in the OT. More on this will be said in chapter four. In most of its occurrences, *habba'al* is used in contexts where it identifies one deity.⁹⁰ Thus, for example, in Judg. 6:25-32, "the baal" is associated with a single altar owned by the father of Gideon. Likewise, 1 Kgs. 16:31-32 makes reference to a single altar to "the baal" that stood in Samaria. In the most famous passage (1 Kings 18)

87 The only use of "the baal" in a cultic sense outside these passages is in Zeph. 1:4.

88 Modern examples in English of nouns with the article functioning as titles are the way in which "the King" in America has come to identify Elvis Presley or how in Canada, "the Great One" is immediately recognisable as a reference to hockey player Wayne Gretzky. In both cases, the term in question is not a proper noun, but a title that relates information characterising the bearer and emphasising his pre-eminent status.

89 See, for example, the dissertation by Anderson (1975).

90 As opposed to its possible use as a collective. On the issue of *habba'al* as a collective see below, p. 138.

using this term, “the baal” is assumed throughout to refer to an individual deity.⁹¹ Similarly, the description of Jehu’s destruction of “the baal” in 2 Kings 10 likewise presents itself as an account of conflict against a single deity (2 Kgs. 10:27).⁹²

The status of “the baal” as a term for an individual deity is suggested also by Jer. 7:9. In this verse, burning incense⁹³ to “the baal” and walking after “other gods” appear

91 1 Kgs. 18:21, *wəʾim-habbaʿal lēkū ʾahārāyw* (“...but if the baal [is God], follow him”), 25, *wəqirʾû bēšēm ʾēlōhēm* (“call on the name of your god”); also 19:18; 22:54.

92 Note also 2 Kgs. 3:2, where a single standing stone (*maššēbat*) is devoted to “the baal”.

93 Traditionally, the verb *qittēr* (*piel* of the root *qtr*) has been translated as “to burn incense”. Recently, a number of studies have suggested alternatives to this rendering. Edelman (1985), for example, argues that the form refers, not to a type of sacrifice, but to a specific step within a variety of offering types—specifically, that point at which the *ʾiššim* portion is burned on the altar. Hence, Edelman defines *qittēr* as, “burn the food offerings” (1985:395)—a conclusion based largely on the observation that the verb’s action was performed on altars (*mizbēhôt*) (Jer. 11:13) and her unvoiced assumption that these *mizbēhôt* bore the same range of offerings as did the altar at the temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem. As a result, she concludes that these altars were used in grain, animal and holocaust offerings (1985:396). To demonstrate that *qittēr* refers to one step in a sacrificial ritual (*zibbah*), Edelman (1985:398) cites thirteen passages where the two terms are used in parallel. Each of these references, however, could just as easily be used to argue that *qittēr* and *zibbah* refer to two distinct and complete rituals—as, in fact, Haran (1985:234) has done. Most importantly, Edelman offers no explanation for why a prophetic author or the Deuteronomic Historian would condemn Israel for performing a particular step within a ritual rather than the larger ritual itself. A better solution is that proposed by Haran (1985:233-35) who argues that *qittēr* refers to the *minḥâ* and means, “to offer (or to burn) a grain-offering”. This view is based, in part, on the observation that in the two contexts in which this form carries an object, that object is a grain-based offering (Amos 4:5; Jer. 44:18-19). Given, however, that uncooked grain offerings included frankincense (*lēbōnâ*) (Lev. 2:1-2, 15) and that the nominal form of *qtr* relates to incense, it is perhaps possible

as elements within a longer list of separate sins—something which suggests that “the baal” and the “other gods” are to be distinguished one from another.

Despite the criticisms of the Biblical authors who reject “the baal” as “foreign”,⁹⁴ “the baal” nonetheless seems to have had a following among many who are otherwise Yahwistic. Thus, Gideon’s father, Joash, can be the owner of a shrine to “the baal” even while bearing a Yahwistic name (Judg. 6:11) and Ahab can give his children Yahwistic names (1 Kgs. 22:2; 2 Kgs. 8:18) despite his own promotion of the cult of “the baal”. That “the baal” was considered by some to be compatible with Yahwism is also suggested by the fact that vessels dedicated to this deity were stored in the temple of Yahweh along with those dedicated to other Yahwistic figures (2 Kgs. 23:4).⁹⁵ The involvement of Yahwistic priests and prophets (Jer. 2:8) with the cult of “the baal” suggests that even members of the religious establishment saw the cult of this figure as compatible with Yahweh. In addition, other passages may even go so far as to suggest that worship of “the baal” was regarded by some as the worship of Yahweh (Jer. 19:5).

to go so far as to identify *qittēr* with, “to make a fragrant grain offering”. This possibility is made more likely if in Isa. 65:3 (where *qittēr* appears), *‘al-hallēbēnīm* is read, “upon incense altars”, instead of the usual, “on bricks”—this following a proposal originally made and discarded by Dahood (1960) and recently taken up by Ackerman (1989:175-85). For the purposes of this study then, *qittēr* will be translated, “to make fragrant grain offerings”.

94 See Jer. 12:14-16.

95 That the asherah is a Yahwistic figure is now well-known from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qom. For Biblical evidence that the asherah was associated with the cult of Yahweh, see Olyan (1988:7-11). On the Host of Heaven as members of a Yahwistic council or pantheon, see Mullen, Jr. (1992:302-3) and Niehr (1995b:811-14).

In a few contexts, *habbaʿal* may function as a collective. In Judg. 2:13, at the end of a section dealing with “the baals”, “the baal” appears in tandem with “the ashtarot”—a pairing that may suggest that here “the baal” stands as a collective for male divinities. It should be noted, however, that this pairing is unique in the MT—everywhere else, *haʿaštārôt* (when it appears with the root *bʿl*) coincides with the plural form *habbēʿālīm*. Given this, it is more likely the case that in this instance a final *mem* on *lbʿl* has dropped out of the text, although it must be admitted that textual support for this is lacking. In Jer. 11:12-13, the mention of multiple gods and many altars to “the baal”⁹⁶ may also be a case of “the baal” as a collective. While this is one possible conclusion, it is also possible that the prophet is offering an attack against what he sees as two related aberrations: one, that Judah worshipped many gods (v. 13a), and two, that as part of this apostasy, they had many altars dedicated to a single figure “the baal” (v. 13b).⁹⁷ That this is the view of at least the editor of the passage is evident from the use of the singular *bošet* (“shameful thing”) in parallel with “the baal”. Where “the baal” does seem to stand as a collective is in Zeph. 1:4, where the author refers to, “the remnant of the baal”—a phrase that is unusual if “the baal” is understood to be a single deity.⁹⁸

96 “For your gods are as many as your cities, O Judah; and as many as the streets of Jerusalem are the altars you have set up to the shameful thing, altars to burn incense to Baal” (NASB).

97 If “the Host” were the attendants of “the baal”, then presumably their altars could be used to worship “the baal”.

98 Halpern (1993a:130-31). See discussion, chapter four.

Fig. 2 - Deity Terms Including Baal in the MT with and without the Definite Article

	WITH DEF. ART.		WITHOUT DEF. ART.	
	SINGULAR	PLURAL	SINGULAR	PLURAL
ASHERAH	<i>hā'āšērā</i> (title, "The Blessed One"?; cult object)	<i>hā'āšērôt</i> (class of goddesses)?; <i>hā'āšērîm</i> (cult objects)	<i>āšērā</i> (cult object)	<i>āšērîm</i> (cult objects)
ASTARTE		<i>hā'āštārôt</i> (class of goddesses)	<i>āštōret</i> (proper noun)	<i>āštārôt</i> (place name)
KEMOSH			<i>kēmôš</i> (proper noun)	
MOLEK	<i>hammōlek</i> (title, "The Ruler"?)		<i>mōlek</i> (proper noun)(an exceptional use; generally, Milkom)	
NEHUSHTAN			<i>nēhūštān</i> (proper noun)	
TAMMUZ	<i>hattammûz</i> (title)			
YAHWEH			<i>yhw̄h</i> (proper noun)	
BAAL	<i>habba'al</i> (title, "The Master")	<i>habbē'alîm</i> (class of gods)		

From the analysis of the various forms of *ba'al* in the MT and from comparison with similar terms conducted above (Fig. 2), the following conclusions may be made. The term Baal does not appear in the MT as the personal name of a deity. Where this

term appears in the masculine plural with the definite article, it refers to a class of deities which the Biblical writers portrayed as foreign. Finally, where this term appears in the masculine singular with the definite article, it functions as the title of a single deity. From the passages examined, it appears to be the case that some in Israel considered “the baal” to be related to Yahweh—perhaps even a manifestation of the god of Israel. A more detailed examination of “the baal” and the identity of the deity to which it applies, is the subject of the next chapter.

Baal and Yahweh in the Old Testament – Chapter Four

References to the Baal in the OT

In this portion of the study, elements from chapter two and the conclusions of chapter three are applied to a study of the various passages in which Baal appears in the OT. With attention to the perspective of the texts and the nature of their audience, this chapter will determine the character of the baal or baals that appear in the OT and their relationship—if such exists—with Yahweh.

A. Baal in the Deuteronomistic History and Chronicles

Judges 6-9

While at first glance this pericope seems to be a plain account of the destruction of a non-Yahwistic shrine by an ardent Yahwist, there are a number of details which suggest that the underlying reality is somewhat more complex.¹ There are, for example, a number of features in the narrative which suggest that the shrine attacked by Gideon

1 The presence of sources in this narrative has long been recognised by scholars, including those whose emphasis is upon the overall unity of Judges. Moore (1906:xxi, 175-237), writing prior to Noth's ground-breaking work on the Deuteronomistic History, describes the passage in terms of his analysis of pentateuchal sources. In this basic approach he is followed by Simpson who sees Judges 6-8 as mainly J and E with deuteronomistic insertions (Simpson 1958:6, 25-40). Soggin avoids the atomising tendencies of Simpson and sees the Gideon narrative as the product of at least two strata of early traditional material with a deuteronomistic redaction (Soggin 1981:104-5). Gray suggests that in the Gideon narrative, a wide variety of independent traditions and sources were brought together by an initial compiler and were modified by a later deuteronomistic editor (Gray 1986:205). On the unity of Judges, see Webb (1987). Polzin (1980) pays close attention to the literary features of the Gideon narrative and of the book of Judges in general, but focuses more broadly on how both fit within the Deuteronomistic History.

and his servants had Yahwistic associations. The story of Gideon proper begins in 6:11 with the appearance of the angel of Yahweh beneath an oak at Ophrah. As has long been recognised, the use of the term *ʿēlōn/ʿēlôn* suggests that the stopping place was a local shrine²—in this case one belonging to Joash, the father of Jerubbaal/Gideon (Judg. 6:11, 25). Despite having a Yahwistic name, Joash is credited in the passage as being the owner of a shrine which included an altar to “the baal” and an asherah. It is this installation that Jerubbaal is commanded to destroy.

As interesting as the fact that the narrative depicts a Yahwist owning a shrine to “the Baal” is the description of the altar as having an adjacent asherah. The fact that the goddess Asherah was consort of the Canaanite god El (and not Baal), combined with the fact that this goddess is known to have been associated with Yahweh, makes it possible that Joash’s altar was connected with Yahweh. That this may be the case is suggested also by the fact that in at least some instances in the MT when an asherah is mentioned in connection with a cultic installation such as a temple or an altar, the installation is a Yahwistic one (e.g. 1 Kgs. 21:7; 23:4, 7, 15). The prohibition in Deut. 16:21 against planting an asherah beside the altar of Yahweh, for example, suggests that this was a not-unusual practice of which the Deuteronomist disapproved. Furthermore, in 1 Kgs. 14:15, one of the two sins for which the fledgling northern kingdom is condemned is the proliferation of asherim. The absence of any reference to Baal in this entire section suggests that here too, the concern is with pairing Yahweh with an asherah. Similarly, the last of the sins of Manasseh listed in 2 Kgs. 21:7 is that he dared to place an asherah in the temple of Yahweh. It is presumably this same asherah that in 2 Kgs. 23:6 is removed from the temple of Yahweh and thrown into the Kidron valley. In 2 Kgs. 23:15, Joash travels north to destroy the Yahwistic sanctuary built by Jeroboam at Bethel. Here, the king destroys the altar and burns its associated asherah. Given that

2 Note the cultic associations of *ʿēlōn/ʿēlôn* in Gen. 35:4, 8; Deut. 11:29-30; Josh. 24:26; Judg. 9:37; 1 Kgs. 13:14; Ezek. 6:13 and Hos. 4:13.

the pairing of an altar and an asherah usually points toward a Yahwistic installation, it is possible that in Judges 6, some type of Yahwistic site is in view.

Even if the passage originally did portray Joash's shrine as a Yahwistic installation with an asherah, it is clear that in its present form the passage sees the altar of "the Baal" as a non-Yahwistic installation. Indeed, several details of the passage suggest that the author has recast his original material in such a way as to point toward the foreign Baal of Ahab and Jezebel. The most obvious clue to such an intention may well be the use of the term *habba'al* itself. In almost every location in the DH where this term is used, it refers to a "foreign" deity, specifically the Baal of Ahab and Jezebel.³ The author's efforts to portray this deity as foreign are also revealed in the fact that the report of the attack on the altar (6:25-32) intrudes into the account of the struggle against the Midianites—Israel's foreign oppressors. The introduction in 6:3 of, "the Midianites, the Amalekites and the sons of the East" who "come up *against them*" (i.e. against Israel), is balanced in verses 33 and 35 by reference again to these same three groups and the announcement that Israel was assembling "*against them*" (i.e. against the Midianites and their allies). Falling as it does in the midst of the account of the Midianite threat, the command to destroy the altar of "the Baal" (vv. 25-32) seems intended by the editor to demonstrate the necessity of dealing with "foreign" *religious* elements before the foreign *military* threat could be faced successfully. This is in keeping with one of the goals of the Deuteronomist, namely, to demonstrate that covenant blessing does not occur apart from covenant obedience.

The broader polemical interests of the passage are revealed also in 6:31. In this verse, the words of Joash point toward interests in the passage that are also in keeping with those expressed elsewhere in the DH. First, the statement that, "if he (the baal) is a

3 Judges 6; 1 Kgs. 16:31-32; 18:19-40; 22:54; 2 Kgs. 3:2; 10:18-28; 11:18. The only occurrence of this term in a context that is not somehow directly related to the northern kingdom or the house of Ahab is 2 Kgs. 17:16, a summary statement regarding the iniquities of both Israel and Judah.

god he will contend for himself" (*ʾim-ēlōhîm hû' yāreb lô*) bears striking resemblance to both the vocabulary and sentiment of 1 Kgs. 18:21, 24 and 37 in which Elijah challenges "the Baal" to determine "who is God" (Gray 1986:289). In Judges 6, the inability of "the Baal" to speak for himself demonstrates that he is not a god and so provides justification for Gideon's actions. This emphasis points toward the Mount Carmel incident where an identical point is made. Second, in relating Joash's threat of death to those who would support "the baal" (Judg. 6:31), the author may also have in mind the Mount Carmel incident and the fate of the prophets of "the baal" at the hands of Elijah (1 Kgs. 18:40; 19:1).

A further connection to the Baal of Ahab comes in Judg. 6:21. Here, the miraculous immolation of Gideon's offering followed by the destruction of the altar of "the Baal" is reminiscent of 1 Kings 18⁴ in which the sacrifice-consuming fire of Yahweh (1 Kgs. 18:38) precedes the killing of the prophets of "the Baal". While this section also bears striking similarity to the divine apparition visited upon Manoah and his wife (Judg. 13:15-21),⁵ a significant difference is that in the case of 6:21, the fire is divinely-provided (like that in the Mount Carmel incident) while in 13:19 it is provided by Manoah.

A further connection between the text under discussion and 1 Kings 18 may come in the sign that Gideon asks of Yahweh. As a portent indicating that Yahweh would bless the efforts against the Midianites, the sign is puzzling for there seems little to connect the ability to manipulate dew with success in battle.⁶ The test may be

4 A fact noted in passing by Moore (1906:188) and Soggin (1981:121).

5 The details of the meeting between Gideon and the messenger of Yahweh has a great deal in common with appearance of the same messenger to Samson's parents in Judges 13. In both cases, following the appearance of the messenger of Yahweh (*mal'ak yhw*), a kid (*gēdî hā'izzîm*) is placed on a rock (*šûr*) along with or as an offering (*minhâ*) and is consumed by fire.

6 See also Moore (1906:175) who ponders over the necessity and intent of the sign of the fleece.

appreciated, however, in the context of the destruction of the altar of “the Baal” and the understanding that the author is relating this deity to the Baal of Ahab and Jezebel. So understood, the import of the sign may be to confirm that those functions previously thought to rest with “the Baal” were actually within the purview of Yahweh. The test of the fleece then, establishes Yahweh as a god of dew (*ṭal*) in the same way that the drought proclaimed by Elijah established Yahweh as the god of “dew and rain” (*ṭal ûmāṭār*)(1 Kgs. 17:1; also 18:1, 45).⁷ Coming as it does after the destruction of the altar, the sign of the fleece may therefore function in the same way as does the rain following the destruction of the prophets of “the baal”—as a confirmation that Yahweh controls those elements previously thought to be the province of Baal.

If the contention is valid that Judges 6 contains allusions to Mount Carmel and the Baal of Ahab, then why might this be the case? If the foregoing is accepted, then it would appear that the author or editor of Judges has taken an account about the Midianite threat and inserted into it a narrative that demonstrates that, prior to their victory, the northern tribes made appropriate moves toward repentance. The identification of the altar destroyed by Gideon with Ahab’s Baal may have been inspired by the conflict with the Tyrian Baal in the northern kingdom combined with the tradition that Gideon bore a name with a Baal element.⁸ The resulting

7 Additional clues that the author is intending to draw parallels to the Baal of Ahab and Jezebel may come in the ten servants who assist Gideon in his attack on the altar (perhaps representative of the ten northern tribes)(Judg. 6:27) and the fact that the battle with the Midianites occurs in the Jezreel valley (near the city of Jezreel and in the shadow of Mount Carmel). Both passages also record the building of an altar (Judg. 6:24, 26; 1 Kgs. 18:31-32) and involve two bulls (*par*)(Judg. 6:25; 1 Kgs. 18:23)(although in Judges 6 only one is sacrificed). The reference to two bulls in 6:25 is widely regarded as a corruption. Even if such is the case, the reference to the second bull in 6:26 testifies to attempts to smooth out the text at an early date in its transmission. On the difficulties with verse 25, see Moore (1906:192) and Gray (1986:288).

8 The tradition behind the name Jerubbaal has proved to be problematic. In the opinion of the editor, this name results from Gideon’s opposition to “the Baal” and means “may Baal contend with him” (Judg. 6:32). As many have noted, however, such an interpretation is at odds with the name itself, which is more

narrative—while not an overt condemnation of Ahab and Jezebel—appears then to use the deity they introduced as an appropriate symbol for foreign religious affections that rendered Israel vulnerable to domination by foreign powers.

1 Kings 17-19

The account of Elijah and his conflict with Ahab, his Phoenician queen Jezebel and the deity they promoted dominates 1 Kings 17-19.⁹ Of primary interest to most interpreters has been the identification of the deity known in these chapters as *habba'al*.

An examination of the passage in question along with sociopolitical considerations suggests that the Baal of Ahab is likely to have been a Phoenician deity

likely to belong to a supporter of whomever is identified by the element *ba'al*. Moore, for example, assumes that the name used the element “baal” to refer to Yahweh (Moore 1906:195-96). Most scholars, however, have seen the name as referring in some way or other to Canaanite Baal. Emerton (1976:290-91) reviews a number of the possible linguistic explanations of the name and settles on “may Baal be great”—taking the verbal element of the name to be *rb* (“to become numerous, great”). Given the doubts about the etymology supplied by the editor, some have argued that it is more likely that the name Jerubbaal was original and that the name Gideon (“chopper”) was given to commemorate either the destruction of the altar and its asherah or the defeat of the Midianites. In favour of the former is the fact that in Deut. 7:5, an element of Gideon’s name (*gd*, “to chop”, “break”) is used to describe what the faithful *Yahwist* should do to Canaanite *asherim*. If Gideon was a *Yahwist* as the text maintains, then it is possible that the baal element in Jerubbaal originally referred to Yahweh. The appearance of the element *ba'al* in names of *Yahwists* is not unknown in the early history of Israel. A number of members of Saul’s family, for example, had names which included the element *ba'al* (e.g. Eshbaal, 1 Chron. 8:33; 9:39 and Meribbaal, 1 Chron. 8:34; 9:40). Note also the combination of Yahweh- and baal elements in the name Bealiah (*bē'alyā*) (1 Chron. 12:6). Given the stance toward Baal, it would not be surprising if a name with a baal element such as Jerubbaal—even if *Yahwistic*—was later abandoned in favour of a neutral or overtly-*Yahwistic* alternative.

9 On the present literary unity of 1 Kings 17-19, see Cohn (1982) and Robinson (1991).

which the royal couple identified with Yahweh, but which the prophet Elijah and others rejected as utterly foreign to Israel and Yahwism. Two factors suggest at the outset that it is *unlikely* that Ahab would choose to supplant the worship of Yahweh with a genuinely alien deity. First, the absence of a single, enduring dynasty in the north meant that the reigning monarch could not rely upon tradition or ancestry as an assurance of public support. Time and again in the early history of Israel, the two groups that weighed heavily in determining dynastic succession were the various public assemblies¹⁰ and the prophets. Already in the brief history of the northern kingdom, this latter group had been instrumental in determining the fate of two kings. The prophet Ahijah gave Yahwistic approval to Jeroboam's initial succession (1 Kgs. 11:29-39) and the prophet Jehu issued a condemnation of Baasha's dynasty that resulted in its dissolution (1 Kgs. 16:1-4).¹¹ In addition, northern literary traditions identify Moses—Israel's greatest leader—as a prophet (Deut. 18:15-18; Hosea 12:13)(Carroll 1969:402). A measure of prophetic influence within the northern kingdom is reflected in Ahab's description of Elijah as the "troubler of Israel" (*ʾōkēr yiśrāʾēl*)(1 Kgs. 18:17).¹² The act of alienating either the prophets or the assembly, therefore, could have potentially

10 The *qēhal yiśrāʾēl* ("assembly of Israel") was the group that gathered at Shechem in order to ratify the ascension of Rehoboam (1 Kgs. 12:1-3). Other, similar popular assemblies were instrumental in ensuring the ascension of other of Ahab's predecessors. Saul's kingship came with the support of both Samuel and "the people" (*hāʿām*)(1 Sam. 11:14-15), while that of David followed endorsement by the "men of Judah" *ʾanšē yēhūdā*(2 Sam. 2:4) and the "elders of Israel" (*ziqnē yiśrāʾēl*)(2 Sam. 5:3). Similarly, Solomon's rise to the throne involved the approval of "the assembly" (*haqqāhāl*)(1 Chron. 29:20-22). Ahab, in considering the terms of surrender dictated to him by Ben-Hadad of Damascus, is said to have consulted the "elders of the land" (*ziqnē hāʾāreṣ*) for their advice (1 Kgs. 20:7-9). On the political role of various "popular" groups in ancient Israel, see Wolff (1947:98-108), Malamat (1963:247-53), de Vaux (1965a:69-72) and Healey (1992:168-69).

11 On the role of the prophets in the life of Israel see further, Parzen (1940) and Wilson (1980).

12 Further evidence of Elijah's authority lies in the fact that the court official Obadiah felt compelled to obey his command even though doing so threatened his own position (1 Kgs. 18:7-16).

serious consequences for the continued rule of any Israelite monarch. These facts of history could not have been lost on Ahab whose own dynasty was Israel's fifth in under 60 years. It is exceedingly unlikely, therefore, that he would endanger this base of support by attempting to replace Yahweh with a foreign deity.¹³

Second, it must be counted as unlikely that a dynasty such as the house of Omri would enter into a political marriage that would see its own national deity supplanted by a foreign one.¹⁴ If the reign of Solomon is anything to go on, the deities that came to Israel as a result of political marriages were not foisted upon the general populace or seen as competing with Yahweh. On the contrary, in Solomon's case, these shrines were built on a separate hill east of the city and some distance away from the temple of Yahweh (1 Kgs. 11:7-8). Moreover, if in a later period even military defeat in the ancient Near East did not automatically result in the imposition of a foreign god, then it is difficult to believe that a political marriage would accomplish this (Cogan 1993).¹⁵

These two factors make it unlikely, then, that Ahab understood "the baal" to be a completely "foreign" god. On the contrary, there is evidence which suggests that the Israelite king regarded "the baal" and Yahweh to be different manifestations of the same deity.

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- 13 Cohen arrives at similar conclusions, stressing that in the ancient world, religion played a foundational role in determining the basic concepts that govern societies. Thus, "the chances that Ahab rejected this (i.e. Yahwistic) ideology in favour of a radically different one become exceedingly slim" (1975:90-91).
 - 14 The international stature of the Omride dynasty is illustrated by the fact that long after the dynasty's demise, Israel was still known abroad as the "house of Omri" (*ANET*³:284). In addition to the economic benefits of the relationship between Israel and Tyre, the alliance provided a balance to the threat of a resurgent Assyria. On the mutual advantages of the treaty relationship between Omri of Israel and Ethbaal of Tyre, see Gray (1970:369), Bright (1981:241-42) and Briquel-Chatonnet (1992:67-89, 229-65).
 - 15 As Schniedewind (1993:650) and Carroll (1969:409, n. 1) observe, the statement by Jehu to the priests of "the baal" that "Ahab served Baal a little" (2 Kgs. 10:18), suggests that Ahab's intent was not to replace Yahwism with the religion practised by Jezebel.

That Ahab and Jezebel saw “the baal” as a manifestation of Yahweh is suggested in part by the references to the prophets of Asherah alongside those of “the baal” in chapter 18. Before examining the references to these two groups, the following should be noted. The Ugaritic texts have brought to light affinities between Yahweh and the Canaanite god El which make it possible that Asherah, consort of El, also had a place within Yahwistic religion. As noted by a number of scholars, confirmation of this possibility now exists in the form of textual and archaeological evidence that demonstrates that some within Israel understood Asherah to be the consort of Yahweh.¹⁶ From Kuntillet ‘Ajrud in the Sinai comes a text which makes specific reference to “Yahweh of *Samaria*” and “his Asherah” (Meshel 1994:99-100). From Taanach in Judah, comes a cult-stand on which Yahweh and Asherah appear to be represented together (Taylor 1988:557-66; 1993:24-37; 1994:52-61, 90-91). This being the case, it should not be surprising to find that in the court of Ahab at Samaria, the prophets of Asherah are connected with Yahweh. Biblical confirmation of this connection is found in several places in which the writer of Kings offers subtle confirmation of a Yahweh-Asherah relationship.

In 1 Kgs. 18:19 the 450 prophets of “the baal” are paired on Mount Carmel with the 400 prophets of Asherah.¹⁷ In the later command to kill off every last prophet of “the baal”, however, the prophets of Asherah are conspicuous in their absence (18:40). By this omission, it would seem that the writer of Kings is subtly acknowledging the possibility that the prophets of Asherah had at least some kind of claim to Yahwistic legitimacy and were not to be wholly identified with a “foreign” deity. That this is the case is further suggested by the existence of the 400 anonymous prophets of Ahab in 1

16 See Day (1986:391-92; 1992a:483), Dever (1982), Emerton (1982:13-19) and Margalit (1990:274-86).

17 Given the known association between Yahweh and Asherah, this pairing of prophetic groups suggests at the outset the possibility that some were associating “the baal” with Yahweh.

Kgs. 22:6.¹⁸ The second specific reference to a group of 400 prophets in the service of the same Israelite king within the space of a few chapters suggests that the author intends the reader to draw a connection between the 400 prophets of Asherah and the 400 anonymous prophets of 22:6.¹⁹ The connection between these prophets and the prophets of Asherah is made stronger by what the narrative reveals about their Yahwistic credentials. While the Judaeen king Jehoshaphat does not regard the 400 prophets as Yahwistic (22:7), it is clear that Ahab and the prophets themselves have no doubts as to their Yahwistic pedigree. In response to Jehoshaphat's request to consult *Yahweh*, Ahab assembles the 400 prophets who return the prophecy that Ramoth Gilead will be given into the king's hand. Later, one of these same prophets, a certain Zedekiah,²⁰ mocks Micaiah and in the process reveals that he understands his role to be one of prophesying by the spirit of Yahweh (*ʾê-zeh ʿābar rūaḥ-yhwh mēʾittî lēdabbēr ʾôtāk*), "Where did the spirit of Yahweh pass (on its way) from me to speak to you" (22:24). The difference between Jehoshaphat's assessment of the prophets and their own testimony as to their background and role is reconciled if one assumes that this group represents

18 Following a suggestion originally made in an oral presentation by David Noel Freedman at the Society for Biblical Literature Annual Meeting in 1988.

19 While some might discount the connection between the 400 prophets of Asherah and the 400 anonymous prophets as too subtle to be compelling, there is another line of evidence that makes the connection attractive. The likelihood of the aforementioned connection becomes markedly stronger if it can be demonstrated that the author of Kings has engaged in a similar practice elsewhere in his work. The likelihood increases further if such an example can be located within the same narrative framework as the case under discussion. In 1 Kgs. 19:18, reference is made to another group of individuals with some connection to a deity. In this case, the writer, discussing those who will exterminate the enemies of Yahweh (19:16-17), identifies a remnant of 7,000 "in Israel" who have not bowed the knee to, or kissed, "Baal". Later, in 20:15, the writer once again makes reference to a group of 7,000 men—the Israelites who will march out to defeat Ben-Hadad. The description of this group as, "all of the people, all the Israelites—7,000" implies that this group constitutes the faithful remnant of Israel. The author's double reference to the 7,000 faithful Yahwists seems intended to emphasise that Israel's military victory comes only through those who have kept themselves pure by refusing to worship "the baal". The fact that the monarch they defeat bears the Baal-name *Hadad* (20:16), serves only to strengthen this conclusion.

20 Who bears, it should be noted, a Yahwistic name.

the prophets of Asherah, considered Yahwistic in the northern kingdom, but somewhat suspect in the mind of Jehoshaphat and the Deuteronomist. The fact that the prophets of Asherah could be closely associated with both Yahweh and “the baal” suggests that people saw a connection between the latter two deities—perhaps to the extent of identifying them.

An additional sign that the Baal of Ahab was generally understood to be a manifestation of Yahweh is found in the fact that the test of Baal’s power is held at a *Yahwistic* site of some antiquity (1 Kgs. 18:30). Further, the later warning by Jehu to remove all Yahweh worshippers from the temple of “the baal” (2 Kgs. 10:23) suggests that the Omrides saw an overlap, or at the very least a compatibility, between “the baal” and Yahweh. That such a warning is felt necessary implies that some Yahwists saw an affinity between the two cults. There is ample reason then, to believe that in the mind of Ahab and many Israelites, “the baal” was a form of Yahweh.

If it is the case that Ahab could view “the baal” and Yahweh as manifestations of the same deity, it is equally the case that such theological subtleties seem to have been lost on ardent Yahwists such as Elijah. The passage under discussion clearly demonstrates that, whatever Ahab’s perspective, the writer of Kings and Elijah considered Ahab’s Baal to be a foreign interloper in direct and irreconcilable conflict with Yahweh. That the above is the case is suggested even prior to the showdown on Mount Carmel. In 1 Kgs. 16:29-33, the author surveys the religious crimes of Ahab son of Omri. Immediately following, in 17:1, the prophet Elijah announces to Ahab in the name of Yahweh that there would be no rain or even dew except at Elijah’s bidding. During the resultant drought, Elijah is three times commanded by Yahweh to go to a particular location. In the first of these commands, Elijah is sent to the Nahal Kerith in the vicinity of the Jordan²¹ where he drinks from the stream and is fed by ravens (1 Kgs.

21 The location of this stream is unknown. Most scholars prefer a location east of the Jordan river, basing their arguments on the use of *‘al-pēnê* and the fact that this

17:2-7). Later, the prophet is sent to Zarephath, a Phoenician town lying between Tyre and Sidon (17:8-9). Here in the heart of the Phoenician homeland, it is apparent that the divinely-commanded drought has taken complete hold. In this region, Elijah performs a number of miracles that demonstrate that Yahweh's power to provide food and overcome death is not confined to any one national jurisdiction (17:8-24)(Bronner 1968:25; Fensham 1980:234; House 1995:215).²² Finally, the prophet is sent to appear before Ahab himself to announce the end of the drought (18:1). As briefly noted above, the purpose of the first two episodes is simple. The incident at the Nahal Kerith establishes the fact of the drought in Israel and the ability of Yahweh to selectively reverse its effects within Israelite national territory. The sojourn at Zarephath, likewise, establishes the fact of Yahweh's drought outside of Israelite territory and demonstrates his ability to selectively reverse its effects beyond Israel's borders—and therefore beyond the reaches of a "national" god. In establishing the fact that Yahweh's power is absolute and unconfined by national boundaries, this section provides a theological basis for the showdown that takes place between "the baal" and Yahweh in chapter 18. This introduction, therefore, establishes the issue of this chapter not as, who is god of Israel, but who is god—period. In the contest of chapter 18, there is no consolation prize. The outcome of the test demonstrates that the loser is not a god.

More than any other event, the Mount Carmel incident provides evidence for the Deuteronomist's belief that Yahweh and "the baal" were incompatible.²³ In statements such as those found in 1 Kgs. 18:21 and 24, the prophet presents "the baal" and Yahweh as mutually exclusive. Further indication that Elijah and the narrator consider the Baal

region was Elijah's homeland (Yunker 1992:899). A minority of scholars have identified the Nahal Kerith with the Wadi Qelt, a gorge on the west bank of the Jordan near Jericho (Aharoni and Avi-Yonah 1979:8; Pritchard 1987:99).

22 Yahweh's universal authority is also implied by Yahweh's command that Elijah anoint Hazael king of Damascus (House 1995:224).

23 The idea that the conflict on Mount Carmel was between the cults of two opposing deities has long been the consensus among scholars. See, Cohen (1975:88, n. 3).

of Ahab to be a foreign rival to Yahweh is found in 1 Kgs. 18:31-32. In this passage, Elijah takes twelve stones and builds an altar in the name of Yahweh. Interesting here is the mention that the stones represent the twelve sons of Jacob and the further, unnecessary notation that the word of Yahweh had earlier come to Jacob, whose name Yahweh had changed to Israel. The use of the phrase, *yīsrāʾēl yihyeh šēmekā* ("Israel will be your name")(18:31), points directly to Gen. 35:10 where the identical phrase appears—again in the context of altar-building. Adding to the significance of this parallel is the fact that it takes place at Bethel (one of the two centres of the traditional, national cult of the northern kingdom) and marks the point at which Jacob's family rids itself of their "foreign gods" (*ʾēlōhê hannēkār*)(Gen. 35:2).²⁴ The point the writer of Kings is making seems inescapable. For both the writer and the prophet, the contest atop Mount Carmel is as significant for Israel as was the day when its founder and his twelve sons turned their back on foreign gods and committed themselves to serve Yahweh—the "god of Israel". By drawing attention to this significant point in Israel's history, the author—through the actions of Elijah—is declaring the Baal of Ahab to be a foreign interloper that needs to be rejected in the same way that Jacob's family earlier rejected its foreign gods.

Yet another indication of the writer's disposition toward the Baal of Ahab may come in his use in 18:36 of the phrase, "Abraham, Isaac and Israel". Less common than the combination "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob", the former phrase occurs only three other times in the MT.²⁵ In the case of the text under discussion, the only prior occurrence is Exod. 32:13 in which Moses²⁶ pleads to God to remember his promises to Israel's

24 An observation made also by Cohn (1982:340-41).

25 Exod. 32:13; 1 Chron. 29:18; 2 Chron. 30:6. The phrase "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" occurs at least nineteen times in the MT.

26 The similarities between the Elijah narratives and Moses' experience at Mount Horeb have been well-covered by a number of authors. See, for example, Carroll (1969), Saint-Laurent (1980:126), Coote (1981:117-20), Cohn (1982), Gregory (1990:144-46) and Robinson (1991).

forefathers and relent from destroying the people. The fact that the parallel invocation of this formula occurs in the aftermath of the sin of the golden calf²⁷ suggests that its use in 1 Kgs. 18:36 is intended to bring to mind the idea that the Baal of Ahab was as much a “non-Yahwistic” aberration as was the calf fabricated by Aaron.²⁸

If the Baal of Ahab was a foreign deity which the royal establishment attempted to promote as a manifestation of Yahweh, then what can be said about the identity of that deity? The majority of scholars follow de Vaux (1971b:238-51) in identifying the Baal of 1 Kings 18 with Melqart.²⁹ There is much to commend this view. As the “Baal of Tyre”,³⁰ Melqart is a likely candidate for the god imported by Jezebel—one who hailed from Tyre. As noted by de Vaux, aspects of Melqart’s character also comport well with details of the Mount Carmel passage. The nature of Melqart/Heracles as a dying and rising god, for example, fits well with Elijah’s taunt that “the baal” “might be sleeping” (*ʾūlay yāšēn*)(1 Kgs. 18:27).³¹ The references to “bending the knee to Baal” (1 Kgs. 19:18)

27 A fact noted also by Cohn (1982:342).

28 While the golden calf ultimately may originate in a Yahwistic image, it is nonetheless the case that the editor of Exodus and the Deuteronomic Historian saw it as non-Yahwistic.

29 Among those who equate the Baal of 1 Kings 18 with Melqart are, Peake (1927), Rowley (1960-61), Albright (1968:243-44), Bonnet (1988:139-43) and Katzenstein (1991b:376; 1997:150-51).

30 A 2nd-century BC dedicatory inscription from Malta reads, *l ʾdnn lmlqrt bʾl šr* (“To our lord, to Melqart, Baal of Tyre”)(KAI 47, l. 1).

31 De Vaux identifies the nature of Melqart as a “dying and rising” god in part on the basis of Josephus’ statement that Hiram king of Tyre celebrated his “awakening” (*Against Apion* I.118-19; *Antiquities* VIII.146) and by inscriptional references to the “rousers” of Melqart (de Vaux 1971b:247-50). See also Bonnet (1988:33-40, 104-112) and Lipiński (1995:230-43).

The problems associated with using classical sources must always be kept in mind. Mark Smith notes that the inability to verify the claims of many late classical sources poses a difficulty for those who would use them to reconstruct early Phoenician religion. “Scholars may either desist from ... optimistic reconstructions and risk an entirely minimalist view of Phoenician religion; or they may venture massive reconstructions synthesising Phoenician evidence with classical authors and exert fewer controls over their material” (Smith 1990b:591). Caution is required in part because Greek and Roman authors sometimes made identifications between their own and other gods on the basis of one particular

and the dance of the priests of “the baal” around the altar (1 Kgs. 18:26), also fit well with what is known about a dance that was part of the cult of Tyrian Heracles (de Vaux 1971b:240-43).³²

Some scholars who acknowledge the identification of the Baal of Jezebel with Melqart suggest that this deity was in some way identified with Baal-Hadad/-Shamem (Mulder 1962:27-44; Bronner 1968:11, 26; Gray 1970:393, 95-96; Briquel-Chatonnet 1992:299, 304-13).³³ Indeed, through the long history of the ancient Near East, deities did not always remain static, but also disappeared, merged with others, or divided. In Syria, for example, Astarte, Anat and probably Asherah coalesce in the deity Atargatis (Oden 1977b:60-107) while in Egypt the amalgamation of Asherah, Anat and Astarte is

feature and not on an overall view of the deity. Thus Plutarch, for example, commenting on the Feast of Tabernacles celebrated at the time of vintage, wrongly identifies Yahweh with the god Dionysus/Bacchus (*Moralia, Table-Talk* IV.6). Reason for caution is also warranted because it is clear that in some cases even those closest to a particular shrine were unsure of the traditions associated with it. Lucian, for example, records a number of conflicting traditions reported to him by priestly staff during his excursion through Phoenicia and Syria (*De Dea Syria* 11-15, 44). For these reasons, the value of classical testimony should be measured by several criteria including date, authorial perspective and conformity with other sources of tradition.

- 32 De Vaux draws attention to the word ὡκλασαν used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew *kr*^c (1 Kgs. 19:18) and points to a form of the same word (ἐποκλάζοντες) used to describe the dance of Tyrian sailors in worship of Heracles (Heliodorus, *Ethiopian Story* IV.17.1). While Bonnet (1988:141) accepts this parallel, she cautions that such dances were not *exclusive* to the cult of Melqart.
- 33 That Melqart may have included the characteristics of more than one deity is made possible by the fact that the god is seemingly unknown prior to the 1st millennium BC and by Herodotus' claim that the cult of Melqart went back to the founding of Tyre (*Histories* II.43-44). Even if the date given to Herodotus represents an exaggeration, it does suggest that the cult of Melqart had a long history. If Melqart *was* venerated in the 2nd millennium, then it would seem that he was not known by the name Melqart. This makes it possible that Melqart of the 1st millennium included the characteristics of an unknown 2nd-millennium deity—perhaps one with storm-god characteristics such as those possessed by Baal-Shamem. That the 1st-millennium cult of Melqart may have incorporated the characteristics of some other 2nd-millennium deity may be implied by the testimony of Menander of Ephesus that Hiram of Tyre pulled down ancient temples and erected new ones to Melqart and Astarte (*Antiquities* VIII.146).

evidenced by a stele dedicated to Qudshu-Anat-Astarte (Edwards 1955:49-5; Cross 1973:33-34). A number of shared characteristics between Melqart and Baal-Shamem make it possible that these two deities were related to each other in at least some localities and at certain periods³⁴—perhaps as deities that were originally both associated with a single Canaanite storm god.

Other scholars draw parallels solely to the Ugaritic myths and argue that the Baal of 1 Kings 18 is most closely related to Ugaritic Baal (Saint-Laurent 1980; Hauser 1990:30-47).

A few scholars completely reject any identification with Melqart and argue instead that the deity challenged by Elijah atop Mount Carmel was Baal-Shamem—the “Lord of the Heavens” (Eissfeldt 1939:18-22; Smith 1990a:42-44). Such a deity, they maintain, fits best with the god who could send fire from heaven and bring rain to a drought-ravaged land. For his part, Smith argues that there is nothing which connects Melqart with the storm.

A novel approach to the problem of identification is taken by Halpern (1993a:149) who suggests that the Baal faced by Elijah was not a single figure such as Melqart, Hadad or Baal-Shamem, but a panoply of deities “virtually indistinguishable from the Israelite pantheon at the time, but with a Tyrian twist”.

Despite the objections of Smith and others, the best candidate for the Baal of Jezebel opposed by Elijah atop Mount Carmel is Melqart, the Baal of Tyre. Indeed, Smith draws too rigid a definition of what constitutes a “storm god” when he focuses on the use of lightning to exclude Melqart as the deity challenged by Elijah. The control

34 In Plutarch’s version of the Osiris myth (*Isis and Osiris* 15-16), Isis goes to Byblos and finds herself at the palace of king Malcathrus and queen Astarte. If the name Malcathrus is derived from Melqart—as seems reasonable—then its pairing with Astarte the partner of Baal might provide evidence that Melqart developed from Baal.

of lightning was just one way in which the storm god exercised authority over the elements that promoted the cycle of growth and brought fertility to the land. To Smith's main objection then, the following should be considered. While the immediate object of the challenge of Mount Carmel was to produce fire (or lightning) from heaven (1 Kgs. 18:24), the larger context shows that the overriding concern was with control of the famine-inducing drought (1 Kgs. 17:1, 7, 16; 18:1-2, 41-45). Once "the baal" and his prophets are defeated, the land once more receives its rain. This fact suggests that the Baal of Jezebel was not just a god of lightning, but of fertility and prosperity. As was demonstrated in chapter two, there is ample evidence to show that Melqart/Heracles was a deity connected with fertility and the storm.

If Melqart does possess storm and fertility characteristics, then the parallels offered by de Vaux and others become much more compelling. In addition to Melqart's connection to fertility, there are several other factors that point toward this deity as the Baal promoted by Ahab and Jezebel. The character of Melqart as a dynastic god that was the protector of cities and colonies (Bonnet 1988:97; Aubet 1993:127)³⁵ fits well with a deity whose temple was built in the newly-founded dynastic capital of Samaria.³⁶ Melqart's association with colonial expansion and trade also comports with the taunt of Elijah that Baal might be "travelling" (1 Kgs. 18:27; Bonnet 1988:141). In addition, the probable celebration of the dying and rising of Melqart through the ritual immolation of an effigy of the god³⁷ fits well with both the challenge to call fire from heaven and the

35 Although some (Smith 1990b) have discounted the idea that Melqart was associated with the city of Tyre itself, the worship of this deity in many of the colonies founded by the city, the tithes sent from abroad to his Tyrian temple, the prominent place at Tyre afforded to the deity's high priest, the god's title (*b'l šr*) and the appearance in the Hellenistic period of Heracles on Tyrian coinage all suggest that Melqart held a position of particular honour at Tyre.

36 See below, pp. 157-62.

37 This ritual may be related to the tradition of the death of Heracles in which the poisoned and dying hero casts himself upon a sacrificial pyre (Gantz 1993:458). Another reflection of this ritual might exist in Pausanias' citation of Cleon of Magnesia in which the latter reports being forced temporarily to leave Cadiz at the

later ascension of Elijah to heaven in a fiery chariot. Given Melqart's maritime associations, it may be significant that when the rain-clouds form they do so out over the Mediterranean Sea (1 Kgs. 18:44).

If Ahab considered the Baal of Carmel to be a manifestation of Yahweh, then the question naturally arises as to what made this so. There must have been some points of comparison between Yahweh and Ahab's Baal that led to a natural identification between the two deities. Several points present themselves. First, both Yahweh and Baal were supreme national and dynastic gods, a fact which in and of itself would have made an identification natural. Second, the storm-imagery earlier appropriated to Yahweh would have provided a natural point of contact with Phoenician Baal. This latter fact is recognised in the Horeb theophany in which Yahweh eschews identification with storm-imagery in favour of the "still, small voice" (*qôl dēmāmā daqqâ*)(1 Kgs. 19:12).³⁸ In other words, at Horeb, Yahweh sloughs off the borrowed imagery that had allowed some in the north to equate him with the Phoenician Baal.

2 Kings 10:18-28

In the passage under discussion, Jehu gathers and slaughters the followers of "the baal" in the temple of "the baal" at Samaria. There is no need to see here a different deity than the one defeated earlier in the showdown atop Mount Carmel. The connection between "the baal" of 1 Kings 18 and the present narrative is suggested in part by the fact that the same term (*habba'al*) is applied to the deity in both passages.

"command of Heracles". Upon his return, Cleon reports seeing "cast ashore a man of the sea, ... burning away, because heaven had blasted him with a thunderbolt" (*Description of Greece* X.iv.6; Jones 1961). If what Cleon observed was a ritual of the Heracles cult, then the reference to the thunderbolt may provide an explanation for the emphasis on fire from heaven in 1 Kings 18.

38 See generally Parzen (1940:75), Todd (1992:25-26) and Cohn (1982:347-48); cf. Lust (1976:94-99).

Additionally, the participation of Jehonadab son of Rechab in the destruction of the Baal worshippers also suggests that the deities are the same. The identity of Jehonadab as a member of a group devoted to nomadism and an eschewal of settled agricultural life marks him as one potentially opposed to a god of weather and fertility—the very characteristics of the baal of 1 Kings 18 (2 Kgs. 10:15-27).³⁹ Continuity is also indicated by Jehu's statement that he would serve "the baal" more than had Ahab (v. 18).⁴⁰

The recognition of the limited extent of Ahab's participation in the worship of Tyrian Baal implies that Ahab's sponsorship of the cult did not represent a wholesale effort to oust Yahweh as the god of Israel. It would seem that here, as in 1 Kings 18, the same understanding of "the baal" applies. While the writer wishes the Baal of Ahab to be understood as an alien deity, clues exist which suggest that the royal establishment understood the god to be either compatible with, or a manifestation of, Yahweh.

The contest on Mount Carmel concluded with the slaughter of the 450 prophets of "the baal". Now, Jehu invites the prophets of "the baal" along with "his worshippers" (*ōbdāyw*) and "his priests" (*kōhānāyw*) to a sacrifice for the god. The term "great sacrifice" (*zebah gādōl*) reveals something of the Deuteronomist's attitude toward the Baal of Ahab. This exact phrase is used in only two other locations in the OT—Judg. 16:23 and Ezek. 39:17. In both cases the context is a "sacrifice" that results in the massive

39 In Jer. 35:6-7, the descendants (either genealogically or ideologically) of Jehonadab son of Rechab describe their lifestyle as including dwelling in tents, refusing to plant crops or vineyards and refusing to drink wine. Such a lifestyle made them largely independent of the agricultural cycle and the fertility or weather deity believed to control it. Thus, this group provided a natural ally for Jehu as he sought to eliminate the worship of "the baal" from Israel. Recent treatments of the Rechabites which see them as chariot makers or former household servants (Frick 1992:630-32; Keown, Scalise and Smothers 1995:195-96) suffer from being more speculative than the traditional view which sees them as ones who had reverted to nomadism (Thompson 1980:615-19). Moreover, none of the alternative proposals concerning the identity of the Rechabites offers a convincing explanation as to why they should make common cause with Jehu in his opposition to the Baal cult.

40 See above, note 15.

slaughter of human beings in a non-Yahwistic context.⁴¹ In the first instance the context is the death of the Philistines as Samson brings down the temple of Dagon, while in the second it is the destruction of the forces of Gog on the hills of Judah. The use of this same term in 2 Kgs. 10:19 therefore, would seem to point toward another human slaughter in a non-Yahwistic context. The editor's understanding of the relationship between Yahweh and "the baal" is also revealed by the fact that Jehu's slaughter of the worshippers of "the baal" is anticipated in v. 16 by his words to Jehonadab *lēkā ʾittī ūrēʾēh bēqinʾātī lyhwh*—"Come with me and see my jealousy for Yahweh". That the natural result of jealousy for Yahweh is the destruction of "the baal" demonstrates once again that, for the Deuteronomist, Yahweh and the Baal of Ahab are wholly incompatible.

In v. 20, Jehu calls on the people to proclaim an "assembly"⁴² for "the baal" at which the worshippers of "the baal" are given special garments (v. 22). While the bestowal of vestments has the appearance of an honour, given what happens next, the actual role of the garments is presumably to identify the Baal worshippers to the soldiers waiting outside. Once the devotees of "the baal" are present, Jehu commands that all the servants of Yahweh be removed (v. 23). If the attitude of the Deuteronomist is accepted as indicating a traditional and widespread point of view, then there is little chance that an ardent Yahwist would be found at a feast for "the baal". The assumption of the text that Yahwists could be found at such a celebration, however, reflects the reality that for some in Israel, Yahweh-worship and Baal worship were entirely compatible.

41 See Irwin (1995:107-9). A plural use of this phrase occurs once in Neh. 12:43 in the context of the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem.

42 The term "assembly" (*ʿāṣārā*) is elsewhere used in a Yahwistic context to indicate an extraordinary gathering that functioned as a Sabbath (Lev. 23:36; Num. 29:35; Deut. 16:8; Isa. 1:13; Joel 1:14; 2:15).

Having killed the followers of “the baal”, Jehu’s men enter the innermost part of the shrine⁴³ and remove and burn its standing stones (*maṣṣēbôt*)(v. 26).⁴⁴ In addition, they break down both the standing stone (*maṣṣēbat*) of “the baal” and the temple itself (v. 27). Interesting to note here is the fact that, as was earlier the case on Mount Carmel, the followers of Asherah are conspicuous by their absence. The absence of any reference to Asherah may well stem from the fact that, despite disapproval by the Deuteronomist elsewhere (17:16), Asherah was a traditional part of Yahweh-worship (as shown by the material from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud) and may have had a closer relationship to Yahweh than

43 Cf. Yadin (1978). Yadin, inspired by the presence of *ʿīr* (“city”) in the MT of 2 Kgs. 10:25, suggests that the temple of “the baal” built by Ahab was not at Samaria, but atop Mount Carmel. This is unlikely to be the case. Jehu’s servants could hardly leave for the “city of the house of Baal” in v. 25 when v. 23 already places them at that very location. Verse 26 shows that *ʿīr* refers to that part of the temple which housed the *maṣṣēbôt* and therefore does not refer to another locality. Although there is a consensus among scholars that *ʿīr* in this passage means “inner shrine”, no one has yet put forward a convincing etymology of the word. Gray’s claim (Gray 1970:562) to find an Ugaritic cognate *ḡr* meaning “inner recess” or “shrine” should be rejected on the grounds that in the passage he cites (where Anat leaves her palace to undertake a slaughter in the valley below), the term *ḡr* is best taken as “mountain” (KTU 1.3 II.3-5). As noted by Jones (1984b:471), most translators and commentators follow the suggestion of Klostermann and emend *ʿīr* (“city”) to *dēbīr* (“inmost shrine”). In the end, however, resorting to emendation may not be necessary. In the passage under discussion, *ʿīr* may simply refer to a fortified area within a larger complex in the same way in which the phrase *ʿīr dāwid/dāwīd* (“city of David”) at times refers to a fortified area within the city of Jerusalem (2 Sam. 5:7, 9; 1 Kgs. 3:1; 8:1; 9:24; 2 Kgs. 9:28; 14:20; 1 Chron. 11:5, 7; 2 Chron. 5:2; 8:11; 21:20; 32:5).

44 The feminine plural noun *maṣṣēbôt* (“standing stones”) seems at odds with the feminine singular suffix on the verb that follows (*wayyiśrēpūāh*, “and they burned it”) and some on this basis favour reading here the singular (e.g. Montgomery 1951:411, 16-1; Jones 1984b:471 and Hobbs 1985:121, 30). GKC (1910:§135p) and Waltke and O’Connor (1990:§16.4b) note, however, that the use of a plural noun with a singular pronominal suffix falls within normal usage. The reference to multiple stones of the “temple of Baal” in v. 26 and a single stone of “Baal” in v. 27 presumably distinguishes between the stone of the primary deity and those of his acolytes. The presence of multiple stones within a single shrine is well-known from excavations at Gezer (Dever 1993:499, 501) and Hazor (Yadin 1972:67-74, Pl. XIVa-b).

did Baal. In addition to the points made above,⁴⁵ the traditional nature of Asherah within Yahwism is suggested by the fact that despite Jehu's zeal for Yahweh (v. 16), an asherah remained standing in his own capital Samaria down through the reign of his son Jehoahaz (13:6).⁴⁶

In a partial summary of Jehu's reign the editor notes that by his actions the usurper smashed Baal worship in Israel. Beyond this point, nowhere else in 2 Kings is Baal worship mentioned in connection with a ruler of the northern kingdom. That such is the case is not surprising. The worship of Tyrian Baal appears to have flourished in Israel in the wake of the political marriage of Ahab to Jezebel and the treaty it undoubtedly sealed.⁴⁷ With the death of Jezebel at the hands of Jehu this treaty ended and with it there died any reason to promote a Phoenician counterpart to Yahweh. More than anything else, the editor's statement that Baal worship was crushed by Jehu, provides reason for doubting Halpern's contention that the Baal of Ahab stood for a *host of deities* "virtually indistinguishable from the Israelite pantheon at the time, but with a Tyrian twist" (1993a:149). It is difficult to imagine that Jehu could crush with one stroke a form of worship that, in the opinion of Halpern, persisted in similar form in the southern kingdom until the Josianic reform (1993a:130-31, 44-50). While the Deuteronomist is quick to condemn the people and rulers of Judah for worshipping the "Host of Heaven" (*šēbā' haššāmāyim*),⁴⁸ this same charge is never levelled against the kings of Israel.⁴⁹ The great sin of these monarchs is rather, following in the "sins of Jeroboam".⁵⁰ The success that Jehu achieved in ending the worship of "the baal"

45 See above, section on 1 Kings 17-19.

46 This asherah is presumably that made by Ahab (1 Kgs. 16:33).

47 See Prentice (1923:37).

48 2 Kgs. 21:3, 5; 23:4-5.

49 The only possible exception to this is the use of this phrase in the general assessment of the sins of *both* Judah and Israel given in 2 Kgs. 17:7-23.

50 1 Kgs. 14:16; 15:30; 16:31; 2 Kgs. 3:3; 10:29, 31; 13:2, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 17:22.

suggests that the cult was that of a single foreign deity and not the traditional Yahwistic “Host of Heaven” in Tyrian garb.

2 Kings 11:17-20 and 2 Chron. 23:16-21

The passages under discussion convey scant detail about the nature of the Baal worshipped in Jerusalem in the time of Athaliah. Even the existence of parallel accounts is of little help given the Chronicler’s general reliance upon Kings at this point (Williamson 1982:312-13). From the two passages, however, the following reasonably may be assumed. In 2 Kings 11 and 2 Chronicles 22-23, Jehosheba, a member of the royal family and wife of the priest Jehoiada, rescues the infant prince Joash and secretly raises him in the temple complex. Some years later, Jehoiada orchestrates a *coup d’état* and presents Joash to the people as their legitimate king. In the course of the uprising, the temple of “the baal” is destroyed and its priest murdered.

Here as in 2 Kings 10, there is little reason to doubt that the Baal in question is the Tyrian import promoted in Israel by Ahab and Jezebel. The reason for this is three-fold. First, Athaliah queen of Judah (and the presumed patroness of the Baal shrine),⁵¹ was probably a granddaughter of Omri and daughter of Ahab and Jezebel—the patrons of Tyrian Baal in the northern kingdom.⁵² Second, as noted by a number of older

51 Athaliah’s connection with the Baal-cult naturally follows from the fact that it is destroyed upon her overthrow.

52 The MT appears divided on the parentage of Athaliah. In 2 Kgs. 8:26 and 2 Chron. 22:2 Athaliah is described as the “daughter of Omri”, while in 2 Kgs. 8:18 and 2 Chron. 21:6 she is identified as the “daughter of Ahab”. Despite the objections of Thiel (1992:511) it may be possible to reconcile these two testimonies by assuming that 2 Kgs. 8:26 and 2 Chron. 22:2 use “daughter of Omri” in the same way that the phrase “son of David” is sometimes used to identify a member of the Davidic line (e.g. Prov. 1:1; Eccles. 1:1; 2 Chron. 23:3; 32:33) . Whatever the case, the MT and the chronology of Athaliah’s reign relative to those of Omri and Ahab make it clear that, 1) she was an Omride, and 2) she was raised during the period of Baal worship in the north.

scholars (Curtis and Madsen 1910:431; Montgomery 1951:423), Mattan, the priest of “the baal” murdered by the people of Judah, bears a name that is well-known in Phoenicia and the Punic colonies.⁵³ The possibility that a Phoenician cultic official served at the Baal shrine in Jerusalem would be in keeping with the idea that the shrine was devoted to a Phoenician deity. Third, the manner in which the people destroy the temple of “the baal” is unprecedented and is suggestive of the kind of anger that is often directed toward foreign elements in times of social upheaval.

As is the case with the Deuteronomist, the Chronicler also portrays the Baal of Athaliah as incompatible with Yahweh. This is demonstrated in part by the need for covenant renewal. In 2 Kgs. 11:17 and 2 Chron. 23:16, Jehoiada makes a covenant with the people and the king in which all three groups pledge themselves to be “people of Yahweh”. In both passages, the immediate result of this covenant is that the people destroy the temple of Baal and kill its priest. The necessity of a renewed covenant highlights the theological disruption wrought by Baal worship in Jerusalem while the destruction of the Baal shrine accentuates the perceived incompatibility of this deity and Yahweh.

If both the Deuteronomist and the Chronicler assume the incompatibility of Yahweh and “the baal”, they also leave clues which suggest that the queen and others understood “the baal” to be compatible with the cult of Yahweh. From 2 Kgs. 11:18 and 2 Chron. 23:17, it is clear that Athaliah—a woman with a good Yahwistic name—tolerated (and presumably patronised) a shrine to “the baal” in Jerusalem.

53 See also the widespread occurrence of this name in votive offerings from El-Hofra in Punic North Africa (Berthier and Charlier 1955). It has been rightly pointed out, however, that the name Mattan is also used of Israelites and is therefore not exclusively Phoenician (Gray 1970:581; Hobbs 1985:143; House 1995:300). While this is true, it is important to note that, with the exception of three occurrences, this name always (16 times) appears in the MT with the Yahwistic theophoric element. Given that elsewhere the Biblical writers were not averse to giving Baal worshippers Yahwistic names (e.g. Athaliah), it remains possible that Mattan was a non-Israelite.

Despite this apparent devotion to “the baal”, the service at the temple of Yahweh was permitted to continue throughout the course of Athaliah’s reign. These two factors suggest that Athaliah, like her parents, saw “the baal” and Yahweh as being entirely compatible and perhaps even identical.

Further evidence for a connection between Yahweh and the Baal of Athaliah may exist if it can be shown that the shrine of the latter was found within that of the former. Although the location of the Baal shrine is not explicitly stated, four elements hint at its possible location within, or adjacent to, the temple complex. First, a location close to the temple of Yahweh is favoured by the context. The setting of 2 Kgs. 11:13-19 and 2 Chron. 23:12-20 is firmly rooted in the temple of Yahweh. In 2 Kgs. 11:13-16 and 2 Chron. 23:12-15, Athaliah is seized within the temple grounds. In 2 Kgs. 11:17-18 and 2 Chron. 23:16-17, the covenant is renewed—presumably at the temple—and the people destroy the temple of “the baal”. Finally, in 2 Kgs. 11:19 and 2 Chron. 23:20, the people escort the new king from the temple to the palace. Second, immediately after the shrine’s destruction, Jehoiada moves to secure the temple of Yahweh, placing officers (*pēquddōt*) over it (1 Kgs. 11:18; 2 Chron. 23:18-19).⁵⁴ This latter action suggests that his control of the temple area had previously been incomplete.⁵⁵ Such a lack of complete control might have been the case if a Baal shrine existed under royal patronage within the temple complex. Third, the fact that only one priest of “the baal” is mentioned in both Kings and Chronicles is consonant with the possibility that the “temple of Baal” was not a large independent sanctuary set apart from the temple mount, but rather a

54 Kings and Chronicles differ slightly at this point. The text of Kings simply states that the priest placed officers over the temple of Yahweh. Chronicles, with its concern for cultic propriety, alters this somewhat to place these officers under the control of the Levites (Curtis and Madsen 1910:431; Japhet 1993:836). In both cases, immediately following the destruction of the temple of “the baal”, Jehoiada moves to establish complete control over the temple precinct.

55 Yadin’s suggestion (1978:130-32) that Athaliah’s temple of Baal was located at Ramat Rahel (MR 170-127) is entirely speculative. No iconographic, archaeological or textual evidence warrants placing a Baal-shrine at the site. See also the objections of Briquel-Chatonnet (1992:298).

smaller shrine located within the larger Yahwistic temple complex. Fourth, if the temple of “the baal” was under royal patronage, then it is likely that it was situated near the palace which sat just to the south of the temple mount. Although the above cannot be considered conclusive, it does at least point toward the idea that the “temple” of “the baal” was located near or within the temple of Yahweh. If such was the case, then it would provide additional evidence for believing that Athaliah held “the baal” to be entirely compatible with Yahweh and perhaps that the former was considered a manifestation of the latter.

That a shrine to Tyrian Baal might have existed within the temple of Yahweh should not be considered altogether surprising. Indeed, a striking parallel is found much later in the approval given by some hellenistic Jews to the installation of an altar to Olympian Zeus in the temple at Jerusalem.⁵⁶ Although a lack of detail makes it difficult to draw conclusions, the passages discussed above make it probable that the Baal of Athaliah was the Tyrian Baal which she and others identified with Yahweh, but which others classified as a non-Yahwistic and foreign intruder.

56 For those Jews steeped in Greek thought, Olympian Zeus was not a foreign god but—as the supreme deity of the Greek world—a deity that could be considered to be a manifestation of Yahweh (Bruce 1997:142-43). That some Jews were comfortable with such an equation is evident from Josephus’ version of the *Letter of Aristeas* in which Aristeas states to Ptolemy Philadelphus that they both worship the same god (*Antiquities* XII.22)(Jones 1980:266-67). Tcherikover (1982:194-95) argues somewhat differently, suggesting that the installation of the new altar came at the behest of members of the Syrian garrison who equated Yahweh with Baal Shamin/Olympian Zeus. This change, he suggests, was tolerated by a only small number of hellenising Jews. The conclusion common to both the above interpretations is that while the identification of Yahweh with Zeus was a natural step for one segment of the population it was rejected as heretical by the majority.

2 Chronicles 24:7

In this verse, the Chronicler blames the dilapidated state of the temple on the sons of Athaliah who pillaged its goods for use in the worship of “the baals” (*labbē‘ālîm*). A comparison with 2 Kgs. 12:5-9 suggests this verse to be an addition by the Chronicler⁵⁷ made to excuse the Levites for the temple’s poor state of repair (vv. 5b-6).⁵⁸ The use here of the term *labbē‘ālîm* rather than the *habba‘al* used in 2 Chron. 23:17⁵⁹ also identifies this verse as the Chronicler’s own comment. The appearance of *habba‘al* in 23:17 is understandable given the Chronicler’s reliance there on the earlier material from 2 Kings 11 (where *habba‘al* also appears). The appearance of *labbē‘ālîm* in relation to Athaliah’s sons may be explained on the grounds that by the post-exilic period the threat of “the baal” (*habba‘al* in 1 Kings 18; 2 Kings 10-11 and 2 Chronicles 23) had long since vanished. In the post-exilic period, there was no danger of a dynastically-sponsored cult that threatened Yahwism from within. Where the danger lay, rather, was in the gods of the peoples with who Israel rubbed shoulders in the much reduced territory of Judah (Ezra 4:1-5; 9-10; Neh. 9:2; 10:31; 13:1-3, 23-27). By the time of the Chronicler, the term describing the object of post-exilic infidelity had become *bē‘ālîm* and this, consequently, is the term he chose to use.⁶⁰ Thus, while there may be some

57 On this verse as the Chronicler’s own contribution, see Williamson (1982:321) and Japhet (1993:844).

58 Athaliah’s sons pillage the *qōdšê* of the temple for “the baals”. When repairs are done and the temple goods restored they are described as *kēlî* (2 Chron. 24:14). The Chronicler’s interest in making this addition regarding the misuse of the temple *kēlî* may also be motivated by the incident described in Neh. 13:4-9 in which the foreigner Tobias is found to have been living in one of the storerooms for the *kēlî* of the temple. Once this is discovered he is ejected and the area purified. If this is the case, then it is further evidence that the Chronicler’s use of *bē‘ālîm* is motivated by an antagonism toward intrusive foreign religious elements.

59 This verse marks the Chronicler’s only use of the term *ba‘al* as a singular noun referring to a deity—elsewhere he uses *labbē‘ālîm*. (2 Chron. 17:3; 24:7; 28:2; 33:3; 34:4).

60 See below, p. 167-68.

truth in the statement that Athaliah's sons redirected temple vessels for use in "non-traditional" worship, the contention that such items were used for "the baals" would appear to be based on a view of a somewhat later religious landscape.

2 Kgs 17:16-17

In these two verses the writer uses several verbs to summarise the sinful legacy of the northern kingdom. For Israel, forsaking the commandments of Yahweh included "making" (*śh*) calf idols and an asherah, "bowing" (*hwh*) to the host of heaven and "serving" (*bd*) the baal, as well as "passing" (*br*) their children through the fire and practising forms of divination (*qsm, nhš*). While directed toward the northern kingdom, this list includes items that are best known through condemnations of the southern kingdom.⁶¹ This fact suggests that here the editor is likely sending a clear message of warning to the people of Judah in which the sins they were committing are cast as the ones that had sent Israel into exile (Provan 1995:248-49).

2 Kings 23:4-7 and 2 Chronicles 34

In 2 Chron. 34:2, the Chronicler introduces the reign of Josiah by repeating almost word for word the formula found in 2 Kgs. 22:2. Throughout the remainder of the passage, the Chronicler rearranges and summarises elements of the Deuteronomic account of Josiah's reforms in Judah and Israel. In 2 Chron. 34:4-5, the author summarises the extensive Kings account (2 Kgs. 23:4-16) of the Josianic purge with its mention of numerous shrines and deities with the succinct statement that Josiah

61 It is, for example, monarchs of the southern, not the northern kingdom, that are accused of passing their children through the fire.

destroyed the altars of “the Baals” and cut down “the Asherim”. This manner of condensing the Kings account demonstrates that for the Chronicler, the term “the baals” is a collective for other gods and unacceptable forms of worship.⁶² This use of *bēʿālīm* comports with the Chronicler’s use of the term at 2 Chron. 24:7.

D. Baal in the Prophets

Hosea 2

References or allusions to “the baal” or “the baals” are found in several locations in Hosea. In chapter 2, the mention of baal occurs in two closely related sections. The first of these, 2:3-15, is a lawsuit speech in which Yahweh condemns Israel for her unfaithfulness. Yahweh’s case is stated concisely in 2:3-7; Israel is guilty of adultery. In 2:3-4, Yahweh enjoins the children Ammi and Ruhamah to contend with their mother

62 An examination of other passages in 2 Chronicles shows that throughout his work, the Chronicler uses the term “the Baals” as a collective and not as a specific foreign deity. In 2 Chron. 17:3-4, Jehoshaphat is commended for having consulted Yahweh rather than “the Baals”. The emphasis in this statement on “consulting” (*drš*) Yahweh as opposed to following the practices of Israel, suggests that the verse alludes to Jehoshaphat’s insistence on seeking (*drš*) the will of Yahweh and his scepticism over the word of the 400 prophets of Ahab (1 Kgs. 22:5). By using the term “the Baals” to refer to Ahab’s prophets, the Chronicler shows that he is using the term as a generalisation for deities and practices he considers to be illegitimate. In 2 Chron. 28:2, the Chronicler states that Ahaz made images for “the Baals”, using a phrase that does not appear in 2 Kgs. 16:2-4 which he otherwise follows quite closely. The addition of the reference to “the Baals” at the head of a list of Ahaz’s transgressions suggests again that the Chronicler is using this term as a collective for what he considers to be unorthodox forms of worship. In 2 Chron. 33:3 the Chronicler refers to asherot and altars to “the Baals” produced by Manasseh. In the parallel passage in 2 Kgs. 21:3, the reference is specifically that Manasseh built altars for “the Baal” and made an asherah just as Ahab king of Israel had done. The singular Baal and asherah as well as the reference to Ahab, shows that the writer of Kings intends the reader to see an identifiable, “foreign” deity. On the other hand, the Chronicler’s use of plural forms and his omission of any reference to Ahab suggests that he is using “the Baals” as a general term for deities that he rejects. See, chapter three.

so that she might avoid punishment. The nature of Israel's harlotry and the punishment to be expected are outlined in two sections, each introduced by the word *lākēn* (2:8-10, 11-15). The second of these elaborations closes the lawsuit speech—a fact made clear by the divine utterance formula (*nēʾum-yhwh*) in 2:15.

At or around 2:16, most scholars have identified the beginning of a new section of markedly different tone.⁶³ In this section (2:16-25), the condemnation that pervades 2:3-15 is replaced with words of forgiveness and restoration. While it is true that the *rīb* form is dropped at the end of v. 15, this does not require that vv. 16-25 are secondary. Already in 2:5, use of the word *pen* ("lest") demonstrates that the penalties outlined are potential consequences that might be averted given certain circumstances. The appearance of a restoration theme in vv. 16-25, therefore, cannot be entirely unexpected. Furthermore, if 2:16-25 was originally separate, it has now been intimately knit together with 2:3-15 by use of several devices.⁶⁴

At the very least, the use of *lākēn* in 2:16 invites the reader to understand vv. 16-25 as an extension of 2:8-10 and 2:11-15. It is also clear that the imagery of chapter two as a whole hinges upon the parallel between the concepts of marriage and national covenant and that covenantal imagery is found both in vv. 3-15 and 16-25. In Leviticus 26, the blessings of the covenant relationship with Yahweh are said to include the seasonal rains and the fertility they bring (26:4-5), peace in the land (26:6a), respite from

63 Mayes (1969:36); Wolff (1974:31, 47); Anderson and Freedman (1980:262-65); Stuart (1987:56-57); Macintosh (1997:40, 69).

64 Several scholars present strong arguments for understanding portions or all of 2:16-25 to be related to 2:3-15. Clines (1979:85-86), for example, sees the three *lākēn* speeches as part of a logical progression. In the first speech, in order to prevent the wife from continuing to "go after" her lovers (7b), Yahweh bars her way with thorns (8). In the second speech, Yahweh removes his gifts from the wife (8) because she does not acknowledge Yahweh as the giver (10). In the third speech, because the wife has forgotten Yahweh her husband (15b), Yahweh will take her to the desert where they first met (16-17). Cassuto (1973) emphasises literary patterns and thematic emphases within chapter two as evidence that the chapter should be understood as a unity.

wild animals (26:6b) and an increase in population (26:9). The undoing of these covenant promises is reflected in the penalties declared by Yahweh in Hos. 2:3-15. Here the absence of rain is conveyed in the notice that Israel will be made “like the wilderness” (*kammidbār*), “like a dry land” (*kēʾereṣ ṣîyâ*) and will be killed with thirst (“I will kill her with thirst”, *wahāmittîhā baṣṣāmā*)(2:5). The blessing of fertility promised in Lev. 26:4b-5 is undone by Yahweh’s announcement that he will take back his “grain, new wine and oil” (*haddāgān wēhattîrôṣ wēhayyîṣhār*)(2:11)—products associated with covenant blessing.⁶⁵ Finally, the notice that “wild animals” (*hayyat haṣṣādê*) will proliferate and overrun the sown area (2:14b) reverses the blessing of Lev. 26:6b and fulfils the curse of Lev. 26:22.

In 2:16-25, Yahweh’s mercy to Israel results in the restoration of the covenant blessings removed in 2:3-15. Yahweh will attend⁶⁶ once again to the heavens which in turn will respond to the earth (2:23).⁶⁷ As a result of this renewed attention, the earth will once again produce its “grain” (*dāgān*), “new wine” (*tîrôṣ*) and “oil” (*yîṣhār*). Finally, this restored relationship results in freedom from violence and peace with the “wild animals” (*hayyat haṣṣādê*)(2:20).

65 See especially, Deut. 11:13-15, where the bestowal of “grain” (*dāgān*), “new wine” (*tîrôṣ*) and “oil” (*yîṣhār*) are specified as signs of Yahweh’s covenant blessing. Elsewhere, this phrase occurs sixteen times in the OT (Deut. 7:13; 12:17; 18:4; 28:51; 2 Kgs. 18:32; Jer. 31:12; Hos. 2:24; Joel 1:10; 2:19; Hag. 1:11; Neh. 5:11; 10:40; 13:5; 13:12; 2 Chron. 31:5; 2 Chron. 32:28). In all but one of these occurrences, the items are seen as part of Yahweh’s provision or as something removed because of disobedience to Yahweh. Only in the case of Rabshakeh’s speech to the people of Jerusalem (2 Kgs. 18:32) are these items listed as coming from a source other than Yahweh. Even here, however, the clear intent of the list is to convince the people that the land to which they would be taken would be just like the one Yahweh had given them. See also, Anderson and Freedman (1980:242) and Stuart (1987:50).

66 For “attend to” as the translation of the Hebrew root *ʿnh* in 2:23-24, see Macintosh (1997:86-87).

67 Although rain is not specifically mentioned in 2:23-24, it is implied by the fact that the attention given by the heavens to the earth results in a return to fertility.

The covenant imagery noted above is carried further by the location at which Yahweh initiates his overture to restoration. In vv. 16-17, Yahweh proposes to take Israel to the “wilderness” (*midbār*) and there present her with vineyards. There, the valley of Achor—previously known as the place of death where an entire clan had been executed (Judg. 7:16-26)—would become a “door of hope” (*petaḥ tiqwâ*). The picture here is clearly that of a return to the locale in which the first covenant was received and a return to the threshold of the land as symbolic of a “fresh start”.

Other points of contact between 2:3-15 and 16-25 may be found in the way in which the trauma of Israel’s birth (“as the day of her birth”, *kěyôm hiwwāldâ*)(2:5) is contrasted with and the joy of her youth (*kîmê nē‘ûrêhā*, “as in the days of her youth”)(2:17). A further connection between 2:16-25 and preceding sections is found in v. 25. In this concluding statement, the use of the roots *zrʿ* (“to sow”), *rḥm* (“to have compassion”) and *‘m* (“people”) recall the children Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah and Lo-Ammi mentioned in 1:3-8 and 2:1-3.

The covenant imagery noted above is carried through 2:16-25 so completely that, if this section is additional, it has been inserted by someone intimately acquainted with the thought and argument of Hosea. Concerning the term “baal”, the points of contact noted above give confidence that what 2:16-25 relates about “the baals” or “the baal” may be accepted as theologically consistent with that related in 2:3-15.

In 2:7, Israel is condemned for pursuing her many lovers and for attributing to their supposed munificence, items she had in reality received from Yahweh (2:8). These items—bread (*leḥem*), water (*mayim*), wool (*šemer*), flax (*pēšet*), oil (*šemen*) and drink (*šiqqûy*)—are all natural elements or the result of agricultural endeavour and so point toward the identity of these lovers as weather and fertility deities. This conclusion is

reinforced by the note in 2:14 that Israel had understood her vines and fig trees⁶⁸ to be gifts from these same gods. The character of these “lovers” as fertility deities is further strengthened by the identification of this entire period as the “days of the baals” (2:15). An identification of these deities as local manifestations of Canaanite Baal is made possible by the fact that at Ugarit, Baal’s rains are essential to a range of products (*lhm*, *yn*, *šmn*) extremely similar to those listed in 2:7 (KTU 1.6 III. 13-16).

As noted above, in Hos. 2:21-24, Yahweh promises that—when once more espoused to Israel—he will restore the land to fertility. The key verb in vv. 23-24 is *ʿnh*. The usual meaning of this verb, “to answer”,⁶⁹ gives little sense in the context as many interpreters have noted. Labuschagne (1997:928) identifies the basic meaning of this verb as “to react” and suggests that it can describe responses that are both verbal and non-verbal. Verses 23-24 may be translated, “...I will give attention to the heavens and they shall give attention to the earth; the earth shall give attention to the grain, new wine and oil and they shall give attention to Jezreel”. Macintosh (1997:72, 86) ends up at much the same point as Labuschagne by understanding *ʿnh* in this passage to be from a different root meaning “be occupied, busied with”.⁷⁰ This latter rendering conforms well with the general thrust of the passage which relates the renewed attention Yahweh will show to Israel once his relationship with her has been restored. Whichever root is at work, the picture is of Yahweh showing attention to the heavens—the seat of rain—and setting off a series of responses throughout creation that results in renewed fertility (Mays 1969:52; Garrett 1997:94; Macintosh 1997:88). These verses may find a parallel in the Ugaritic story of Kirta (KTU 1.16 III.2-8). In the latter text, the illness of king Kirta results in drought—a condition brought on either by the sympathetic response of

68 For the use of vines and fig trees as a parallel word pair denoting agricultural productivity in general, see Jer. 5:17; Joel 1:17; Ps. 105:33.

69 See, I ענה in, BDB (1952: 772-73).

70 See, II ענה in, BDB (1952: 775).

creation or by the absence of Kirta's patron Baal.⁷¹ The lines in question may be translated as follows:

<i>yšq . šmn [...]</i>	Pouring oil [...]
<i>ʿn . tr . arš . wšmm /</i>	Give attention, investigate earth and heaven;
<i>sb . lqšm . arš /</i>	Go around to the far reaches of the earth,
<i>lksm . miyt</i>	to the end of the watery place! ⁷²
<i>ʿn / larš . mṭr . bʿl /</i>	Examine the earth for the rain of Baal,
<i>wlšd . mṭr . ʿly /</i>	and the fields for the rain of the Most High!
<i>nʿm . larš . mṭr . bʿl /</i>	Pleasant for the earth is the rain of Baal,
<i>wlšd . mṭr . ʿly /</i>	and for the fields, the rain of the Most High;
<i>nʿm [.] lhṭt . bʿn /</i>	pleasant for the wheat in the furrow,
<i>bm [.] nrt . ksmm /</i>	in the tilled soil of an emmer-crop,
<i>ʿl tl[m]k ʿrṭrm</i>	upon the furrows of the crops!"

In the Kirta text, the unnamed individual is asked to "examine" or "give attention to" (ʿn) the earth and heavens in order to look for evidence of Baal's presence. Evidence of the deity's absence and the extent of the drought is embodied in the

71 The damaged condition of the first 30 or so lines of column three makes it impossible to determine precisely what causes the drought. There is some indication in both Old Testament and Ugaritic literature that the earth responds when it witnesses grievous crime. In Hebrew tradition, Adam's sin results in a curse whereby the earth no longer produces freely (Gen. 3:17-19). Likewise, if the people fail to keep the covenant, the land fails to produce its crops (Lev. 26:20). When David sins by ordering his census, one of the proposed penalties is famine (2 Sam. 24:13). In each of these cases, however, it is significant that creation does not respond spontaneously, but reacts to a command from Yahweh. In Ugaritic literature, the murder of Aqhat results in drought (KTU 1.19 II.1-25). In the passage under discussion, however, the drought seems to be in response to the absence of Baal. In KTU 1.16 IV, the fact that El commands Baal's herald Ilīsh to cry out from atop a tall tower may imply that Baal is missing and the drought due to his absence (KTU 1.16 IV. 1-16). That Baal may be missing may also be suggested by the parallel in vocabulary between this passage and that of KTU 1.5 VI.3-11 where Baal's servants Gupn and Ugar search for their missing master. Compare, *sb/[y] . lq[šm . arš] ʿd / ksm . mhyt* (KTU 1.5 VI.3-5) with, *sb . lqšm . arš / lksm . miyt* (KTU 1.16 IV.3-4).

72 Greenstein (1997:35) here takes *lksm* as "for emmer". Although emmer is mentioned later in the text (l. 10), the translation adopted above is more likely based on the parallel between this passage and KTU 1.5 VI.5.

statement (ll. 13-16) that the stores of “bread” (*lḥm*), “wine” (*yn*) and “oil” (*šmn*) are depleted. Although the vocabulary is different, each of these staples corresponds to a category of items found in Hos. 2:24⁷³ In the Biblical passage the inattention of Yahweh to the skies results in a land that does not produce. Yahweh’s renewed notice of the heavens establishes him as the deity who fructifies the earth and provides Israel with the commodities she needs.

Hosea’s assessment of Israel’s affection for these gods is that it is incompatible with their covenant with Yahweh.⁷⁴ To this end, the prophet, in vv. 10-11, lists the bountiful provision Yahweh had made for unfaithful Israel. In so doing, he uses the phrase, “grain, new wine and oil” (*haddāgān wēhattîrôš wēhayyiṣhār*)(v. 10a)—a formulaic expression used throughout the OT as a statement of what can be expected when one dwells in obedience to the covenant in Yahweh’s land of promise.⁷⁵ To further distinguish Yahweh from these other deities, the prophet declares that when Yahweh does restore his gifts to his people, he will present them to Israel in the wilderness (*midbār*)(2:16-17), an area in which a rain-god’s powers are of no effect⁷⁶ and a region that had earlier provided the setting for Yahweh’s covenant with Israel. The restoration of Israel following her dalliance with “the baals” will require the reinstitution of Yahweh’s covenant with his people (2:18-25).

While Hosea’s general tendency is to malign these baals as illicit lovers, his comments in 2:18-19 reveal something of the people’s conception of whom these deities represented. That the people saw these deities as Yahwistic is perhaps implied by the

73 “Grain” (*haddāgān*), “new wine” (*wēhattîrôš*) and “oil” (*wēhayyiṣhār*).

74 The very premise of the marriage imagery and the wife’s statement in 2:9, “I will go back to my first husband” (*wē’āšûbâ ‘el-’îšî hārî’šôn*), presuppose that Israel worshipped Yahweh first and that “the baals” were a powerful, but later, attraction.

75 See above, note 65.

76 See also Hos. 13:4-6.

fact that their demise is linked with the suspension of Israel's feasts (*hg*), new moons (*hdš*), sabbaths (*šbt*) and seasonal celebrations (*mw'd*)—occasions that are portrayed elsewhere as unequivocally Yahwistic.⁷⁷ The prophet's contention that the "days of the baals" will be replaced by an era in which Yahweh will no longer be called, "my baal" (*ba'li*),⁷⁸ further suggests that the Israelites identified the baals as individual manifestations of Yahweh,⁷⁹ or saw Yahweh as presiding over a pantheon of lesser baals. In favour of the first view is the fact that 2:18 predicts that the change in address is made possible because Yahweh will remove the names (plural) of the baals (plural) from the mouths of the Israelites.

Interesting in this passage is the mention of "the baal" in 2:10. In this verse, Yahweh laments the fact that Israel showed no awareness that Yahweh had been the source of her "grain, new wine and oil" (*haddāgān wēhattîrôš wēhayyishār*). Additionally, the verse notes that Yahweh had given Israel silver and gold which she in turn used "for the baal". Although it has much in common with the tone of the passage as a whole, it is probable that the phrase, *ʿāsû labbā'al*, represents an editorial insertion.⁸⁰ This

77 See, Lev. 23:2-44; Num. 10:10; 29:39; 2 Kgs. 2:22-23; Isa. 1:13-14; 66:23; Ezek. 44:24; 45:17; Ezra 3:5; Neh. 10:33-34; 2 Chron. 2:3; 8:13. On the Yahwistic nature of these occasions, see also Keil (1989:57-58), Harper (1936:231-33), Stuart (1987:51), Davies (1992:76), Achtemeier (1996:23) and Macintosh (1997:61-62).

78 The reading of the LXX (καὶ οὐ καλέσει με ἔτι Βααλῖμ) is intended, as Wolff (1974:46) notes, to harmonise 2:16 (LXX) with the plural forms in 2:13, 17 (LXX).

79 A number of scholars maintain that Yahweh's eschewal of the title *ba'li* suggests that the Israelites worshipped him as Baal. See, Wolff (1974:49); Davies (1992:82).

80 A number of scholars suggest taking *ʿāsû labbā'al* as a gloss (Smith 1928a:25; Harper 1936:23; Wolff 1974:31, 37; Macintosh 1997:54-55). The notes of BHS suggest excising, *wēkesep hirbêti lâ wēzāhāb ʿāsû labbā'al*. The presence of the *lamed* preposition with feminine suffix (*lā*), however, is in keeping with the manner of address elsewhere in the chapter and so suggests that such extensive excision is unnecessary. Confusion as to the reading of this verse is also reflected in the LXX, which reads, καὶ ἀργύριον ἐπλήθυνα αὐτῇ αὐτὴ δὲ ἀργυρᾶ καὶ χρυσᾶ ἐποίησεν τῇ Βααλ ("and I multiplied silver to her, but this one used silver and gold for the baal"). Davies (1992:74-74) retains the phrase, suggesting that it, "contains nothing alien to Hosea" and that here the prophet may have, "temporarily abandoned his allegory to make his accusation more concrete". Keil (1989:56) does likewise and suggests it to be a relative clause without *ʾšer*. Stuart

possibility is raised by the fact that whereas everywhere else in the lawsuit the defendant Israel is addressed in the third feminine singular, here alone the manner of address is the third plural. Although *BHS* suggests silver and gold to be additions to the text, the use of the verb *hirbêti* ("I lavished") suggests they do belong and are intended to show that Yahweh went well beyond his covenant obligations to Israel.⁸¹ As several scholars note, it is likely here that an editor, familiar with the use of "silver" and "gold" in reference to idols elsewhere in the book (8:4; 13:2), has inserted at 2:10 a gloss identifying this as the use to which Israel put Yahweh's gifts.⁸²

Hosea 3:4; 7:5; 8:4, 10; 13:10

A few scholars (Östborn 1956:56; Cazelles 1949; cf. Wolff 1974:124; Macintosh 1997:300) have suggested that Hosea's use of the terms *melek* ("king") and *šār* ("prince", "officer") are sometimes allusions to deities. This suggestion is attractive because Ugaritic Baal is at times called "eternal king" or said to possess an "eternal kingship"⁸³ and because Jeremiah at least once uses, "the baal", as a substitute for, "the molek" (Jer. 32:35). An examination of the use of these terms in Hosea, however, suggests that no reference to "the baal" or "the baals" is intended. In Hos. 3:4, for example, the prophet states that, "the Israelites shall go a long time without king and officers, without sacrifice and without standing-stones and without ephod and teraphim". While the proximity of king and officers to terms related to idolatrous worship might at first

(1987:43-44) also sees the phrase as original and attempts to make sense of it by taking *ʿāšû* as an infinitive absolute and the following *lamed* as a defectively written negative particle. He thus translates, "I...supplied her in abundance with silver, and provided her with gold—not Baal".

81 See Deut. 11:13-15, where the bestowal of "grain" (*dāgān*), "new wine" (*tîrôš*) and "oil" (*yîšhār*) are specified as signs of Yahweh's covenant blessing. See also, Lev. 26:3-13; Deut. 28:1-14.

82 Mays (1969:41); Wolff (1974:37); Macintosh (1997:54-55).

83 KTU 1.2 IV.10; perhaps also 1.108 1, 20.

suggest that the former represent gods, the overall context points in a different direction. Given the statement in 3:5 that in the future Israel would return to seek Yahweh and king David,⁸⁴ 3:4 is seen to function as a poetic way of saying that the coming judgement would leave Israel without statehood or organised religion. What the elements of v. 4 have in common then, is that they are all (king included) seen as illegitimate by Hosea, a fact made clear by his endorsement of the Davidic house of Judah in v. 5.

In 7:5, Östborn (1956:34, 37, 56-57, 64, 93) again sees a reference to baal as king, but here the passage—even in its currently troubled state—seems rather to represent Hosea's comment on court intrigue in the northern kingdom. In 7:1, the passage is introduced with the condemning words that an evil (*r'h*) exists in Samaria—people there deal falsely (*šqr*). This falsehood enters even the palace where the officers deal treacherously (7:3). Given this context, v. 5 should not be taken to refer to a religious festival ("the day of our king") when princes become sick on wine,⁸⁵ but to court intrigue. Indeed, the verse is best translated, "By day, officers make our king sick on tainted wine".⁸⁶ This understanding is confirmed by v. 7 which states that the Israelites "consume their judges and all their kings are fallen" (*wš'oklû 'et-šöptêhem kol-malkêhem nâpâlû*). This view of these verses also accords with the period in which the prophet's ministry occurred. According to the book's superscription (1:1), Hosea's ministry

84 Most scholars understand the reference to the Davidic house to be a late insertion (Harper 1936:216, 23; Mayes 1969:60; Wolff 1974:57; Davies 1992:104-5; Macintosh 1997:110-12; cf. Anderson and Freedman 1980:307; Stuart 1987:67-68). There are, however, reasons for accepting the reference as original. Foremost among these is the general disdain that Hosea has for the northern monarchy (e.g. Hos. 5:1). Related to this is the chaotic succession and political miscalculation that plagued the northern kingdom during its final days and the comparative stability and shrewd judgement that characterised the kingdom of Judah during the same period. In the face of such a disparity, one should not be surprised if Hosea might look forward to an eventual return to rule by the Davidic house.

85 NASB, NIV, NRSV.

86 So essentially the NJPS. On this approach to the verse, see further, Anderson and Freedman (1980:457-58) and Garrett (1997:167).

extended from the reign of Jeroboam II to beyond that of Israel's final king, Hoshea ben Elah. During this time, the northern kingdom was plagued by internal strife that saw four of its last six kings assassinated.⁸⁷

The terms *melek* and *šār* occur in the context of idolatry once again in Hos. 8:4, 10. In these verses, however, Hosea's intent is to list the good things that Israel has rejected. Already in 3:5, the prophet has made it clear that at a future date, the northern kingdom would be reconstituted under a Davidic monarch. In light of this statement, 8:4⁸⁸ is best taken as Yahweh's condemnation of the north for its rejection of the house of David.⁸⁹ Rather than being a benefit to the nation, Israel's king and princes have mishandled affairs and become a burden (*mśʔ*) that has weakened the nation (v. 10).⁹⁰ Following this—and as a second, separate element of his criticism of Israel—the prophet condemns the people for making idols, specifically the calf of Samaria (8:5).⁹¹

Östborn (1956:56) sees a reference to “the baal” also in 13:10. Here, however, the question, “Where, then, is your king?” (*ʾēhî malkēkā ʾēpôʾ*) is best taken to refer to the removal of Hoshea as the last ruler of the northern kingdom and so embodies the

87 Murdered in coups during this period are, Zechariah, Shallum, Pekahiah and Pekah (2 Kgs. 15:8-17:6). On the turbulent nature of succession in this era, see Noth (1960:257-62), Bright (1981:269-75), Miller and Hayes (1986:327-29), Bruce (1997:49-58) and Macintosh (1997:256, 61).

88 “They set up kings, but not by me; they made officers, but I did not know [them]”.

89 See Keil (1989:112), Harper (1936:314) and Macintosh (1997:299); cf. Wolff (1974:138). Although 8:4 is difficult to translate, 8:1 with its mention of the “house of Yahweh” also shows a preference for traditions associated with the Judean royal house.

90 This contrasts with the cultic interpretation which sees v. 10 as a statement that the worship of other gods had become a burden to Israel. The LXX understanding of this verse also makes it temporal rather than cultic. It reads *mśh* for the MT *mśʔ* and so translates, “...they shall cease a little while to anoint king and rulers”.

91 Although Baal is related to bovine imagery (KTU 1.3 IV.27; 1.5 V.17-22; 1.10 III.1-21, 35-36), “the calf of Samaria” likely refers to the northern cult established by Jeroboam I—by this time probably active only at the southern shrine at Bethel due to Assyrian incursions farther north (Aharoni and Avi-Yonah 1979:95)(10:5). See Wolff (1974:140) and Macintosh (1997:303-6).

prophet's disdain for the northern monarchy in general. Although the vocabulary of 13:10b-11a⁹² likely alludes to the appointment of a king in the time of Samuel (1 Sam. 8:4-22), 13:10 could just as easily reflect an understanding of the popular forces behind the ascension of Jeroboam I (1 Kgs. 12:1-20). In the first instance, the people specifically request a king who would "go out and fight our battles for us" (1 Sam. 8:20), a duty that is particularly ironic given king Hoshea's failure in the face of Assyrian aggression. That a cultic interpretation is out of the question here is also plain from Yahweh's statement in 13:11a, "I gave you a king in my anger". If 13:10 is taken to refer to the inability of "the baal" to protect Israel, then v. 11a must be understood to mean that Yahweh led his own people into idolatry—an extremely unlikely circumstance. More likely is the suggestion by Garrett (1997:261) that 11a is a *double-entendre* referring to the king of Israel and to their new king, the Assyrian monarch.

Hosea 9:10-17

Use of the term Baal has also been identified in Hosea in 9:10-17 where the prophet alludes to the wilderness dalliance at Baal-Peor. Many discussions of this passage seek—quite naturally—to understand it in light of what is said about the Baal-Peor incident in Numbers 25. The passage itself, however, makes it clear that the author does distinguish between what went on at Baal-Peor and what he addresses in Hos. 9:10-17. While the Baal-Peor incident involved all Israel, for example, the activity in this passage is limited specifically to Ephraim (9:11). In addition, the activity described in these verses is noted as an evil carried out at Gilgal⁹³ in Israel, not at Baal-Peor in the

92 E.g. *mlk*, *špt*; see further, Davies (1992:293).

93 The exact site of Gilgal is unknown. According to Josh. 4:19, it was located just to the east of Jericho. Most scholars favour the area around Khirbet el-Mafjar (MR 193-143), a site some two kilometres north-east of Jericho. For discussion regarding candidates for the site, see Wolf (1966), Bennett Jr. (1972) and Ottosson (1992).

Transjordan (9:15). In Hosea 9, the sin at Baal-Peor is used as a means of introducing the condemnation of a new apostasy—one that bears similarity to a notorious sin from Israel's past.

At Baal-Peor, Israel is said to have turned its back on Yahweh and became involved in the sexual rituals of a foreign cult. In 9:11-17, the writer condemns a cult centred at nearby Gilgal (9:15). The general character of this cult may be sketched by looking at the penalty Yahweh imposes upon Ephraim. The rituals the Israelites perform at this site seem intended to promote human fertility. In 9:11, the glory of Ephraim departs. While some associate this glory with Yahweh's presence,⁹⁴ the use of this same term in Hos. 4:7 shows it to refer to Ephraim's large population.⁹⁵ Verse 11 relates that this blessing will quickly vanish as Yahweh turns away from them and leaves them infertile. Ephraim's population will further diminish as Yahweh snatches

94 Garrett (1997:200), for example, argues that parallelism between vv. 11a and 12b equates the departure of Ephraim's glory with Yahweh's "turning away" from Ephraim. If this were the case, however, one might expect to find mention of "Yahweh's glory" and not "Ephraim's glory". Further, the use of *šûr* (a variant spelling of *sûr*) in 9:12 need not imply departure (NASB, NIV, NRSV) in the sense of that found in Ezek. 10:18 and 11:22-23 (where the dominant verbs are *yš'* and *ʿlh*), but may simply mean the turning away of Yahweh's attention from Ephraim (NJPS).

95 *kērûbām kēn ḥāṭēʾû-lî kēbôdām bēqālôn ʾāmîr*; "The more they multiplied, the more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame". See also Jer. 30:19-20. Cf. Ps. 106:20. At Ugarit, the *kṯrt*, a group of minor deities who attend births and bring fertility (KTU 1.17 II.26-40; 1.24 ll. 5-7, 4-50) are understood by many scholars to be closely associated with birds. If this is the case, then the scattering of birds in 9:11 is an apt metaphor for Ephraim's dwindling fertility. Most scholars understand the epithet of the *kṯrt*, *snnt*, to come from the Akkadian *sinuntu* meaning "swallows". On Ugaritic *snnt* as "swallows" see Gordon (1937:33; 1949:87), Ginsberg (1938:14), Gaster (1961:338-39), Lichtenstein (1972:104), Gibson (1978:106) and de Moor (1987:231). More recently, a number of scholars have interpreted *snnt* on the basis of a late Aramaic word *snn* ("bright", "shining") and have translated "the shining ones" (van Selms 1954:86; Marcus 1997:215-16; Parker 1997:56-57). Further evidence that the Kotharot are to be associated with birds may also exist if in KTU 1.24 ll. 42-43 these figures may be understood to be "descending upon the nut trees" (*yrdt / bʾrgzm*)(Pope 1977:166).

away those children who do manage to be born (9:12a). As further punishment, Ephraimite women will be given wombs that miscarry and breasts that dry up (9:14)—a clear reversal of the promise given to the Joseph tribes in Gen. 49:25. The overwhelming emphasis on frustrating conception suggests that a significant element of the cult practised at Gilgal was centred around ensuring human fertility. That this should be the case is no surprise given the fact that Israelite tradition held Gilgal to be the place where the entire wilderness generation of males was circumcised (Josh. 5:2-9). The name associated with this location—*gibʿat hāʿārālôt* (“Hill of the Foreskins”)—is one that likely conveyed a strong image of male virility. Another hint at the existence of such a cult at Gilgal may be found in Hos. 4:11-15. There the prophet describes in sexual terms the cultic acts practised by the “daughters” and “daughters-in-law” of Ephraim and notes that Ephraim’s men have actually engaged in cult-related sexual activity. The writer concludes by expressing the hope that Judah would avoid Ephraim’s sin and would not make vows to Yahweh at Bethel or Gilgal. The reference in this context to Ephraimite women—especially daughters-in-law—and forbidden vows made to Yahweh at Gilgal, is in keeping with the practise there of some form of fertility ritual.

As is acknowledged by all scholars, 9:13a is extremely difficult to translate.⁹⁶ Some have seen in the *lēšôr* of the MT a reference to Tyre and a comparison between the natural blessings given to that city and those bestowed upon Ephraim (Wood 1985:206-7; Garrett 1997:201-2; so also KJV, NASB, NIV). A similar result is achieved by those who see *šôr* as related to Arabic *šwr* “small palm tree” and perceive here a depiction of Ephraim as a choice young tree planted in a meadow (Macintosh 1997:370-71; NRSV; Lane 1984:1744). Most interpreters, however, follow in some measure the LXX which reads, Εφραιμ ὃν τρόπον εἶδον εἰς θήραν παρέστησαν τὰ τέκνα αὐτῶν, (“Ephraim, as I saw, placed their children into a trap”)(Smith 1928a:306; Harper 1936:338; Mays

96 Anderson and Freedman (1980:543) do not exaggerate when they say of Hos. 9:13, “Nearly every word in this verse constitutes a problem. All together, they make translation and interpretation practically impossible”.

1969:131, 34; Burnett 1985:212; Davies 1992:228-29; BHS). Typical of this approach is Wolff (1974:160-61) who emends the text to read *lšyd št lh bnyw*⁹⁷ and translates, “(Ephraim...) has exposed his sons to the hunt”.⁹⁸ None of these proposals, however, produces a final reading that is satisfactory.

A solution to the current impasse—and one that involves minimal disruption to the text—is one that recognises this verse as a further allusion to the account of the Baal-Peor incident in Numbers 25. In that passage, the Midianites used sex in order to lure the Israelite men into pagan worship and thereupon to their spiritual destruction. In order to stem the defection, Moses commanded the judges of Israel to kill (*hrg*) all the Israelite men who had joined themselves to the Baal of Peor (Num. 25:5). At the lowest point, an Israelite man brought a Midianite woman to the Tent of Meeting at the centre of the Israelite camp. The manner in which Phinehas is able to spear both man and woman with a single blow has suggested to various interpreters that here the writer wishes to convey that the two were caught in the act of intercourse (Num. 25:8).⁹⁹ In its summary of the event, Num. 25:15-18 identifies the woman as Cozbi, daughter of Zur (*šûr*), a prince of Midian.

Given this background, the best solution to the crux of Hos. 9:13 is to identify *lšwr* as a reference to the leader of Midian to whom the Israelites nearly fell victim. This solution requires only a repointing of the MT and avoids as unnecessary the consonantal emendation required by most other proposals. Further, this suggestion fits well with the occurrence in 13b of *hrg*—a term which harks back to the slaughter that was the punishment for the apostasy of Baal-Peor (Num. 25:5). More difficult is the term

97 Wolff actually reads, *lšyd št ld bnyw*, but this is a typographical error.

98 While Kuan (1991) raises valid concerns about the LXX reading, the alternative he proposes, “Ephraim, just as I have seen Tyre planted in a pleasant place, so Ephraim must lead his children out to the slaughterer” makes no sense whatsoever.

99 For references, see Ashley (1993:521).

šētûlâ (“planted”). Here, it seems best to follow the Hebrew underlying the LXX and so along with many others read, šāt lô (“he set for him”). The verse may then be reconstructed and translated as follows, *ʿeprayim kaʾāšer-rāʾtî lēšûr šāt lô bānāyw wēʿeprayim lēhōšîʾ ʿel-hōrēg bānāyw*, “Ephraim—as I watched—gave his sons to Zur; so Ephraim will bring out his sons to the slaughter”. If the above is close to the mark, then it provides a further connection between this passage and the incident at Baal-Peor. The idea Hosea is developing appears to be that, just as Ephraim had earlier (and nearby) risked destruction by allowing its sons to participate in foreign sexual rites, so too would a sex-related cult at Gilgal lead to the death of Ephraimite sons.¹⁰⁰

Which deity was venerated by the cult at Gilgal? Hosea’s use of *bōšet* in 9:11 may suggest that he was likening the practices at Gilgal to Baal worship—a possibility that the emphasis on fertility might be interpreted to confirm. If, however, the texts from Ugarit have anything to contribute to this question, it is to remind that human fertility was first and foremost the purview of El and not Baal. In the Aqhat narrative, for example, Baal must entreat El to bless Aqhat with a son (*KTU* 1.17 15-48). Similarly, in *KTU* 1.14 I.35-43; II.6-27, it is El who provides Kirta with the instructions that will ultimately lead to the birth of a son. In this latter context, El is further associated with human fertility by use of the title *ab adm* —“Father of Man” (*KTU* 1.14 I. 37, 43). In Hosea 4:15, the prophet commands the people not to go to Gilgal or to swear by Yahweh there. These twin injunctions suggest that the Israelites worshipped what they understood to be a form of Yahweh at this site, but that it was a practice that Hosea considered foreign.¹⁰¹ Worship at Gilgal is most likely, therefore, to have been associated with Yahweh’s roots as an El deity and so probably relates little if anything

100 There is no evidence in the passage to support Burnett’s (1985:213) contention that these verses refer to child sacrifice. Verse 16b—“I will kill the beloved ones of their womb”—refers not to child sacrifice, but to the death of infants from post-natal complications.

101 Worship at Gilgal is also condemned by Hosea’s contemporary Amos (Amos 4:4; 5:5).

about either Baal-Peor or Baal worship in Israel. The reference to Baal-Peor in this passage is most likely the prophet's way of condemning a fertility practice at Gilgal by associating it with another notorious sexual episode from Israel's past that occurred in the same region. The use of the word *bōšet* in v. 11 may be intended to connect this cult to the worship of the baals—something that is a preoccupation of the prophet elsewhere in the book. It may also be the case, however, that this use of *bōšet* may be the earliest written association of this term with "Baal" (here the Baal of Peor) and that it is on account of its use in this context that it becomes a synonym for "Baal" elsewhere in the MT (Wolff 1970:165; Garrett 1997:198-99).

Hosea 13:1-2

As the text now stands, 12:15-13:1 best functions as a pronouncement of judgement concluding the lawsuit speech begun in 12:3 (Stuart 1987:195-96; Garrett 1997:247). In these verses the prophet relates that through his relationship "with the baal" (13:1), Ephraim bitterly provoked Yahweh (12:15). It is not possible from this reference to determine if the prophet is using "the baal" to refer to the deity promoted by Ahab and Jezebel, to the Baal of Peor, or as a collective term for all of the gods worshipped by Israel.

The occurrence of *wayyāmōt* ("and he died") at the close of 13:1 and *wē'attā* ("Now") at the beginning of 13:2 suggests that with 13:2 the prophet is turning to a discussion of a different form of idolatry. The MT at 13:2 is widely acknowledged to be difficult and many have attempted to make sense of it with less than satisfying results.¹⁰² The LXX has at this point a reference to human sacrifice. As a number of

102 The NASB translates, "They say of them, 'Let the men who sacrifice kiss the calves'" while the NRSV offers, "'Sacrifice to these', they say. People are kissing calves!" The NJPS reads, "Yet for these they appoint men to sacrifice; They are

scholars have observed, however, the LXX reading, θύσατε ἀνθρώπους ("Sacrifice men!"), is unlikely to be correct, for it is difficult to imagine that the prophet would attack such a notorious practice in so circumspect a manner (Achteemeier 1996:102; Garrett 1997:248). More sense is gained by following the minor emendations suggested by Stuart, who proposes altering the MT *ʾomrîm zobhê* to *ʾimmêrîm zābhû* ("they sacrifice lambs") and translating the bicolon as, "To these they sacrifice lambs, human beings kiss bulls!". In addition to being minimally intrusive, Stuart's suggestion has in its favour the fact that it provides parallelism to the verse. The verse is best understood as a condemnation of the various forms of idolatry that flourished in the north including the calf cult at Bethel and Dan.

Jeremiah Introduction

The structure and date of the book of Jeremiah are points around which no scholarly consensus has developed. Although the book has been regarded by some as being in "extreme disarray" (Bright 1986:lv),¹⁰³ others regard it to be structured along the lines of a well-organised archival record (Peckham 1993:301-39).¹⁰⁴ On the date and manner of composition, two general positions may be identified—that which sees the work as containing the original words of the prophet or his circle with relatively few

went to kiss calves!" The NIV, following the lead of the LXX, sees here a reference to human sacrifice.

103 Similar despair at discerning structure within the book is expressed by Thompson (1980:30).

104 Peckham posits that around an original Jeremianic dramatic poem, a later editor wove interpretation and commentary along the lines of an archival record so that the finished work is three roughly parallel parts (chs. 1-24, 25-39, 40-52) each composed of six books with each book being subdivided into multiple columns. This arrangement is not intended to make the book easy to read, but represents, "a way of incorporating, organising, and synthesising the original text composed by Jeremiah along with the editor's interpretation and the evidence for it in an ongoing historical and prophetic tradition" (1993:317).

late editorial additions¹⁰⁵ and that which sees the hand of the prophet in the poetic oracles with the prose sermons and biographical narratives being the product of later deuteronomistic editors.¹⁰⁶

That the book of Jeremiah in its present form post-dates the production of the DH is a certainty given the fact that its concluding chapter incorporates a sizeable portion of the latter work (2 Kgs. 24:18-25:30). The prose sermons of Jeremiah do bear verbal affinity with similar material from the DH. The idea that major portions of the book were written at a late date by a deuteronomistic circle, however, is but one possible explanation for these similarities. Indeed, given the lack of consensus on how long the Deuteronomists were active and the nature of their standing within society, caution is advisable when drawing conclusions on what the presence of deuteronomistic language reveals. For example, given certain observed differences in theme between the DH and Jeremiah (McConville 1993:18-22; Peckham 1993:301-2, 20), plus the points of contact between poetry and prose within Jeremiah itself (Bright 1951),¹⁰⁷ it is possible that the prose sermons were produced by the theological successors to Jeremiah and so reflect much that is in keeping with his message. The linguistic similarity between these sermons and the DH may in turn be accounted for by assuming that both works reflect the common terminology of the tightly knit exilic

105 Into this group fall Harrison (1973:27-34), Wilson (1980:232-33), Bright (1986:lxiii-lxxiii), Holladay (1989:12-13, 15-24), Craigie, Kelley and Drinkard (1991:xxxiii-xxxvii) and McConville (1993:14-22).

106 Among the recent proponents of this general approach are, Hyatt (1942, 1951), von Rad (1965:193, n. 8), Carroll (1986:65-82), McKane (1986b:cxxxiii-cxxxiv, clxxii). Nicholson (1970:1-19, 116-38) differs slightly from other interpreters in seeing the prose sermons and biographical narratives as arising from the preaching, not the formal literary activity, of the Deuteronomic school. McKane (1986a:xcii) sees some passages as expressing Deuteronomic ideas (e.g. 7:16-20; 11:1-14; 14:2-10, 11-16; 14:17-15:4; 16:1-9; 18:7-12), but on the whole confesses an inability to date precisely many elements of the book.

107 Differences in genre and vocabulary within the book may be accounted for by assuming, 1) a natural development in thought that is to be expected over a forty-year career, and 2) an editorial process of the Jeremianic traditions that took place after the prophet's death.

community within which they may have been produced. For the purposes of this study, the prose sermons and biographical narratives are assumed to preserve useful information about Judahite religion at the end of the second temple and early exilic periods and the attitude of the prophet toward aspects of religious life in this era.

Jeremiah 2

A close examination of Jeremiah 2 reveals that the chapter comprises several poetic oracles originally directed toward different audiences. As Holladay (1986:66-67) observes, 2:4-8 is best taken as an oracle originally directed toward the northern kingdom.¹⁰⁸ As proof of this, Holladay cites two pieces of evidence, 1) the address formula in v. 4, (“Hear the word of Yahweh, O house of Jacob and all the families of the house of Israel”), and 2) the reference to the prophets that prophesy by “the baal” (*wēhannēbîʾīm nibbēʾû babbaʿal*)(v. 8). This latter reference is significant because of the appearance in 23:13 of a very similar phrase condemning the prophets of Samaria who prophesy by “the baal”.¹⁰⁹ To these may be added a third piece of evidence in the form of a probable allusion to baal in a northern context. The emphasis in vv. 6-7 on Yahweh’s ability to lead the people through the “dry land” (*bēʾereṣ šîyâ*) and into the “fruitful land” (*ʾereṣ hakkarmel*) functions well as a polemic against the Baal of Ahab and Jezebel—a deity related to rain and fertility. In addition, the unexpected use of the term

108 That 2:4-8 forms a discrete unit is evident from the presence of an inclusio consisting of the terms *hlk*, *ʾhr* and *haḥebel* (“emptiness”) in v. 5 *hlk*, *ʾhr* and *loʾ yôʿîlû* (“they do not profit”) in v. 8. The likelihood that both *haḥebel* and *loʾ yôʿîlû* are wordplays on *habbaʿal* is noted by a number of scholars and serves to further enhance the connection between vv. 5 and 8. See Thompson (1980:167, 69), Bright (1986:15), Carroll (1986:125) and Holladay (1986:67).

109 *ûbinēbîʾē šōmērôn rāʾîti tiplâ hannabbēʾû babbaʿal wayyatʿû ʾet-ʿammî ʾet-yiśrāʾēl*, “Among the prophets of Samaria I saw an unsavoury thing; they prophesied by the baal and they led my people Israel astray”.

*karmel*¹¹⁰ to describe “fruitfulness” functions conveniently within the context as an allusion to the showdown at Mount Carmel and the victory won there by Yahweh over the Baal of Ahab. The characterisation of prophesying by “the baal” as something that “defiles”, clearly demonstrates that the prophet sees this act as something incompatible with Yahwism. The pairing of, “the baal” (singular) with “things that did not profit” (plural)(2:8), need not be taken to indicate that “the baal” is a collective. Such a pairing may simply convey that, in addition to prophesying by a single figure, “the baal”, the prophets compounded their guilt by following other deities.

The references to “the baals” in v. 23 and “the baal” at v. 28 (LXX), clearly belong to material separate from vv. 4-8—material containing speeches directed toward Judah and Jerusalem. The reference to “the valley” (v. 23) almost certainly alludes to the Hinnom valley and so identifies vv. 20-25 as part of an invective against Jerusalem. Likewise, the occurrence of Judah in the vocative in v. 28 shows that vv. 26-28, if coming from a separate oracle, originates in one that also targets the southern kingdom. The fact that these passages are directed toward a southern audience means that their use of forms of the term *ba'al* must be treated distinctly from those found in references to the northern kingdom. As a result, v. 23 and v. 28 (LXX) may not be taken *a priori* as a refinement of what is to be understood by “the baal” in v. 8. Consequently, Halpern’s (1993a:127) statement that, “The cisterns and the baals are identical, and plural, yet the prophets prophesy by the formally singular baal”, loses much of its effectiveness as an argument for seeing “the baal” here as a collective for multiple gods.

110 The root *krml* occurs only fourteen times in the sense of “fruitfulness”. A more common root for “fruitful” is *prh*—one that occurs 30 times in this sense. The use of the less common word in this passage may suggest that the defilement of the *ʿeres hakkarmel* is intended to play on the name of Mount Carmel and alludes to the crisis involving “the baal” that was resolved there in the time of Elijah and Ahab. The fact that the LXX reads *Κάρμηλον* in 2:7 suggests that it may see an allusion to Baal here. The presence of an allusion to Carmel overcomes Carroll’s (1986:122) argument that the reference to the house of Jacob is generic and not an indicator of northern provenance.

Reasons for taking vv. 4-8 as containing allusions to the distinct storm and fertility god worshipped by the house of Ahab have already been offered above. Closely connected with this section are vv. 9-13 which continue the former's use of storm and water imagery and the verb *y'l* (v. 11). In v. 12, for example, the "heavens" (*šāmayim*) are called to witness against the infidelity of the people. In v. 13b, the people themselves are condemned for having rejected Yahweh—their "spring of living waters" (*mēqôr mayîm ḥayyîm*), in favour of "broken cisterns" (*bo'rôt nišbārîm*). The thematic unity between vv. 4-8 and 9-13 set against the fact that the two sections concern different generations¹¹¹ suggests that the writer is using the past worship of Baal in the northern kingdom as a springboard for critiquing a similar infidelity in the present. Yahweh condemns his people in the present because they have not learned from the evils of the past. This suggests that vv. 9-13 should not be taken solely as a definition of what devotion to "the baal" entails. The differences and connections between the two sections suggest that the writer is exploiting the negative association of a historic term, "the baal" to condemn the worship of a variety of gods that the writer saw as foreign. The uselessness of these gods is captured in the way in which they are likened to "broken cisterns" (*bo'rôt nišbārîm*)(v. 13).

A further use of a form of the term *ba'al* comes in v. 23 where reference to "the baals" is part of a direct address to the people of Jerusalem. In this section (vv. 20-25), the writer argues that Israel's errant religious devotion had rendered her a "foreign vine" (*haggepen nokriyyā*). As evidence of this, he accuses the people of going after "the baals"—a charge they vehemently deny (v. 23). While reference to "the valley" immediately brings to mind the immolation of children in the valley of Ben-Hinnom, use of the plural "the baals" and the verses that follow suggest that here Jeremiah is not specifically and exclusively referring to human sacrifice. In other passages in Jeremiah

111 Vv. 4-8 treat the worship of "the baal" by "the fathers" (v. 5), whereas vv. 9-13 deal with present and future generations (v. 9).

where human sacrifice is in view, the divine term usually employed is the singular *habba'al* (19:5; 32:35).¹¹² Also absent here is any reference to passing sons or daughters through the fire—a formulaic expression in contexts where human sacrifice is in view.¹¹³ Moreover, the imagery of verses 23b-25 may indicate that there is a sexual aspect to the practices indicted in v. 23a that is not immediately in keeping with the idea of human sacrifice.¹¹⁴ In the end, that devotion to “the baals” took place in the Hinnom valley should come as no surprise given the tendency for cultic sites to attract more than one deity. It is possible, for example, that “the baals” worshipped in the valley were related to “the baal” (perhaps as his retinue), but unlike “the baal” were not worshipped with human sacrifice.¹¹⁵ In this section, “the baals” (v. 23) appears instead to stand as a term for multiple “foreign” gods here as it does elsewhere in the MT.¹¹⁶

A final use of the term *ba'al* comes if one accepts the LXX form of v. 28. This verse is part of a speech by Yahweh in which Judah is consistently referred to in the third person. This change in person from vv. 20-25 suggests that vv. 26-28 are part of a unit originally separate from the one that precedes it. Despite the tendency among scholars to accept this longer reading as genuine,¹¹⁷ it should probably be excluded on the grounds that it represents a conscious effort on the part of the LXX translator to unite the disparate elements of vv. 4-29 around the theme of human sacrifice to a single deity.

112 In 7:31 no deity is mentioned.

113 See, Lev. 18:21; Deut. 18:10; 2 Kgs. 16:3; 17:17; 21:6; 23:10; Jer. 32:35; Ezek. 16:21; 20:26, 31; 23:37.

114 It is possible, however, that the sexual images in these verses relate to the general concept of religious infidelity and not to specific cultic practices.

115 See below, pp. 197-99. In that section, the prophet condemns worship in the Hinnom valley where incense is burnt to “other gods” (v. 4) and children are offered to “the baal” (v. 5).

116 See above, chapter three.

117 See, Holladay (1986:54; 1989:4) and Janzen (1973:121). For a view that regards the LXX material as an addition, see McKane (1986a:47). Bright (1986:13), Carroll (1986:135), Thompson (1980:180-81) and Craigie, Kelley and Drinkard (1991:36) all adopt the MT reading without significant comment.

This tendency may perhaps first be observed at v. 8b where the LXX reads ἀνωφελοῦς (“unprofitable thing”)(singular) where the MT is plural. The LXX translator also appears to make a deliberate effort to focus attention on human sacrifice in the Hinnom valley by translating singular τῆς Βααλ in v. 23.¹¹⁸ In addition, the expanded form of LXX at v. 28 most likely serves to bring this verse into general conformity with the reading of 11:13—καὶ κατ’ ἀριθμὸν διόδων τῆς Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἔθουον τῇ Βααλ (“and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem you sacrificed to Baal”). Here, the general tendency for scribes to add material rather than excise it should also be noted in favour of the shorter reading of the MT. In addition, it may also be stated that the shorter reading of the MT is entirely appropriate given the absence of synonymous parallelism elsewhere in the verse. An intentional effort to evoke images of human sacrifice is also suggested by the fact that, whereas 11:13 has ἐτάξατε βωμοὺς θυμῶν τῇ Βααλ (“you set up altars to burn incense to Baal”), in 2:28 the translator has substituted the root θύω (“sacrifice, slaughter, kill”)—a term associated with blood and human sacrifice (Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich 1979:367).¹¹⁹ This last fact especially

118 The MT has the more difficult reading, *habbē’ālīm*.

119 θύω is used in the sense of human sacrifice in 1 Kgs. 13:2; Ps. 106:37-38; Ezek. 16:20; 39:17, 19. Throughout the book of Jeremiah, the *pi’el* form of *qtr* appears nineteen times. In seventeen of these occurrences, the LXX translator renders this Hebrew form by using a variant of the Greek root θυμιᾶω, (“I offer incense”; the term θυμῶν used for *lēqattēr* in Jer. 11:13 comes from this root. The fact that in 2:28, the translator departs from his usual practice and renders the *pi’el* of *qtr* (which, although not in the MT, may be presumed to underlie the Greek here on the basis of its use in 11:13) by using a different verb, θύω (“I slaughter, sacrifice”), demonstrates that here, the translator is engaging in interpretation. The use at this point of a stronger term—one used elsewhere in relation to blood offering—suggests that the translator is consciously attempting to evoke images of human sacrifice.

Holladay’s claim (1986:54) that θύω frequently stands for *qtr* in the *pi’el* is incorrect. Hatch and Redpath (1987:659) list only three instances where the *pi’el* of *qtr* is rendered by θύω. In an overwhelming number of cases, θύω is used to translate Hebrew *zābah* in the *qal* or *pi’el* (96 times).

suggests that *contra* Holladay (1989:4), the LXX form of v. 28 should be regarded as expansionist.

Jeremiah 3:12-14

In this passage Yahweh enjoins a “faithless” people to return to him (v. 12). This people, he declares, has been scattered abroad because while in their homeland they had “scattered their tracks” to strangers at treed sanctuaries. The phrase *wattēpazzērî ʾet-dērākayik* is unusual not only for the unique form of the root *pzr*, but also for the strange use of *drk*—which *BHS* suggests emending to *dôdayik*, (“your lovers”). The mention in v. 15, however, that Yahweh will give the people shepherds suggests that the MT reading be retained and that the intended image is that of the myriad of sheep and goat tracks that criss-cross the Judaeen hillsides. Such an image provides an apt metaphor for the lack of direction and commitment that the prophet is condemning. In this context, Yahweh’s statement *šûbû bānîm šôbābîm ... kî ʾānōkî bāʾaltî bākem* – “Return, O faithless sons...and I will be a master (Baal) to you” stands as a play on the name Baal—a term representative of the people’s wayward affections. Unlike Hosea, who eschews the use of the term Baal altogether, here the writer sees fit to use it to declare that he and not Baal is the true patron of Israel.

Jeremiah 7

In Jer. 7:9, the prophet differentiates between “the baal” and “other gods” by placing both terms within a larger list of distinct sins including theft, murder and

swearing falsely.¹²⁰ This distinction is perhaps continued later in the chapter where the prophet refers to cultic sin committed by people in both the temple and the valley of Ben-Hinnom. In the temple, the people set up their “abominations” (*šiqqûšêhem*)(7:30)—a reference that may reasonably be taken to include images dedicated to “other gods”. In the valley of Ben-Hinnom, the people built installations where they burned their children.¹²¹ Although the object of this human sacrifice is unnamed, 7:31 suggests that the people regarded this deity as related to, or identical with, Yahweh.¹²² The result of both of these sins is death and despair throughout Jerusalem.

Halpern (1993a:128-29) has suggested that 8:1-2 demonstrates that “the baal” (7:9 and, presumably, 7:31) is a collective for the “sun, moon and all the host of heaven”. Two reasons, however, suggest caution when considering such a connection. First, as many scholars have suggested, 8:1-3 is most likely one of several independent units brought together to form the temple sermon.¹²³ Evidence of this may be directly observable in the odd manner in which judgement brings death and burial in general in 7:32 and then immediate disinterment of a specific group in 8:1. If this is the case, then one must ask how this material should be understood to relate to what precedes it. Second, seeing the “sun, moon and the host of heaven” as embodied in the term “the

120 Bright (1986:56) describes the items of this list as conveying an, “almost total breach of the covenant stipulations”. McKane (1986a:162) and Holladay (1986:244-45) compare items in this list with elements from the Decalogue.

121 The objections of Weinfeld (1972) that the cult in the Hinnom valley involved only cultic dedication and not actual sacrifice have been effectively answered by Mosca (1975:140-52), Heider (1985:66-81) and Day (1989:15-20).

122 That this statement reflects a common understanding that Yahweh was the object of such actions is maintained by Bright (1986:57), Holladay (1986:268), Halpern (1993a:129) and Keown, Scalise and Smothers (1995:159); a similar view is expressed more tentatively by Smith (1990a:132) and Craigie, Kelley and Drinkard (1991:260). Thompson (1980:450, 594) appears to regard the practice as non-Yahwistic.

123 Thompson (1980:272-74); McKane (1986a:181-82); Craigie, Kelley and Drinkard (1991:116, 19-20); Taylor (1993:197).

baal” (7:9, 31) ignores the presence in chapter seven of two other divine elements—the “Queen of Heaven” (7:18) and “other gods” (7:9).

A better understanding of the role of 8:1-3 is to see it as an appendix outlining the judgement due for all of the sins listed in the Temple Sermon. If this is the case, then the sun, moon and the host of heaven may well correspond to “the baal”, the “Queen of Heaven” and the “other gods” respectively. A correspondence between other gods and the host of heaven may be implied elsewhere in Jeremiah at 19:13, where the prophet speaks of the houses on whose rooftops the people of Jerusalem, “burned sacrifices to all the heavenly host and poured out libations to other gods”.¹²⁴ Similarly, the reference to the moon (8:2) may apply to the “Queen of Heaven”—a figure whose title naturally points to an identification with the second-ranking luminary in the heavens. The association of the Queen of Heaven with the moon is made more likely if the former is to be associated with Astarte, as a number of scholars maintain.¹²⁵ In addition to being associated with the planet Venus (Wyatt 1995b:204), Astarte is, in several traditions, associated also with the moon. In *De Dea Syria* (§4), for example, the traveller and satirist Lucian remarks upon Astarte of Sidon, equating her with Selene (Σεληναίην) the Greek moon goddess. In the bilingual Pygri inscription, Phoenician Astarte is paired with Uni the Etruscan counterpart to Juno—a goddess with some lunar associations.¹²⁶ If the above is true, then it is possible that the sun corresponds to “the baal”. A solar association to “the baal” of the Tophet is not entirely surprising given that, 1) the people

124 In Judges 2:11-12, “other gods” stands as a synonym for “the baals”. In 1 Sam. 7:3-4, “the baals” are considered “foreign gods” (*ʾēlōhê-hannēkār*). In 3 Enoch 14:4-5, the astral and meteorological functions of the universe (including control of the sun, moon and stars) are apportioned among the angels. This may reflect a recollection of their role as minor deities, “the baals”.

125 Ackerman (1989:20-34) suggests that the Queen of Heaven was a syncretistic deity incorporating aspects of Astarte and Ishtar while Olyan (1987) associates her solely with Astarte. Smith (1990a:90, 145) tentatively identifies Astarte with the Queen of Heaven.

126 Fitzmyer (1966:288); Rose (1970:568-69); Ackerman (1989:22-23).

seem to associate this figure with Yahweh, 2) a solar Yahwism likely existed in Israel until at least the time of Hezekiah (Taylor 1993, 1994; Smith 1990a:115-24)¹²⁷ and, 3) in at least one passage, the worship at the Tophet is condemned in a section that is otherwise devoted to the condemnation of solar worship (2 Kgs. 23:10-12).¹²⁸ The objection (Heider 1985:346) that the Tophet cult was chthonic in character and therefore unlikely to be associated with a solar deity is lessened when one recalls that solar deities in both Egypt and Ugarit were thought to spend half of their time in the underworld.¹²⁹ While deities with baal names are not often thought of in solar terms, at least one baal figure is so characterised in the Phoenician History of Philo of Byblos.¹³⁰

What Jeremiah 7 reveals about “the baal” is that he was a deity sometimes worshipped with incense (7:9) and on other occasions with human sacrifice (7:31); both actions were seen by the people of Judah as completely compatible with their devotion

127 Among other things, Taylor (1993:176-82) points out that certain items placed in the temple of Yahweh were dedicated to the sun.

128 In this passage, Josiah is credited with defiling the Tophet where children were sacrificed to Molek. Following this he, 1) removes from the temple the horses dedicated to the sun (near the room of Nathan-Melek) and, 2) burns the chariots dedicated to the sun. He also pulls down the rooftop altars near the upper room of Ahaz—installations which by virtue of their location may be presumed to have had a solar aspect.

129 In *KTU* 1.6 IV.6-20, for example, it is the sun goddess Shapash who is dispatched to search the underworld for Baal. Also, at Ugarit, “to arrive at the setting of the sun” was a metaphor for death (*KTU* 1.15 V.18-20; 1.16 II.24-24). See also, Ps. 90:6 and Job 4:20. In Egypt, Seth (equated with Baal) rides daily in the solar barque of Re, but also has a prominent role (positively and negatively) in the underworld. On the relationship of the sun to the underworld, see Astour (1967:287-88; 1980:232) and Healey (1980).

130 Philo of Byblos states that during times of drought, the people of Phoenicia looked to the sun, which they identified with Baal-Shamem (*PE* 1.10.7). Attridge and Oden (1981:81, n. 49), however, suggest that the reference to a solar aspect to Baal-Shamem is simply a reflection of the growth of solar theology in the Hellenistic period.

to Yahweh (7:10, 31b). It is possible that “the baal” venerated at the Tophet was a chthonic form of Yahweh identified with the sun.¹³¹

Jeremiah 11

A further mention of “the baal” comes in the prose of Jeremiah 11. After rehearsing the covenant history of the people and their sin (11:1-8), Yahweh turns attention toward the unfaithful inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem and the disaster soon to be visited upon them. When calamity strikes, these people will be rebuffed by Yahweh and will turn instead to the gods to whom they burned incense. To emphasise the extent of Judah’s unfaithfulness, the prophet states,

For as the number of your cities are your gods, O Judah; and as the number of the streets of Jerusalem are the altars you have set up to the Shameful One¹³²—altars to burn incense to the baal (11:13).

131 Several scholars have suggested that Psalm 104 implies a connection between Yahweh and solar and storm imagery (Dion 1991; Taylor 1993:225-30).

132 The presence of the word *bōšet*—absent in the LXX—should probably be seen as an expansion by the editor of the MT in keeping with his tendency demonstrated elsewhere to clarify the names of individuals by adding explanatory phrases (Holladay 1989:7-8). The explanatory use of the singular, *bōšet* (“Shameful One/Thing”), in v. 13b shows that the editor of the MT, at least, understood “the baal” to refer to a single figure—the term elsewhere being used as a substitute for “baal” where the latter undoubtedly represents a divine individual. See, for example, the following cases where personal names with the theophoric element “baal” have been altered: Eshbaal (*ʿešbāʿal*) (1 Chron. 8:33; 9:39) to Ishboshet (*ʾiš bōšet*) (2 Sam. 2:8-15; 3:8-15; 4:5-12 etc.), a presumed Mephibaal (**mēpībaʿal*) to Mephiboshet (*mēpībōšet*) (2 Sam. 4:4; 9:6-13; 16:1-4; 19:24-30; 21:7-8) and Jerubbaal (*yērubbaʿal*) (Judg. 6:32; 7:1; 8:29, 35; 9:1-28, 57; 1 Sam. 12:11) to Jerubbeshet (*yērubbešet*) (2 Sam. 11:21). The exact identity of this divine individual as either Yahweh or Canaanite Baal is not crucial to the point at hand. The term *bōšet* (“shame”), also appears in connection with a divine figure in Jer. 3:24 *habbōšet* (“The Shameful One”)(in a context where an identification with Yahweh is impossible).

Halpern suggests that the correlation between this verse and v. 12 demonstrates that “the baal” is a collective for “gods” (1993a:128). Such a conclusion, however, is not demanded by the context. Indeed, the verse can just as easily be taken merely to emphasise that each hamlet in Judah had its own deity or deities and that in Jerusalem, many altars existed to one particular figure, “the baal”.

The identity and role of “the baal” in the summary verse (17) is difficult to determine. While it may function here as a collective for multiple gods, it is just as, or more, likely to refer to a single deity, “the baal” as Israel’s single greatest temptation and therefore a suitable representative of all her infidelity.

Jeremiah 19

In Jer. 19:1-13, the prophet stands in the Hinnom valley and inveighs against the cultic activities undertaken there.¹³³ Two activities in particular attract his rebuke. First, claims Yahweh, the people have forsaken him by burning incense to “other gods” (*lē’lōhīm ʾāḥērīm*)(v. 4)—figures that their forefathers had never known. What arises from this description is the conclusion that the prophet regarded these “other gods” as both alien and non-traditional.¹³⁴ Second—and in contrast to this—the prophet also

133 Bright (1986:127-28, 31) argues that vv. 2b-9 and 11b-13 are prophetic harangues which expand upon an account of an original address to a small group of elders and priests. Even if these verses are insertions, they should be considered closely connected with each other. The reference, for example, to kings and inhabitants/dwellings of Jerusalem in vv. 3 and 13 suggests a close connection between the two sections. In addition, it should be noted that Bright’s objection that the address to the kings and people of Jerusalem (v. 3) conflicts with the immediate audience (v. 1) does not in and of itself show the prophetic speech to be secondary. The use of the plural “kings” shows that v. 3 does not identify a different audience (and hence an alternate setting) but is rather a rhetorical device designed to indict the rulers and people of Jerusalem past and present.

134 This same status is demonstrated elsewhere in Jeremiah where it is clear that continued existence in the land depends upon abstaining from the worship of “other gods” (35:15) and foreign exile is the natural result of worship of these

condemns worship of “the baal” undertaken in the same locality (19:4b-5). Veneration of this figure is said to involve human sacrifice. The disclaimer that Yahweh did not command such devotion betrays the fact that, far from regarding “the baal” as foreign, the people worshipped this figure as a Yahwistic entity.¹³⁵ Verses 4-5 show, therefore, that in condemning what he sees as unorthodox cultic activity in the Hinnom valley, Jeremiah distinguishes the worship of “other gods” from “the baal” in the means of their veneration. As a result of these activities, the Hinnom valley had become an “alien place” (*wayēnakkērû ʿet-hammāqôm hazzeh*)(19:4).

In 19:13, the writer turns his attention from the Hinnom valley to Jerusalem proper and condemns the cultic sins carried out within the city. The relationship between vv. 4-5 and v. 13 is at first glance difficult to ascertain. Following the overview of sins in vv. 4-5, the prophet outlines the punishment that such transgression will bring—the sins committed in the valley will have disastrous consequences for those dwelling in the city (vv. 7-9). Then, in the presence of the elders and the priests who have accompanied him since v. 2, Jeremiah is commanded to smash the juglet he has been carrying. With this action, he brings to a fitting conclusion his condemnation against the city. The summary statement in v. 11 of the judgement due the city has its predicate in the description of judgement given already in vv. 7-9. Against this background, vv. 12-13 with their renewed mention of both city and Tophet may

same deities (13:4-10; 16:13). “Other gods” are also equated—from the prophet’s perspective, at least—with foreign, non-traditional deities in 44:3, 8.

- 135 Despite the claims of the people, it is certainly the case that the writer regarded—or at least wished to portray—“the baal” as “foreign”. The reaction of the priest, Pashur (20:1-2), to Jeremiah’s remarks is particularly instructive on the question of the nature of the deities condemned by the prophet. The fact that Jeremiah’s declaration that worship of “the host of heaven” and “the baal” and “other gods”, earns him a beating and imprisonment at the hands of a high-ranking Yahwistic cultic official strongly implies that at least some of the deities condemned by the prophet were considered by many to be Yahwistic in nature.

constitute a later addition¹³⁶ prompted by the mention of both city and Tophet in v. 12. If this is an addition, it appears to be intended to draw a comparison between the human sacrifice in the valley and the offering of incense in the city and to emphasise that while the latter does not involve human death, it nonetheless merits the same condemnation as the former.

Jeremiah 23

In Jer. 23:13 and 27, the prophet makes passing, but important, reference to “the baal”. In v. 13, Yahweh recalls how the prophets of Samaria had once prophesied “by the baal”. The reference to the capital of the defunct northern kingdom and the baal worshipped there—as well as the intervening storm imagery (v. 19)—suggests that here, the prophet is alluding to the deity promoted by Ahab and Jezebel. As noted above, this figure was most likely a single deity with storm-god associations that was identified by some with Yahweh.

Having recalled the apostasy of the prophets of Samaria, the prophet turns his attention toward the prophets of Jerusalem. Concerning this group he concludes (vv. 26-27),

Is there anything in the hearts of the prophets who prophesy lies—the prophets of the deception of their own heart—the ones who intend to make my people forget my name by their dreams which they relate to each other, just as their fathers forgot my name because of “the baal”?

Ensnared in this statement is the acknowledgement that for the people of Jerusalem, “the baal” was a problem of the past. It was the fathers of the Jerusalemites who had

136 If these verses are an addition, they have been skilfully added to the passage, with terms like, “kings of Judah” (*malkê yēhûdâ*) and “other gods” (*lē’lōhîm ʾăḥērîm*) (v. 13) harking back to the same terms in v. 4.

once forgotten Yahweh because of “the baal” (v. 27)—perhaps a reference to the reign of Athaliah when religious traditions of the northern court were promoted in Jerusalem and when the city briefly “forgot” Yahweh.¹³⁷ This and v. 13 then, demonstrate that—however else he might choose to use the term—here Jeremiah demonstrates awareness of a historical use of the term “the baal” that had its roots in the northern kingdom.

Jeremiah 32

In Jer. 32:26-44, the prophet relates Yahweh’s sentence of doom over the city of Jerusalem. In v. 29, Yahweh declares that the Babylonians would soon burn the city and the houses on whose roofs the people had “offered incense to the baal” and “poured out libations to other gods”. This statement is significant because of a nearly identical phrase in 19:13 where the destruction of the city is tied to the fact that its citizens had “offered incense to the host of heaven” and “poured out libations to other gods”. The use of “the baal” in 32:29 where “the host of heaven” appears in 19:13 suggests that—as was the case in 19:13—here too, the author wishes to make the point that the burning of incense to other gods is just as serious as the sacrifice of children to “the baal”.¹³⁸

137 The extent to which Judah “forgot” Yahweh during this period is made plain by the fact that Jehoiada had to reinstitute a covenant between Yahweh, king and people that made the latter the “people of Yahweh” (2 Kgs. 11:17).

138 Holladay (1989:207, 19) maintains that vv. 28-29 is a late expansion, arguing in part that the doom found in these verses is at odds with the words of hope communicated elsewhere by Yahweh. An examination of the verses in question, however, shows there to be no inconsistency between their sentiment and the hope expressed earlier in the chapter. First, the inevitable destruction of the city is already presumed in v. 25b, a line that neither Holladay nor Bright (1986:289, 98) appear to suspect as being late. It cannot be said, therefore that vv. 28-29 introduce material that is completely out-of-step with what precedes it. Second, while Jeremiah’s purchase of the field is indeed an action designed to instil hope in his audience, vv. 14-15 make it clear that it is a hope delayed. The command to place the deed in an earthenware jar for long-term preservation and the statement that

The reference to the defilement of the temple and the sacrifice of children made to “the baal” in the Hinnom valley (vv. 34-35), repeats almost word for word the text of Jer. 7:30-31. The characterisation here of worship of “the baal” as the foremost expression of rebellion and evil is clear from the fact that condemnation of the grisly worship of this god is the crowning element in the prophet’s list of Israel’s sins (vv. 30-35). The manner in which the cult of child sacrifice in the Hinnom valley is set apart in this passage (and in chapters 7 and 19) from references to other cults such as “the host” and the unique disclaimer attached solely to condemnations of this form of worship (7:31b; 19:5b; 32:35b) both suggest that “the baal” worshipped at the Tophet is not identical to “the host of heaven”, “other gods” and “the baals”.¹³⁹

Conclusions

An important observation when encountering the use of “the baal” in Jeremiah is the recognition that the book uses the term in more than one way. As noted above, the writer of Jeremiah thrice uses “the baal” to refer to a deity related primarily to the northern kingdom and which for Israel and Judah was a cultic temptation very much in

houses, fields and vineyards shall, “once again be purchased” (*’ôd yiqqānû*), points toward a hope that is to be realised in the distant future. Such a distant hope is in no way incompatible with a pronouncement of immediate and violent judgement upon Jerusalem. On the contrary, it may even be said that the latter makes entirely appropriate some statement to the former. Third, the relationship between hope and destruction is further clarified by Yahweh’s rhetorical question of v. 27b. The answer anticipated by this question (“Is anything too hard for me?”), prepares the way for the proclamation of doom in vv. 28-29. If nothing is too difficult for Yahweh, then surely he is able to bring restoration in the wake of destruction at the hand of the Babylonians. There is, therefore, no reason to exclude vv. 28-29 on the grounds of inconsistency of thought.

139 Although it is an argument from silence, it is probably significant that “the host” is never implicated in the sacrifice of children. This may also provide reason for assuming that where Jeremiah appears to equate “the host” and “the baal” he is doing so not because they are the same in his mind, but because the baals as underlings could naturally be indicated by reference to their chief.

the past (Jer. 2:8; 23:13, 27). This emphasis on the past nature of “the baal” indirectly confirms the statement of the Deuteronomist that Jehu eradicated “the baal” from the northern kingdom (2 Kgs. 10:28). Distinct from this use of “the baal” are the majority of occurrences of this term in the book which refer to a divine figure related to Yahweh that was the recipient of human offerings in the Hinnom valley in Jerusalem and of incense elsewhere (7:9; 11:13, 17; 32:29). Around this figure and closely associated with it there appears to have been a group of deities known as “the baals”, the “host of heaven”, or “other gods”. These figures were worshipped with libations and incense in Jerusalem and at the Tophet (2:23; 19:4, 13). The apparent overlap between this group and “the baal” may be due to the likelihood that “the baal” was the pre-eminent figure among “the baals”—an arrangement parallel, and perhaps related, to Yahweh’s position as head of the divine council/heavenly host.¹⁴⁰ While Jeremiah attempts to portray this group as both novel and foreign (7:9b; 19:4; 44:3), the sheer intensity of his protest suggests that it enjoyed some history within Yahwism (11:10; 44:7-9, 21).¹⁴¹

Zephaniah 1:4-6

Understanding the meaning of this passage rests in large part upon coming to terms with its structure. The phrase, *wēhikrattī min-hammāqôm hazzeh* (“I will cut off from this place”) is followed by a list of groups and actions that Yahweh opposes. Standing at the head of this list is *šē’ār habba‘al* (“the remnant of the baal”)—a phrase introduced by the direct object marker (‘et). Immediately following is another phrase introduced by ‘et—*‘et-šēm hakkēmārīm ‘im-hakkōhānīm* (“the name of the idolatrous

140 See above, chapter three.

141 On this point, Carroll (1986:729) observes, “It is an absurd feature of these sermons that the nation is accused of persistent idolatry throughout their existence yet always in terms of gods which they have not known!”.

priests¹⁴² with the priests”). Following this is a series of participial phrases introduced by *wēʾet*. Most interpreters take this series of items as a simple list of iniquities opposed by the prophet (Smith 1928b:55; Robertson 1990:260-6; Roberts 1991:172). This is a reasonable approach since in many places in the MT, this construction represents a simple list with no items in apposition.¹⁴³ This is not, however, the only possible understanding of this type of chain. Indeed, in a small number of cases where this construction is present, the second term only may be in apposition to the first and this combination followed by a further list of items introduced by *wēʾet*.¹⁴⁴ A further option is identified by Halpern who suggests that in the verses under discussion, *habbaʿal* stands as a collective encompassing all of the items that follow. He argues that, because the term *šr* (“remnant”) is most often used with plurals and collectives, it is best to see “the baal” as a collective for “the Host of Heaven”—a group mentioned in v. 5 (Halpern 1993a:130-32).

142 Although generally translated, idolatrous priests” (NIV, NASB; KJV “Chemarim”, JPS “priestlings”), the exact meaning of *hakkēmārīm* is unknown. Mowinckel’s (1916:238-39) suggestion early in the century that the root means, “heiß sein, brennend sein” and that a *kōmer* engaged in ecstatic behaviour remains speculative. The term occurs only three times in the OT (2 Kgs. 23:5; Hos. 10:5; Zeph. 1:4). In the first two passages, it is clear that these functionaries are ones who received their office by royal appointment and are associated (by the Biblical writer, at least) with unorthodox worship. In 2 Kgs. 23:5, Josiah is said to have done away with *hakkēmārīm* “whom the kings of Judah appointed”. Likewise, in Hos. 10:5, the prophet refers to *hakkēmārīm* of the calf of Beth-Aven—a clear reference to the officials of the cult established by Jeroboam I which functioned under royal patronage at Bethel. It is possible, therefore, that one characteristic of Israelite *kēmārīm* is that they were priests who did not owe their office to tribal affiliations. Based on the OT occurrences of *kmrym*, Ben-Zvi (1991:67-72) argues that the term does not refer to priests of a non-Yahwistic cult, but to those of an illegitimate Yahwistic cult. It is only in later Jewish Aramaic, he maintains, that the term comes to specify non-Yahwistic priests. For further discussion concerning this word, see Cody (1969:14, n. 28), Berlin (1994:74-75) and Jenson (1997:662-63). Whatever the true nature of *hakkēmārīm*, its appearance with *hakkōhānīm* in v. 4 seems to be as part of an antonymic word pair indicating the entirety of the Judaeen religious establishment.

143 E.g. Gen. 5:32; 6:10; 11:26-27; 21:5; 23:28; Num. 4:14; Deut. 28:20; Jer. 51:28.

144 E.g. Deut. 26:15; Isa. 29:10; Jer. 41:3. See Patterson (1991:303, 5).

The structure of Zeph. 1:4-6 lends the greatest support to Halpern's general approach. In the clear majority of places in the MT where similar chains of nouns or participles are found, they form a string of words in apposition to an initial term.¹⁴⁵ This is especially true of longer chains such as the one found in Zeph. 1:4-6. In addition, morphology suggests that the phrase *ʾet-šēm hakkēmārīm ʿim-hakkōhānīm* should be understood to be in apposition to *ʾet-šēʾār habbaʿal*. In verse 4, *šēʾār* and *šēm* form a parallel word pair that elsewhere in the MT appears with the same governing verb—*krt* (Isa. 44:22).¹⁴⁶ This fact suggests that “the names of the kemarim with the priests” should be understood as an explanation of “the remnant of the baal” and not just as a term in a sequential list.

Zephaniah 1:4-6 may therefore be laid out as follows:

<i>wēnāṭīṭī yādī ʿal-yēhūdā wēʿal kol yōšēbē yērūšālāim wēhikratī min hammāqôm hazzeh ʾet šēʾār habbaʿal</i>	I will stretch out my hand over Judah and over all of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. I will cut off from this place the remnant of the baal—
- <i>ʾet-šēm hakkēmārīm ʿim hakkōhānīm</i>	- the name of the kemarim with the priests,
- <i>wēʾet hammištahāwīm ʿal haggagôt lišbāʾ haššāmāyīm</i>	- those who bow down on the rooftops to the Host of Heaven,
- <i>wēʾet-hammištahāwīm hannišbāʿīm lyhwh wēhannišbāʿīm bēmalkām</i>	- those who bow down, swearing by Yahweh and swearing by their king,
- <i>wēʾet-hannēsôgīm mēʾahārē yhwh waʾāšer wēloʾ biqšû ʾet-yhwh wēloʾ dērāšūhū</i>	- those who turn away from Yahweh and who do not seek him or inquire of him.

By so constructing these verses, the prophet condemns an entire catalogue of activities he understands to be intimately connected with the worship of “the baal”. This being

145 E.g. Exod. 35:11; 38:3; 39:33; Lev. 14:9, 45; Josh. 15:14; 1 Kgs. 7:51; 2 Kgs. 20:1; Isa. 39:2; Ezek. 30:22; 1 Chron. 6:57, 67; 2 Chron. 29:18.

146 A similar pair (*šēm* and *šēʾērīt*) occurs in 2 Sam. 14:7 without the verb *krt*.

the case, the passage becomes instructive for identifying some of the characteristics of the worship of “the baal”.

Most significant is the revelation that worship of “the baal” was seen by the faithful as entirely compatible with fidelity to Yahweh. This is clear from the fact that the prophet condemns those who believe that homage to “the baal” means they can swear by Yahweh and “their king”.¹⁴⁷ Zephaniah’s condemnation of a Yahwistic figure, “their king”, as part of the worship of “the baal”, closely parallels Jeremiah’s identification of “the baal” with “the Molek” (“the Ruler”)—a figure that he too connects with Yahweh.¹⁴⁸ The association between Yahweh and “the baal” is also suggested by the fact that “the remnant of the baal” is said to include both the *kēmārîm* and the priests. The involvement of such a broad cross-section of the Judaeen religious establishment¹⁴⁹ suggests that “the baal” was seen as either compatible with, or identical to, Yahweh.

From these verses it is also clear that the veneration of “the baal” involved the worship of the “Host of Heaven”. While Halpern (1993a:130-31) understands the phrase

147 Reading *bēmalkām* with the MT and LXX. While many interpreters emend to *milkōm* (“Milkom”)(Halpern 1993a:131; Roberts 1991:167; Smith 1928b:55; also NASB, NRSV, NJPS), it should be noted that this reading is found only in the Lucianic recension of the LXX and in later versions such as the Syriac and Vulgate. Moreover, in every other occurrence of Milkom in the MT, the name is identified as the god of Ammon (1 Kgs. 11:5, 33; 2 Kgs. 23:13). Given that Ammon is not in view in Zephaniah 1, there seems little reason to support the reading of Milkom (Patterson 1991:306; Berlin 1994:76). For other treatments in support of the MT reading, see Robertson (1990:265) and Taylor (1993:202-3). After examining several alternatives, Ben-Zvi (1991:74-78) accepts the MT reading, “their king”, and suggests that the reference is to an aberrant form of Yahweh-worship. Ben-Zvi bases this conclusion in part on other passages in which a common noun associated with Yahweh is used to identify idols made for Yahweh (e.g. *hinnē ʾēlōhēkā yisrāʾēl*, 1 Kgs. 12:28). Both Heider (1985:332-34) and Berlin (1994:77) accept the reading of the MT but take this to be a reference to the worship of “the/their Molek”.

148 On Jer. 19:3; 32:29-35, see above, section on Jeremiah 19.

149 See above, note 142.

“the baal” to be a collective for the Host, given its use elsewhere in the MT,¹⁵⁰ it is more likely that “the baal” is singular and that the Host are mentioned because they were a subsidiary element of worship of “the baal”. A reasonable assumption is that the Host were worshipped as the heavenly court or divine council of “the baal”.

II. Deities with Baal-names in the OT

Baal-Berith

The god Baal-Berith appears in only one location in the OT, in the narrative describing the disastrous and short-lived relationship between the people of Shechem and Abimelek, the murderous son of Jerubbaal (Judg. 8:33-9:57). Within this framework, Baal-Berith (“Baal/Lord of the Covenant”) appears twice (8:33; 9:4) and the name El-Berith (“El/God of the Covenant”) once (9:46). The presence at Shechem of a deity related to covenants is not surprising given that the site is associated with covenants at several places in the OT.¹⁵¹ Although there is much within the passage to attract the interest of the reader, there are also few cultic details to assist in making an assessment of the identity and character of Baal-Berith. As a result, treatments of the question have been few and brief, with all writers acknowledging the tentative nature of their conclusions. Discussions of this deity have generally addressed two issues, 1) the identity of Baal-Berith and 2) the nature of the covenant at Shechem.¹⁵² The pages that follow concentrate on the first of these two concerns.

150 E.g. Judg. 6:25-32; 1 Kgs. 18:16-40; 2 Kgs. 10:18-21.

151 In Genesis 34, the clan of Jacob makes a covenant with the Shechemite “sons of Hamor” while in Josh. 8:30-35; 24:1-28 the tribes of Israel renew the covenant at Shechem.

152 See, Smith (1946), Gray (1962b), Clements (1968), Anderson (1975:319-23), Mulder (1995) and Lewis (1996).

A major problem in determining the identity of Baal-Berith is to decide if the shrine belonging to El-Berith (Judg. 9:46) is the temple of Baal-Berith or some other deity. The majority of scholars¹⁵³ maintain that Baal-Berith and El-Berith refer to the same god, while Mulder (1995:267), de Vaux (1965b:294) and others conclude otherwise. While it is certain that a plurality of gods was worshipped at Shechem, it would be unusual for two deities at the same locale to bear identical epithets.¹⁵⁴ For this reason, it is most likely that Baal-Berith and El-Berith refer to the same figure. If this is so, then it remains to ask, Which god is connected with Baal/El-Berith—El, Baal or some other deity?

In his recent and judicious treatment of the subject, Lewis (1996) examines both Biblical and extra-biblical material and favours an identification of Baal/El-Berith with El.¹⁵⁵ Lewis approaches this issue first by asking whether Baal/El-Berith acted as a guardian or witness of a covenant or if he was actually a partner in the covenant. On this point, he notes that while the role of gods as treaty witnesses is widely attested in the ancient Near East, there is no example of such a treaty being witnessed by a single deity (1996:408, 15). This observation suggests to Lewis that the background of Baal/El-Berith at Shechem is as a deity that functioned as a covenant partner.¹⁵⁶ If Lewis is correct, then Baal/El-Berith may have been a god with whom the inhabitants of Shechem made a covenant—the people making the deity their civic or dynastic god and the deity agreeing to protect the city.¹⁵⁷

153 E.g. Moore (1895:236, 42); Meek (1950:26); Clements (1968:26, n. 3); Oldenburg (1969:81); Kaufmann (1960: 138-39). Kaufmann (1960:138-39) and Wright (1965:141) suggest that Baal-Berith should be connected with Yahweh.

154 The same might be said for the appearance of two nearly identical titles within a confined literary context like Judg. 8:33-9:57.

155 Cross (1973:44, 49, n. 23) also regards Baal/El-Berith as an El deity.

156 See also Clements (1968:31).

157 On the possibility that a segment of Shechem's population (the "sons of Hamor") had such a covenant relationship and possible parallels from Mari, see Habel (1964:27-28), Clement (1968:28-31) and Lewis (1996:411-13).

As evidence for understanding the “Baal” in Baal-Berith generically, Lewis (1996:413) points to Gen. 14:13 where the plural expression *ba‘ālê bērit* occurs in connection with individuals in covenant relationship to Abraham. This use, he suggests, provides reason for understanding the similar construction Baal-Berith in functional terms and as a covenant partner. In favour of seeing Baal-Berith as an El-figure, Lewis points to Gen. 33:20¹⁵⁸ in which Jacob erects at Shechem an altar which he calls *‘ēl ‘ēlōhē yiśrā’ēl* (“El, god of Israel”). In addition to this, both Lewis (1996:415-16) and Craigie (1973) cite a text from Ugarit in which El is described as *il brt . il . dn* (“El of the Covenant, El the Judge”)(KTU 1.128, ll. 14-15). This combination of patriarchal traditions and Ugaritic parallel leads Lewis to cautiously identify Baal/El-Berith as an El deity that functioned as “lord of the covenant”.¹⁵⁹

The view that Baal-Berith was a local manifestation of the Canaanite fertility god Baal is argued by Gray (1962b), Oldenburg (1969:81) and Mulder (1962:138-39; 1995:271). In support of this, Mulder points to Judg. 9:27 in which the men of Shechem gather and tread grapes then hold a festival in the temple of their god. The reference to vineyards, however, need not be taken to mean that a fertility deity is in view. Indeed, associations connected with the *marzeah* feast (where alcohol was consumed freely) could own vineyards and be dedicated to specific deities (McLaughlin 1991). In addition, the fact that the gathering of Judg. 9:27 seems prompted by a dissatisfaction with Abimelek argues against it being a seasonal ritual associated with a fertility deity. The verse in question simply does not convey enough about the background of the celebration to allow confidence about the identity of the god in whose temple it was celebrated. Given the evidence that is available, it seems best to see Baal-Berith as a title

158 The citation in Lewis’ article erroneously reads, Gen. 33:30.

159 Lewis (1996:416-22) also discusses two bronze figures connected with Shechem, one of which he concludes to be a likely representation of El and the other which he regards as a possible representation of El.

for an El deity, El-Berith, that had a long history of worship among Canaanites and Israelites at Shechem.

Looking at the narrative (Judg. 9:1-57) and its context (Judg. 8:33-35), it appears that the editor includes the story of Abimelek and the people of Shechem because of its generally negative outcome coupled with mention of the god Baal-Berith. The editor's presumption seems to be that by becoming king of Shechem, Abimelek—the son of a judge of Israel—entered into some form of relationship with Baal-Berith. This assumption is likely based on the editor's own understanding of what constituted a royal instalment and the conjecture that the same pattern applied at Shechem. If the crowning of Joash is anything to go on, the instalment of a Judahite king took place at the temple in Jerusalem, involved standing by a pillar and entering into a covenant with Yahweh (2 Kgs. 11:12, 14; 2 Chron. 23:11-13; also 2 Kgs. 11:17; 2 Chron. 23:16).¹⁶⁰ Key elements of this procedure appear also in Abimelek's inauguration. In Judg. 9:6, the people of Shechem (the city of Baal-Berith) crown Abimelek at a sacred place that appears to include a pillar.¹⁶¹ Thus, while the deity El-Berith may have had Yahwistic associations, by the time of the editing of Judges the reference to a Baal name provides reason for stating that Israel's association with this figure amounted to apostasy.

160 *wēhinnē hammelek ʿōmēd ʿal-hāʿammūd kammišpāt*, "Now, the king was standing by the pillar as was the custom". The fact that the king is presented with the testimony (*hāʿēdūt*) prior to anointing implies some form of covenant commitment to obey Yahweh. The reference to covenants made after the instalment may be an extraordinary measure due to the cultic disruption caused by Athaliah's bloody usurpation and her Baal worship.

161 *wayyāmlīkū ʿet-ʾābimelek lēmelek ʿim-ʾēlôn muṣṣāb ʾāšer biškem*, "They made Abimelek king at the oak of the standing stone at Shechem". Although the form *muṣṣāb* is unusual, it seems best to see it as related to, or a corruption of, *maṣṣēbā* "standing stone" as does BHS.

Baal-Peor

The account of the incident at Baal-Peor found in Numbers 25 is widely acknowledged to be a composite of a JE tradition (vv. 1-5) dealing with spiritual and sexual sin and Moses' pronouncement against it and a later P strand (vv. 6-8) focusing on the actions of Phinehas the priest (Gray 1906:381-87; Noth 1968:195-99; Budd 1984:275; Ashley 1993:514-15; Davies 1995:284; cf. Milgrom 1990:476-77). According to Num. 25:1-5, the people of Israel engaged in sexual relations with Moabite women (v. 1) who invited them to the sacrifices of their gods (v. 2). The result of these actions was that Israel became "yoked" to the Baal of Peor and so incurred the wrath of Yahweh (v. 3). In vv. 6-18—a passage which in its reference to sexual immorality compliments the material of vv. 1-5—Phinehas is said to have received priestly office because of his bold execution of an Israelite man and "the" Midianite woman he had brought into the camp.¹⁶² Another depiction of these events is found in Ps. 106:28-31 which, by virtue of its use of the phrases *wayyiṣṣāmēdû* (v. 28) and *wattē'āṣar* (v. 30), shows itself to be acquainted with both components of Numbers 25 (Cross 1973:202, n. 31).

The material in Psalm 106 presents the additional—and unexpected—information that the apostasy at Baal-Peor involved consuming sacrifices to the dead (*zibhê mētim*). Traditionally, interpreters have seen a parallel between *zibhê mētim* of Ps. 106:28 and *lēzibhê 'ēlōhēhen* of Num. 25:2 and understood this phrase to denigrate the gods of Moab as "lifeless idols" (Delitzsch 1991:156; Allen 1983:49). Nowhere else in the OT, however, is the term *mētim* used in this exact sense. Recently, Lewis (1989:167)—anticipated in part by Dahood (1970:73-74) and followed by Smith (1990a:127-28)—has suggested that *mētim* of Ps. 106:28b refers to the *'lhyim* of Num. 25:2 not as "lifeless idols" but as departed ancestors. In this he is supported by the occurrence in Ugaritic literature of a parallel word pair (*'lm / mtm*) which refers to

162 Given that the editor has chosen not to present either tradition in its entirety, one should not be too hasty in concluding that these elements refer to different events.

deified ancestors (KTU 1.6 VI.48). That the psalmist should make such a connection solely on the basis of *lēzibhê ʾēlōhēhen* in Num. 25:2 is exceedingly unlikely. It seems reasonable to assume, therefore, that the author of Psalm 106 is aware of a broader tradition in which the sin of Numbers 25 is connected with the veneration of ancestral spirits.

Spronk (1995:279-80) finds evidence of just such a tradition in the word *pēʿôr* itself (Heb. *pēʿôr*, “open wide”) which he relates to the entrance to the underworld—citing Isa. 5:14. Indeed, such a connotation is quite compatible with the Arabic cognate *fġr*, which can mean “to dig a hole in the ground” (Lane 1984:2425). Further clues to the presence of a cult of the dead come from two widely noted, but late, traditions associating the site of Baal-Peor with the Marzeah¹⁶³—although it must be admitted that is possible that these traditions may be late extrapolations inspired by the material found in Psalm 106.

A question that rises out of vv. 6-18 concerns the nature of the activity involving the Israelite man and the Midianite woman. While the presumed sexual nature of their act might alone account for the violent reaction of Phinehas, it is also possible that their act had cultic overtones. This possibility is suggested by the fact that they are slain within a structure described by the term *haqqubbâ*. Many scholars have already drawn attention to pre-Islamic Arab parallels in which this same term designates a small tent-shrine of red leather which housed the clan gods (Morgenstern 1942-43:207-23; Cross 1947:59-61; 1973:202; de Vaux 1965b:226-97; Reif 1971:204).¹⁶⁴ The use of this same term

163 In *Sifre Num* 131, the incident at Baal-Peor is understood to have included a Marzeah. Also, on the 6th-century AD Medeba map, Baal-Peor is recorded as BHTOMAPCEAHK or Beth-Marzeah.

164 A specific cultic or underworld connection may be indicated if this term is shown to exist in KTU 1.6 IV.18-20. In this difficult passage, Shapash is about to enter the underworld to search for the missing Baal. Before doing so, however, she requests of Anat,

šdyn . ʿn . b . qbt [.]

here may hint that Phinehas was reacting to cultic as well as sexual violations. Little more than this can be said with certainty. The cultic nature of the *qubbâ* is also suggested by the fact that later tradition (1 Chron. 9:19-20) maintained that Phinehas oversaw the gatekeepers of the tabernacle—a responsibility that makes sense if he was protecting a cultic area by killing the pair found in the *qubbâ*.

The limited details found in both Numbers 25 and Psalm 106 make it difficult to determine the identity of the Baal of Peor. Spronk (1986:231-33; 1995:279-81) favours an identification with the “chthonic aspect of Baal”.¹⁶⁵ In this he builds upon de Moor’s earlier suggestion that Baal is to be identified with the mysterious underworld figure Rpu (*KTU* 1.108 ll. 1, 21-22)(Spronk 1986:173-74, 180; de Moor 1976). That Baal should have a chthonic aspect should not be surprising given that in *KTU* 1.6 V he is pictured

[t] / bllyt . ʕ . umtk /
wabq̣ṭ . aliyn . bʕl

The transcription offered above is that of Smith (1997:159) The second edition of *KTU* differs by suggesting *qḅt*. Gibson (1978:78) translates these lines as,

Pour sparkling wine from a vat,
Let the children of your family wear wreaths,
and I will seek mightiest Baal.

The context of this request for ritual action suggests that the ritual itself may relate to divination or summoning up the inhabitants of the netherworld. If this is the case, then Shapash may be asking Anat to perform a ritual act similar to one performed before a family shrine. One possible reading would take *qḅt* (transcribing with Smith 1997:159 and Gibson 1978:78) as “shrine” and *bl* as related to Hebrew *bll* “to moisten with oil, pour oil on”. This reading has the advantage of seeing a parallelism between the lines 18-19 that includes verbs for libation and nouns related to a clan cult. The lines might then be translated,

Pour out ...wine at the shrine,
Let ...be poured out before/upon your family,
And I will seek mightiest Baal.

165 Habel (1964:25) expresses a similar view, suggesting that the Baal of Peor likely represented fertility and underworld aspects of Canaanite Baal.

as having emerged from the netherworld and gained the upper hand over Mot. Such an achievement would make Baal a suitable patron of a cult related to summoning the spirits of the dead. The primary difficulty with this view is that it is not clear how Baal achieves his exit from the underworld or if he actually dies. The lacunae at the end of *KTU* 1.6 V and the beginning of column VI leaves open the possibility that the son produced by Baal (*KTU* 1.6 V.17-26) is intended as a substitute for Baal designed to deceive Mot and allow Baal to escape. Also, at the moment, there are no texts that unambiguously depict Baal as having a cultic association with the underworld. Finally, it should be noted that the association of Baal with Rpu has not as yet gained wide acceptance (Rouillard 1995:1311-14).

An equally plausible solution sees the Baal of Peor as a local manifestation of the Moabite national god Kemosh—a deity who in his Assyrian form ^d*Ka-am-muš*, could be equated with the underworld god Nergal (Müller 1995a:358). Suggestive also of a chthonic association for Kemosh is the existence at Ugarit of a binomial deity *zz . w kmṭ* (*KTU* 1.100 l. 36)—where *zz* refers to “clay”, a substance ubiquitous in the underworld (Mattingly 1992:896; Müller 1995a:358). This suggestion has in its favour the fact that it sees associated with the Baal of Peor a deity known to have been venerated in the region. Other than offering these two possibilities, little can be said about the identity of the Baal of Peor.

Baal-Zebub

The title Baal-Zebub appears in only one narrative in the OT, in the account of Ahaziah's efforts to receive healing following an accident (2 Kings 1). Early discussions of this text—limited by the sources then available—were coloured by speculation, imagining here a solar deity symbolised by the flies that swarmed in the heat of the

Palestinian sun. In support of this understanding, scholars proposed parallels to obscure fly-deities in classical literature or offered somewhat forced claims about the significance of the fly in the ancient Near East (e.g. Sayce 1915:34; Peake 1919:21; Keil 1991:285).

Recently, the consensus among scholars has been that Baal-Zebub is an intentional distortion on the part of the editor and that the name of the real deity in view is that preserved in the NT references to Beelzebul (Βεελζεβοὺλ)(Matt. 10:25; 12:24, 27; Mk. 3:22; Lk. 11:15, 18-19).¹⁶⁶ As many have noted,¹⁶⁷ the name Beelzebul may now be understood in light of the Ugaritic title *zbl b'l* “prince Baal”—this correlation is confirmed by the fact that in Matt. 12:24, Mk. 3:22 and Lk. 11:15, Beelzebul (Βεελζεβοὺλ) is described as ἄρχοντι τῶν δαιμονίων (the “ruler/prince of demons”).¹⁶⁸ These NT references would need not be related to 2 Kings 1 at all were it not for the fact that they appear in the context of exorcising demons—entities which in 1st-century Judaism were credited with responsibility for disease. It is this same issue of healing that motivates Ahaziah’s petition to the god of Ekron in 2 Kings 1 and so invites the correlation between OT Baal-Zebub and NT Beelzebul.

The possibility that the god of Ekron was Baal-Zebul has been challenged by Fensham (1967) who suggests that the MT reading *zēbûb* preserves the actual title of the

166 On the NT evidence, see Davies and Allison (1991:194-96).

167 E.g. Gray (1970:463); Anderson (1975:381-82); Hobbs (1985:8); Cogan and Tadmor (1988:25); Maier (1992a:554); Herrmann (1995b). A helpful survey of various approaches to the question is found in Lewis (1992).

168 In another passage, Jesus suggests that in their attacks on him, his detractors have called “the lord of the house Beelzebul” (Matt. 10:25). The term οἰκοδεσπότην (“lord of the house”) in this verse preserves in Greek an Aramaic play on words based on the terms *baʿal* (“lord”) and *zēbûl* (“exalted dwelling”)(Hab. 3:11; 1 Kgs. 8:13; Isa. 63:15; 2 Chron. 6:2). There is nothing to suggest that the wordplay of Matt. 10:25 conveys anything with regard to the character of the god in question.

deity in question.¹⁶⁹ Fensham's proposition has not received the attention it deserves. His proposal that *zēbûb* in 2 Kgs. 1:2-3, 6, 16 is related to the Ugaritic root *ḏbb* is etymologically plausible and has the added benefit of explaining an otherwise puzzling element in the narrative—the destructive use of fire. While the root *ḏbb* occurs only once in the Ugaritic texts published to date, efforts to define it are assisted by the fact that in the text in which it does appear, it does so in parallel with *īšt* ("fire").¹⁷⁰ If Fensham's suggestion is accepted, then it clears away a minor problem in the normal understanding of *zēbûb*—that Baal-Zebub ("lord of the flies") is intended to discredit the god of Ekron. The difficulty with this view—and it is a minor one—is that it is not clear that the substitution of *zēbûb* ("fly") for *zbl* ("prince") provides the stinging satire that is necessary here. Indeed, if the editor wished to alter the name of Baal-Zebub in a way that demeaned the god, then it is surprising that he passed up the opportunity to label him *ba'al-zôb*—"Lord of the Bodily Discharge"! The term *zôb* would seem well suited to the editor's supposed intent, being a term aurally close to *zbl* and one related to illness and ritual uncleanness¹⁷¹—issues not far removed from the one at hand. On this point, however, one should not presume too much about the intent of the editor or the likely reaction of his audience. In the end, the context of the NT references to Beelzebul and the fact that the name corresponds to the title of a well-known north-west semitic deity suggests that Fensham's proposal be rejected. The enduring value of Fensham's suggestion, however, is that it focuses attention on an overlooked aspect of the narrative—the curious presence of fire from heaven (2 Kgs. 1:9-15). If one may take up this observation and move beyond Fensham's conclusions, then this aspect of the

169 Like Fensham, Tångberg (1992) too argues that *ba'al-zēbûb* is the actual name of the deity, but suggests that it refers to a local Baal with some form of fly ornament.

170 *KTU* 1.3 III.45-47. "Fire" is the definition adopted or suggested in this passage by Gibson (1978:50, n. 11), Smith (1997:111) and Wyatt (1998:80). Problematic for this definition is the fact that cognates appear to be lacking in Arabic, Aramaic and Biblical Hebrew.

171 E.g. Leviticus 15; Num. 5:2; 2 Sam. 3:29.

narrative may well relate something about the character of the deity that is at the heart of the passage.

Largely overlooked in attempts at discerning the character of the deity petitioned by Ahaziah is the fact that this king of Israel was a son of Ahab and Jezebel who at the time of his death had been on the throne for a scant two years (1 Kgs. 22:52-53).¹⁷² Given the fact that Ahaziah had been raised in an environment in which Melqart¹⁷³ had been given pride of place, then it is natural to suppose that Baal-Zebub/Zebul of Ekron—to whom he instinctively appealed at his moment of crisis—was somehow related to these religious traditions.¹⁷⁴ An obvious connection between Baal-Zebul and the religious traditions of the house of Ahab is the fact that *zbl* is an element in the name Jezebel. From the context, it is evident that Ahaziah sent his messengers to Ekron in order to procure a healing. While the text condemns Ahaziah only for “seeking” (*drš*) Baal-Zebub, this does not require that the role of the deity was solely to give oracles. The term *drš* is used in the OT in a variety of contexts to indicate that help is being sought. Its use here should be taken to mean not only that Ahaziah was interested in the future, but that he expected Baal-Zebub to offer some gift of healing.¹⁷⁵

172 According to Thiele's (1982:217) reckoning, Ahaziah ruled 853-52 BC.

173 See above, section on 1 Kings 17-19 and chapter two, section on Melqart. Those who equate the Baal of Ahab and Jezebel with Melqart include Rowley (1960-61), de Vaux (1971b), Bright (1981:245), Bonnet (1983:197; 1988:139), Albright (1990:232, 43); Katzenstein (1991a) and Lipiński (1995:234). Cf. Smith (1990a:42-45).

174 The connection between the religious traditions favoured by Ahab and Jezebel and those practised by their son is highlighted by application to both parties of the accusation that they “served the Baal”. As Hobbs (1985:7) notes, this censure occurs rarely in the Former Prophets, appearing in 1 Kgs. 22:54 in connection with Ahaziah and in 1 Kgs. 16:31, 2 Kgs. 10:18-19 and 21-23 with regard to his parents. In 2 Kgs. 17:16 it is present in a catalogue of the sins committed by Israel and Judah. Only in Judg. 2:13 does the phrase appear without reference to the house of Ahab.

175 See, for example, the case of Asa (2 Chron. 16:12) who was presumably not just asking the *rōpē'im* about the condition of his feet, but also requesting a cure. The same would hold true for the cases of Ben-Hadad of Damascus (2 Kgs. 8:8-10) and

The episode in which the two companies of soldiers are consumed by heavenly fire (2 Kgs. 1:9-12) seems a curious narrative detour until it is remembered that this same demonstration is central to the defeat of the prophets of Baal atop Mount Carmel in 1 Kings 18. The use of fire to condemn the act of Ahaziah—Ahab's son—seems therefore a clear invitation to view Ahaziah's actions as a continuation of the apostasy of his mother and father. If the Baal of Mount Carmel was a form of Melqart, the Baal of Tyre, then the use of fire in 2 Kings 1 provides an additional clue to aid in identifying Baal-Zebub/Zebul. Melqart is one of a class of dying and rising deities that included Eshmun and Adonis.¹⁷⁶ In classical literature, Melqart is identified as the Tyrian Heracles and is a deity whose cult included a ritual immolation by which the resurrection of the god was celebrated.¹⁷⁷

Also important for understanding the identity of the god of Ekron is the fact that Eshmun—a deity belonging to the same class as Melqart¹⁷⁸ and one probably considered to be his equivalent at Sidon¹⁷⁹—was a healing deity.¹⁸⁰ Given Ahaziah's own religious background, the importance of fire in the narrative, and the connection of fire and healing to the cults of Melqart and Eshmun respectively, it is tempting to conclude that

son of Jeroboam I (1 Kgs. 14:1-13)—the pronouncement of a deity, after all, would by its very nature be a cure.

176 On Melqart, Eshmun and Adonis as gods of the same class worshipped at different Phoenician cities, see Cooper (1986:313), Ribichini (1988:110-1; 1995:1055), Clifford (1990:57-58),

177 Frazer (1963:110-16); Barnett (1969:9-11); Lipiński (1995:238-42); Ribichini (1995:1055).

178 Melqart and Eshmun are mentioned together and given identical roles in the Treaty of Esarhaddon with Baal of Tyre. One of their areas of responsibility was the provision of oil (*ANET*³ 534). Ribichini (1988:111) suggests that the name Eshmun "seems to derive etymologically from the Semitic word for oil", which he connects with the deity's role as a god of medicine (oil being understood as an agent of healing in the ancient world).

179 Cooper (1986:313).

180 Eshmun is regularly associated with the Greek god of healing, Asclepius (Ribichini 1988:111).

the Baal to whom Ahaziah instinctively turned was a local manifestation of Melqart-Eshmun.

The only difficulty with this identification is the likelihood that the god of Ekron bears the name *zbl*—a title associated at Ugarit with Baal-Hadad. Here it should be recalled that the Ugaritic texts are firmly rooted in the Late Bronze age and that no mention of Melqart appears during this era (Xella 1986:36-3; Ribichini 1988:110). Given the fact that in the 1st millennium, Melqart is known as the Baal of Tyre and is pictured on the Bar-Hadad stela in a manner reminiscent of a Late Bronze age storm god,¹⁸¹ then it is possible—perhaps even likely—that the dying and rising deities of the Iron age represent aspects of Late Bronze age Baal that became independent deities over time. Such a development would explain the absence of 2nd-millennium BC references to the god even while tradition associates him with something so ancient as the founding of Tyre (Herodotus, *Histories* II.44). If this is the case, then it is easy to see how a manifestation of Melqart might be known by a title that was originally attached to Baal-Hadad.

181 See chapter two, section on Melqart and ANEP Pl. 499.

Baal and Yahweh in the Old Testament – Chapter Five

Summary and Conclusions: Baal in the Old Testament

The task of reconstructing any aspect of the history of Israelite and Canaanite religion is a daunting one. A paucity of sources scattered across a broad time period, the fluid relationship between ancient deities and their evolving role and status within the pantheon combine to present a considerable challenge to the interpreter. In certain times and locales, deities are known to have merged. In Egypt, for example, the merging of Asherah, Anat and Astarte is demonstrated by a stela dedicated to a single deity, Qudshu-Anat-Astarte (Edwards 1955:49-5; Cross 1973:33-34). Likewise, in Syria, Astarte, Anat and probably Asherah coalesced in the deity Atargatis (Oden 1977b:60-107). In Iron age western Palestine other deities seem to diverge. Here the Late Bronze age storm god Baal, who so dominates the Ugaritic myths seems to be replaced by two classes of deities bearing storm and fertility characteristics. Iron age inscriptions dedicated to Baal are strangely rare. On the other hand, other deities bearing Baal names and characteristics arise and flourish. Such is the case in the Treaty of Esarhaddon with Baal of Tyre (*ANET*³ 534), where two distinct groupings of Baal type deities exist—Baal-sameme, Baal-malage and Baal-saphon and Melqart (the Baal of Tyre) and Eshmun. When the characteristics of these gods are combined, the resulting image is remarkably like that of Late Bronze age Baal as known at Ugarit. In Egypt, Seth can oscillate between being reviled as murderer of Osiris to being lauded as friend and protector of Re. Given the ebb and flow of divine activity and identity in the ancient Near East, it is possible that Israel and Judah underwent change and that divine labels had different referents depending upon time and place.

In the study of divine names and titles undertaken above, it is clear that the term *habba'al* does not appear as the personal name of a deity in the OT. This lone fact as

much as any other should warn against a simple identification of the baal of the OT with a single deity such as the Baal of Ugarit. The study conducted above has shown that throughout Israel's history, the term Baal was used and understood in different ways by different groups. Key to understanding the meaning of Baal in the OT is the recognition that the term was a title, "the baal", that had distinct uses in the north and the south. For Biblical writers who addressed the northern kingdom "the baal" was most directly related to the Phoenician deity—likely a form of Melqart—introduced into public worship by Ahab and Jezebel. Although the Omrides appear to have believed this god to be a legitimate manifestation of Yahweh, it was nonetheless attacked by the prophets as something utterly foreign and so incompatible with Yahwism. Hence, in narratives recounting the Mount Carmel incident (1 Kings 17-18), Yahweh's subsequent whisper at Horeb (1 Kgs. 19:8-14)¹ and Jehu's purging of the cult (2 Kgs. 10:15-29), the emphasis is on rejecting a particular storm deity as foreign and incompatible with Yahwism.² Even narratives of earlier events such as those involving Gideon (Judges 6) display the literary effects of this deuteronomistic response. Through all of this, it is evident that while the Deuteronomists reject the baal of Ahab and Jezebel as foreign, there were those in Israel who felt it to be a valid expression of Yahwistic faith.³

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- 1 Moses' time in the cave at Sinai (Exod. 33:17-23; 34:4-7) follows a repudiation of false worship (Exod. 32:1-35). Likewise, Elijah's time in the cave at Horeb (1 Kgs. 19:8-14) follows a similar event and marks a new departure in worship (1 Kgs. 18:20-46). No longer would Yahweh be sought in the natural elements, for "Yahweh was not in the wind...Yahweh was not in the earthquake...Yahweh was not in the fire" (1 Kgs. 19:11-12). See Cross (1973:190-94).
 - 2 To this list should now probably be added the narrative regarding Ahaziah's appeal to Baal-Zebub of Ekron (2 Kgs. 1:1-18). See above, pp. 213-18.
 - 3 See above, chapter four, especially sections on 1 Kings 17-19, 2 Kgs. 10:18-28 and Hosea 2.

Concerning the related term, “the baals”, it is clear that it is used in the DH as a collective for gods of which the Deuteronomist disapproved. In this sense it usually appears alongside ashtarot, a term commonly used in the DH as a collective for female deities (e.g. Judg. 3:7; 10:6; 1 Sam. 7:4; 12:10). Within the DH, “the baals” are not condemned in conjunction with “the baal” at all. Perhaps this is because, although prominent at Tyre, Melqart was not head of the pantheon and so did not have a retinue. Whatever the reason, this fact suggests that for the DH, “the baal” and “the baals” belong to separate religious spheres. Also distinct from the baals in the mind of the Deuteronomist is the notorious “sin of Jeroboam”. Although Jehu is credited with eradicating the baal in the northern kingdom, he is nonetheless condemned for continuing to practise the cult of Jeroboam (2 Kgs. 10:29).

What the DH expresses in narrative terms, the writer of Hosea expresses in prophetic form. Here too, the emphasis is on rejecting as foreign a storm and fertility deity that at least some in the northern kingdom felt to be Yahwistic. The extent to which this understanding of Yahweh as Baal was accepted by the people is reflected in Yahweh’s pronouncement that “you will no longer call me ‘My Baal’” (Hosea 2:18)—a point made also in Yahweh’s Horeb demonstration that he was not in the wind, earthquake or fire (1 Kgs. 19:11-14).

Prophetic writing and narratives dealing with the southern kingdom display a markedly different use of the term “the baal” and “the baals”. Here the emphasis is not on polemics against a “foreign” storm and fertility deity but against a figure that seems much closer to home. In 2 Kings 23, it is significant that “the baal” is condemned alongside southern aberrations that are considered somehow Yahwistic (23:4-7) and not included among those that are clearly foreign (23:13) or those that are found in the northern kingdom (23:15-20). The southern prophets focus on “the baal” as a fertility

deity only rarely, and when they do, it is often in contexts where they momentarily shift focus to the northern kingdom (e.g. Jer. 2:6-7). Jeremiah seems to acknowledge the existence of northern and southern uses of the term “the baal” when he speaks of a form of Baal worship that for Israel was finished and in the past. Thus, he can allude to the time when the baal of Ahab intruded into Judaeen life by saying the ancestors of the current generation forgot Yahweh’s name “because of the baal” (Jer. 23:27).⁴ For the most part, however, when the southern prophets of the 7th century and onward speak against “the baal” they attack a figure wholly unlike that found in narratives like 1 Kings 17-19. This deity is one entrenched in Jerusalem and intimately associated with “the baals”, “the Host” or “other gods” (Jer. 19:4-5, 13; 32:29). So closely is “the baal” tied to “the baals/Host” that on occasion, mention of the former is understood to include the latter (Zeph. 1:4-5). Jeremiah’s attacks on both “the baal” and “the baals” suggests that the latter forms the retinue of the former. The one feature that “the baal” in southern writing and “the baal” in northern writing share in common is the fact that the people appear to have understood the title as referring to a figure compatible or identical with Yahweh (Jer. 7:31; 19:5; 32:35; Zeph. 1:4-5).

Different from the situation in the north is the fact that in southern polemics against “the baal”, allusions to storm or fertility imagery are conspicuous by their absence. Indeed, the central concern of writers like Jeremiah is that people honour this figure with human sacrifice and fragrant meal offerings—the latter of which are also offered to his retinue, “the baals/Host”.⁵ Central to the veneration of this figure is a

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- 4 The most likely point of reference here is the baal promoted briefly in Jerusalem by Athaliah (2 Kgs. 11:13-20).
 - 5 Another point that shows the northern and southern uses of Baal to be distinct is the fact that never in northern tradition is “the baal” associated with human sacrifice.

place called “Tophet”—a term never used in connection with Israel or with “the Baal” in northern sources. The connection of this Baal with human sacrifice at Tophet in the Hinnom valley as well as his identification with “the Molek” (Jer. 32:35; probably also Zeph. 1:5) points toward a chthonic character for this deity. The fact that this same figure and those connected with him were also worshipped with offerings made at rooftop altars implies a connection with the sun. In one passage, worship at Tophet is condemned in a section of a list that is otherwise devoted to a condemnation of solar Yahwism (2 Kgs. 23:10-12). This solar character is confirmed if Jeremiah’s succinct reference to exposure before the “sun, moon and all the host of heaven” (Jer. 8:2) may be taken as a summary of his preceding polemic against “the baal”, the “Queen of Heaven” and “the other gods/baals” in the Temple sermon (Jeremiah 7). If “the baal” of Judah is related to the sun, then it may have been somehow related to the solarised form of Yahweh that was tolerated at least until the time of Hezekiah, but rejected as part of the reforms of Josiah.⁶

Later, in the post-exilic period, the people of Israel returned to a land that was much different than the one they had left when they first went into exile. Here the administrative policies of both Assyrians and Babylonians had disrupted the social fabric and altered the religious landscape (2 Kgs. 17:22-33). As a result, the challenges that faced post-exilic Israel were not identical to those that stirred and inspired the pre-exilic prophets. In this new socio-political reality, there was no danger of a dynastically-sponsored cult that threatened Yahwism from within. Where danger lay, however, was in the gods of the peoples with whom Israel rubbed shoulders in the much-reduced and vulnerable territory of Judah. For this reason, it is not surprising to find that the

6 On the existence of such as Yahwistic solar cult, see Taylor (1993).

Chronicler sometimes uses “the baals” where the DH made reference to “the baal”.⁷ In order to provide a relevant message to this new situation the Chronicler, in his own work and often in his reuse of Kings, changed “the baal” to “the baals”. In so doing, he took the warnings given to earlier generations and updated them for use in his own time.

7 E.g. 2 Chron. 17:3-4 (cf. 1 Kgs. 22:5); 24:7 (cf. 2 Kgs. 12:5-9); 28:2 (cf. 2 Kgs. 16:2-4); 33:3 (cf. 2 Kgs. 21:3).

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