**Appendix 1**

**The ‘dying and rising god’ in the post-Ugaritic Levant**

The destruction of Ugarit and Hatti towards the end of the second millennium BCE, and the [simultaneous? subsequent?] transition [from a ?? form of writing] to a linear alphabetic script written on perishable materials have led to a dramatic break [or loss] in our knowledge of Syro-Levantine cultures, literatures, and rituals. The same holds true regarding the evidence for the mythologem of the dying and rising god. Moreover, biblical literature – which is often used to represent the Levantine literature of the first millennium BCE due to the loss of almost all other corpora – has largely rejected, like the Mesopotamian culture, the mythologem of dying and rising gods.[[1]](#footnote-2) Despite these difficulties, there is evidence to suggest that this mythologem continued to be prevalent in the West Semitic cultures, not only as a literary theme but as a ritual one as well.

Since T.N.D. Mettinger[[2]](#footnote-3) has fully discussed this issue, whose scope extends beyond our focus ,on the writings from the second millennium BCE , I will provide only a few examples attesting to the continuity of this mythologem in the Levantine cultures. The first two examples mentioned below are important primarily because they preserve the memory of the ritual aspect of the mythologem in the local languages of Phoenician and Hebrew. Although they may sometimes indicate only a trace of the practice ) without accompanying theological explanation, they are nevertheless significant for two reasons: The absence of epigraphic literary texts in the first millennium BCE on the one hand and the opposition to the “dying and rising god” mythologem in Israeli culture on the other.[[3]](#footnote-4) The two final examples in this appendix cite some of the literary traditions regarding the death and resurrection of the god, which were transcribed by the pagans in ancient times, when local literary traditions finally began to be preserved again thanks to the interest of Christian writers and clergy. These traditions add to the impressions from approximately the same period of the Church Fathers, whose writings were discussed at the beginning of Chapter One.

The first instance of the ritualistic expression of this mythologem in [these?] later periods is the cultic functionary referred to as the *mqmˀlm* who served in Phoenician and Punic temples, and is cited in inscriptions from the 4th century BCE and onward.[[4]](#footnote-5) The literal meaning of מקם אלם is “the raiser (Phoenician *q-w-m* in the H conjugation) of the deity.”[[5]](#footnote-6) In light of the Greek translation of this position – ἐγερσε[ίτης] – which is preserved in inscriptions from Philadelphia/Amman and Ramleh, the meaning of “the awakener of the deity” might be even more appropriate.[[6]](#footnote-7) In several occurrences, the “awakened” god is called *mtrḥˁštrny*, namely “the husband of Astronoe,” an appellation that befits the Late Antiquity traditions about Astronoe, who revived her lover (see, e.g., Damascius, cited below).[[7]](#footnote-8) While two inscriptions, one Phoenician and the other Greek, refer further to the functionary as “the awakener (*mqm*/ἐγερσε[ίτης]) of Ml(qr)t/Herakles,” this role does not necessarily relate to Melqart in other occurrences.[[8]](#footnote-9)

Remarkably, an echo of this position might be found in Tanaaitic sources (m. *Maˁ.Šen*. 5:15; m. *Soṭ*. 9:10) mentioning a group named המעוררים (the me’orerim), literary “the awakeners” (Hebrew *ˁ-w-r* in the D/Polelconjugation),[[9]](#footnote-10) who served in the second Jerusalemite Temple until John Hyrcanus abolished it. In later sources—in the Tosefta (Soṭa 13: 9) and in the Jerusalem Talmud (44b [9:10])—it is explained that the awakeners were the Levites who recited in the Temple in Jerusalem the words “Rouse Yourself; why do You sleep, O Lord?” Although this explanation indicates that the sages of the Mishnah and the Talmud drew on their familiarity with the service of the Levites in the Temple to explain the ancient Mishnah in their possession; it is possible that as in other cases, an ancient tradition survived here whose origins are similar to those of the Phoenician function//role described above.[[10]](#footnote-11)

The earlier occurrence of the second example of the Levantine cultic use of the dying and rising god’s mythologem was surprisingly preserved in the biblical literature. While most biblical texts rejected the mythologem itself, as mentioned above, traces of the agricultural rituals underlying it have nevertheless been found in Psalms 126: 5-6:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 5 Those who sow in tears do reap with songs of joy |  |
| 6The one who carries the seed-bag weeps as he goes; the one who carries his sheaves comes with songs of joy. |  |

Although these verses predate the writings of Origen and Jerome by hundreds of years, they portray the same exact practices of weeping during the sowing and display of joy during the harvest that were performed by the pagan residents of Palestine, as reported by these patristic authors (cited in Chapter A, and see below in brief). While the psalmist did not – or could not –explain the mythological ideas underlying the ritual, the comments of the patristic authors disclose its mythical roots. For convenience, here are once again the shortened citations of Origen and Jerome about this practice:

[citations]

An earlier testimony by these Church Fathers is found in the writings of the pagan Plutarch, who in the first century CE attributes the same ritual to the Egyptian god Osiris:

In this way we shall undertake to deal with the numerous and tiresome people, whether they be such as [to?] take pleasure in associating theological problems with the seasonal changes in the surrounding atmosphere, or with the growth of the crops and seedtimes and ploughing; and also those who say that Osiris is being buried at the time when the grain is sown and covered in the earth and that he comes to life and reappears when plants begin to sprout… (Plutarch, *de Iside et Osiride* 65).

The men of later times accepted this blindly, and in their ignorance referred to the gods the behaviour of the crops and the presence and disappearance of necessities, not only calling them the births and deaths of the gods, but even believing that they are so (ibid, 70).[[11]](#footnote-12)

As stated in Chapter A, at the end of antiquity Osiris was also considered to be one of the dying and rising gods and therefore it is not surprising that this ritual was also attributed to him. In fact, on account of such a pedigree—as due to similar evidence from that period (see below)—Frazer believed as others did, that even in the period prior to the end of antiquity, Osiris was one of the dying and rising gods.

The mythical idea underlying the agricultural ritual that likens sowing to the burial of the god, and the ripening of the grain to his resurrection, continued to be common even among the monotheistic societies of late antiquity, as evidenced by the parables quoted in the New Testament and Christian sources (*John* 12: 24- 25; *Cor* 1 15: 35-37, 42-44; Justin Martyr, 1 *Apol*. 19.1), and in the Talmud and other Jewish sources (*b Sanh*. 90b; *b Ket*. 111b; *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 5.1 10. *PirqeideRabbi Eliezer* 33) that liken the death of humans to the sowing of wheat grains, and their resurrection - to the ripening of the grain stalks.[[12]](#footnote-13) While these parables no longer refer to the dying and rising god as in Psalms 126, but rather, in this case, to the resurrection of the dead; they constitute a further development of the same ancient ritual, which only due to the randomness of the find first appears in several verses in Psalms.[[13]](#footnote-14)

As mentioned, the impression of relatively scant literary evidence from the Levant of the 1st millennium BCE changes abruptly in the period of Late Antiquity, around the rise of Christianity, when pagan texts and patristic polemics against pagans were beginning to be preserved, copied, and transmitted. Then, thanks to the tremendous undertaking of preservation during that period and in subsequent years, we are once again treated to a wealth of evidence recording the literary traditions of dying and rising gods that prevailed in the Syro-Levantine region. As we began with the patristic accounts of pagan practices, it would only be fitting to conclude with two examples from the accounts of pagans themselves attesting to their own customs and literature. Lucian of Samosata (c.125 – after 180 CE) writes the following about the cult of Adonis in Byblos[[14]](#footnote-15):

[citation]

Likewise, Damascius (c. 458 – after 538 CE), the last scholar of the Neoplatonic academy in Athens, writes the following about the Phoenician Eshmun:

[citation]

These pagan writings complete our survey of the mythologem of the “dying and rising god” in the Levant and of the history of its research Along with the writings of Origen, Jerome, Cyril, and Aristides, which opened the present research, these pagan writings are the very same that led James Frazer and his predecessors to speculate that the mythologem of the dying and rising god was shared by *all* the peoples of the ancient Near East from days long ago.

1. Isa. 17:10-11 is often mentioned as one of a very few exceptions referring to a resurrection rite, due to the ritual of ,נטעי נעמנים “planting of Naamanim,” occurring there. For an additional example, which usually are missing from review as such, see below. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. 3 For the biblical references to the deaths of the foreign gods, Tammuz and Hadad-Rimon, see Chapter I, and Appendix 2, respectively. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. For a reevaluation of all the occurrences in Phoenician and Punic inscriptions, see Zamora 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. For a discussion of the Phoenician verb *q-w-m*, denoting “rising after death” (in light of biblical Hebrew), see Greenfield 1987, 397-399. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. The reconstruction and translation of the Greek phrase follow... The same position [or: **role** or: **function**] is apparently also referred to in an inscription from Ascalon, which uses an identical formulation to that appearing in the Ramleh inscription. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Less likely is the possibility that the Phoenician appellation *mtrḥˁštrny* was given to the functionary, implying the context of a sacred marriage, as was suggested, for example, by Lipiński 1970, 33-34. An interesting equivalent for such an appellation (although its relation to our texts is not clear) is the Akkadian *mutibēletšamāmî*, “the husband of the mistress of heaven,” given to an unknown deity in the neo-Assyrian ascension? of *Nergal and Ereškigal* (1:47; Dalley 2000, 177, n.3 suggests identifying this god as Dumuzi)*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. In this context, scholars usually mention the statement of Josephus (Ant. Jud. 8.5.3; and cf. *Contra Ap.,* 1.18) about King Hiram as the first to celebrate the “awakening (ἔγερσις) of Heracles” in the month of Peritius. For a discussion, including the opposing approach which translates (without grounds) the Greek and Phoenician verbs as “the erecter of...,” see… [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. For a discussion of the biblical Hebrew verb*ˁ-w-r* as disturbing the dead, a semantic equivalent of the Phoenician *q-w-m*, see Paul 2009. In post-biblical Hebrew, the verb ‘a-v-r is used in the meaning of resurrection from the dead: Both in the language of prayer (as in -*. Ber.* 65a [9:2]: “He who knows your number will wake you up and remove the dust from upon your eyes. Praised are you, Lord, who makes the dead live,” as well as in tombstone inscriptions such as in Zoar tombstone 20: “May the soul of Jacob rest …May he wake up to the voice of the announcer of peace.” [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Lieberman links the awakeners in the Jerusalem Temple to the daily Egyptian ritual performed in the Temple of Serapis and the like. However, nowhere do the Jewish sources state that this is a daily worship, and any other appropriate date for this worship can be suggested, as Uffenheimer has noted. For more examples of local pagan traditions reflected in Second Temple customs, see Ayali-Darshan 2013 and the previous bibliography therein. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. cf., also Tertullian, *ad. Marc.* 1.13:“… So also Osiris: that he is for ever being buried, and sought for in the waters, and recovered with rejoicing, they argue is a promise of the return of the seed sown, of the lively elements, and of the reviving year.” [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. It should be noted that like the Christian sources, all of which were written by the inhabitants of the Land of Israel, the Talmudic sources also attribute the parable to the figures who lived in the Land of Israel. It should also be emphasized that not every parable of sowing and reaping is necessarily used as an image of death and resurrection, as is evident, for example, from Matthew 13. By contrast, Clement the Roman, a contemporary of Justin Martyr, sought in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, 24: 4-5 to quote the parable of the death and resurrection, but omitted from it the basic premise on which he relied - according to which the seed was considered to refer to the dead, and chose another image: A barren seed capable of reproduction. He seems to have done so after failing to know or understand the convention that views the seed as a dead entity, and so when he sought to use the same parable, he described the seed in a different way - dry and barren, but not dead. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. The following table illustrates the similarities between the various aforementioned texts:

    |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
    | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
    |  | Sowing | | | Growth/Harvest | | |
    |  | Description of the act: Sowing | Description of the act: Weeping | Explanation: The buried seed is analogous to the dead (god / flesh and blood) | Description of the act:  Growing/ harvesting the grains | Description of the act: Joy [or: Rejoicing] | Explanation:  The growth of the grains symbolizes resurrection (of the god / flesh and blood) | |
    | Psalms 126 | \* | \* |  | \* | \* |  | |
    | Pagan rituals | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* | \* | |
    | Non-pagan imagery | \* |  | \* | \* |  | \* | |

    [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. While the influence of the classical Adonis on the following two authors is certain, the resurrection of the protagonist is unique to Near Eastern sources (among pagans and patristic sources alike) and has no record in early classical sources. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)