**C. The ‘dying and rising god’ in Ugarit**

The only texts of the ancient Levant to survive in a local language from the second millennium BCE are those Ugarit. As James Frazer reached his conclusions before the discoveries at Ugarit had been deciphered, he was never able to adduce them as evidence for his views. Later scholars, however, regarded Ugaritic literature as highly relevant to the issue of dying and rising gods raised by Frazer, using them to variously confirm or refute Frazer’s thesis.

In the 1930s, the early years of Ugarit’s excavation, Frazer’s anachronistic criteria for identifying dying and rising gods (based on Hellenistic and Roman literature) were still being used. In the texts of Ugarit, scholars encountered the god of the netherworld, Mot, whose killing in the Baal Cycle includes the use of agricultural tools and who, it is implied, returns once every seven years. Early scholars maintained that Mot represented the sole analog to the legends of Tammuz and Adonis mentioned by later writers in the context of agricultural rituals.[[1]](#footnote-1) However, after the six tablets of the Baal Cycle had been fully deciphered and ordered, it became clear that the dying and rising god mythologem, taken in its most literal sense—a god who dies and comes back to life—is, in fact, closely associated with the god Baal throughout the second part of the Cycle. Mot’s death and resurrection—primarily tied to his role as god of the netherworld—is, comparatively speaking, tangential to the Cycle’s main narrative.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Perhaps influenced by the general opposition to Frazer’s conclusions (opposition that has grown since the 1950s with the discovery of the larger part of *Inana’s Descent*), some have argued that the findings in Ugarit describe neither the death of Baal nor his resurrection.[[3]](#footnote-3) With little evidence to support the resurrection of the god Dumuzi, the Baal Cycle has risen to importance as the sole piece of evidence favoring Frazer’s theory—even though the latter had written with no knowledge of the work whatsoever. Even after it has been proven that the end of *Inana's Descent* does indeed describe Dumuzi’s periodic return from the netherworld, the argument that the dying and rising god mythologem does not actually appear in the Baal Cycle continues to constitute one of the better-known interpretations of the Cycle’s second section.

From a philological point of view, some have argued that given the fragmentary state of the Ugaritic text, any definitive conclusions about the circumstances of Baal’s death and resurrection are mere conjecture.[[4]](#footnote-4) It should, however, be noted that the two other extant texts which attest to Dumuzi’s periodic return from the netherworld (*Inana’s Descent* and a passage from the letter of Hammi-ištamar of Mari) are also extremely fragmentary in those places most relevant to this argument, yet remain unquestioned. More importantly, the texts from Mesopotamia and Mari describe Dumuzi’s resurrection with verbs that denote liberation (búr) and return (*târum*), the meanings of which can only be determined from context. In the Baal Cycle, by contrast, the unambiguous terms “to live” (from the root -*yḥ*) and “to die” (*m-t*) are employed.

Comparing the Ugaritic text to Frazer’s old theory, some have further noted the lack of agricultural rituals associated with Baal’s death and resurrection. This, they argue, indicates that the Ugaritic tradition is unfamiliar with the mythologem of dying and rising gods.[[5]](#footnote-5) In their view, therefore, the Baal Cycle is not discussing the real death of Baal (and thus cannot be discussing his resurrection either). Thus, J.Z. Smith has argued that the Baal Cycle is treating its hero “*as if* he [were] dead.”[[6]](#footnote-6) Similarly, M.S. Smith has proposed that Baal simply disappeared into the netherworld and later reappeared—much like the vanishing gods of Hittite literature.[[7]](#footnote-7) Once again, these arguments do not contend with the fact that the Baal Cycle explicitly uses the verbs “to die” and “to live” in reference to its protagonist. Moreover, they do not account for descriptions of mourning and burial after the god’s death and rejoicing and feasting after his resurrection. None of these tropes can be found in the Hittite texts which describe vanishing gods,[[8]](#footnote-8) and there is little reason to surmise that the Cycle is simply being metaphorical.

It is thus clear that those who would propose that the dying and rising god mythologem is completely absent from the culture and literature of Ugarit, do so prompted not by a simple reading of the text, but rather out of a reluctance to accept Frazer’s view. A simple reading of the Baal Cycle, however, leaves no room for any other interpretation: Baal died and was resurrected, as indeed Mettinger and Wyatt have recently admitted.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Regardless of their positions towards Baal’s death and resurrection, scholars have generally offered a harmonistic interpretation of the variety of traditions brought together to describe Baal’s fate. If, however, one wishes to understand the sources of the Baal Cycle and determine their antiquity relative to the final product, then a recognition of the traditions grouped together in the work, and an analysis of the inconsistencies between these different traditions—both among different versions of Baal’s death and resurrection as well as contradictions between these and the work as a whole—is imperative.

In what follows, I will therefore address the variety of dying and rising god traditions embedded in the Baal Cycle, using philological and comparative analysis to demonstrate their contents and the way they were incorporated into the Cycle. This discussion is comprised of two parts: the first and most important will discuss the death and resurrection of Baal (C1)—a discussion that has preoccupied scholars in recent years. The second will discuss the question of Mot’s death and resurrection (C2)—an issue that interested scholars in the first years of Ugarit studies, but which was soon afterward mostly abandoned.

Before broaching these discussions, two introductions are in order. The first provides a general overview of the Baal Cycle as a whole, the second section of which contains most of Ugarit’s traditions regarding dying and rising gods. This will shed light on the methods and circumstances which led to the integration of dying and rising god traditions into a work that is, first and foremost, an account of Baal’s wars with his enemies and his efforts to attain the throne. The second introduction describes the trope of dying gods in the ancient Near East—to which belongs, as will become clear, the description of Mot’s death in the Baal Cycle. Unlike scholarship pertaining to the god Dumuzi, scholarship on Ugaritic literature has gone even further in its attempts to deny Baal’s role as a dying god, precluding, of course, his ability to rise again. Therefore, before we can truly understand traditions connected to Baal’s resurrection, we must begin with those traditions which discuss his death.

# Introduction 1: A Brief Overview of the Baal Cycle

The Baal Cycle is comprised of two sections, each one of which recounts a battle between the storm god, Baal and another deity. The first, and larger part of the Cycle recounts Baal’s battle with Yamm, the personification of the sea. The second, shorter part discusses Baal’s battles with the god of the netherworld—Mot. While the two sections are based on diametrically opposed traditions, together they comprise a coherent narrative with an organized and structured plotline. It seems that the reason for this is that the second part of the Cycle has been edited in light of the first, that is, in light of the battle between Baal and Yamm, as scholars have shown in the past.[[10]](#footnote-10) As a discussion of Baal’s war with Yamm is beyond the scope of the present study, I will suffice by noting the four points about this section most relevant to the Cycle’s second part, and based upon a comparison between this story and its parallels in the ancient Near East.[[11]](#footnote-11)

1. *The boundaries of the account of Baal’s war with Yamm within the Baal Cycle*. In its description of the storm god’s victory, the construction of his palace, and his coronation, the Baal Cycle resembles several ancient Near Eastern accounts of combat between storm god and sea. These elements are, in other words, not the invention of the Baal Cycle’s author. For this reason, (and as opposed to a view, beginning to gain some traction, which divides the Cycle into three parts) the Cycle is comprised of just two sections: the struggle between Baal and Yamm and the struggle between Baal and Mot. The transition between sections takes place on the fourth tablet of the Cycle: Baal completes construction of his palace on Mount Zaphon and assumes his place on the throne; this is immediately followed by Mot’s challenge to Baal,[[12]](#footnote-12) inaugurating the Cycle’s second section.
2. *The war between Baal and Yamm in the Cycle*. All extant ancient Near Eastern accounts of a battle between storm god and sea, seem to be etiological; they explain how the storm god became a violent king after vanquishing the sea. The author of the Baal Cycle expanded this theme by splitting the Ugaritic pantheon into two warring camps: joining Yamm are the parents of the gods El and Aṯirat, who crown Yamm king in Baal’s stead; Baal, for his part, fights alongside his sisters Anat and Astarte. This stark division between the gods has not been entirely assimilated into the first part of the Baal Cycle, even if it is woven throughout it. The demarcation between two divine camps continues into the second part of the Baal Cycle. Exceptions to this theme are those passages which describe Baal’s descent into and ascent from the netherworld—this particular account completely contradicts the aforementioned alignments, sketching an entirely different set of divine camps.
3. *Literary imagery in the story of Baal’s war with Yamm in the Baal Cycle*: The first part of the Baal differs from analogous ancient Near Eastern stories in one important respect: while most versions of the story use concrete, natural imagery (the sea roils and rises, threatening to drown the gods; the storm god hurls wind and lighting upon the sea) the Baal Cycle shows no traces of this literary approach. Yamm does not rise, and Baal hurls no bolts of lightning. Instead the author chose to portray the struggle using the imagery of feuding noblemen; they host feasts, send emissaries, and fight with conventional weapons. This literary device continues into the second part of the Cycle as well, especially those sections which describe the battle between Baal and Mot, as I will discuss below. Another literary device—followed assiduously by the author of the Cycle, and lacking from analogous accounts—is the symmetry between the two combatants: both rule over their fellow gods, both have palaces built for them, and, in both cases, this is done with the assent of the father of the gods. This symmetrical portrayal is also evident in Baal’s battle with Mot, especially in the descriptions of gods descending to the netherworld and re-ascending.
4. *The structure of the account of Baal’s battle with Yamm*. The story begins with a challenge to Baal’s authority; it concludes with Baal’s victory and his assumption of the throne on Mount Zaphon. Throughout the account, Baal’s battles with Yamm are described, as well as his victory and the construction of his palace. Likewise, the ambitions of another god (ˁAṯtar) to rule are described. The second part of the Cycle similarly begins with a challenge to Baal’s reign and concludes with Baal gaining the throne on Mount Zaphon. Over the course of this section, Baal’s battles with Mot are described as well as the coronation of ˁAṯtar in his stead. Unlike the first part of the Cycle, however, comprised primarily of traditions related to the battle between storm god and sea, this section is mostly drawn from traditions revolving around the mythologem of dying and rising gods—a series of traditions with no obvious connection to intra-divine wars.

The very attempt to adapt a theomachic narrative to traditions of dying and rising gods produced contradictions and inconsistencies: both between the divergent traditions of dying and rising gods and between the versions of this mythologem and the main plot of the narrative: a battle between gods. It is, however, precisely these contradictions that allow us to detect the different literary strands which the author of the Baal Cycle had at his disposal and which he incorporated into the story. The following chart depicts the inclusion of four major literary units (lettered from A-D) into the story of Baal’s battle with Mot, as described in the second part of the Cycle.

Figure 1: Structure of the Story of Baal’s Battle with Mot

A. Baal and Mot struggle over the throne

D. Mot’s death

B. Baal’s rise

D. Mot’s ‘rise’

A. Baal and Mot struggle over the throne

B. Baal’s death

C. ˁAṯtar’s rise to the throne and his subsequent fall

The present chapter is focused only on units B and D which discuss the deaths and resurrections of both Baal and Mot; a discussion of the entire second part of the Baal Cycle lies beyond the scope of the present chapter. We cannot, however, discuss these units without noting that they do not exist independently; they are parts of a work, which has, in turn, been incorporated into a larger work.

# Introduction 2: A Short Summary of the traditions of dying and rising gods in the Ancient Near East

Archaeological findings in Egypt and Mesopotamia over the past century have reinforced one of the main arguments against Frazer’s approach: most of the gods whom Frazer regarded as dying and rising gods, are described in these ancient texts as dying, never to rise again.[[13]](#footnote-13) This is a substantial claim in and of itself as a review of the vast amounts of material regarding dying gods such as Osiris and Dumuzi reveals a consistent death account, which, in most cases, is comprised of the following elements: (a) the god, who is the protagonist of the story, is murdered by a violent enemy or drawn down into the netherworld against his will; (b) his family members, especially the women, search for him; (c) his family members, especially the women, lament his death.[[14]](#footnote-14) Another element (d1) associated with dying god accounts in Egypt and Mesopotamia is the parallelism between agricultural activities—especially the harvest—and the actions which kill the god in question. Though absent from narrative literature, this latter element is featured in ritual texts,[[15]](#footnote-15) and having become dominant in the texts of late antiquity, Frazer considered it one of the fundamental components of the mythologem of dying and rising gods. In the epigraphic findings of the second and first centuries BCE, however, the element is rather sparsely represented. Regardless, like all the other components mentioned here, it is relevant only to god’s death and not to his resurrection.

Though it is difficult to identify the precise origins of this recurring pattern, its circulation in both Egypt and Mesopotamia suggests that it was widespread in the ancient Near East. The traditions of dying gods in Ugarit relied on this pattern as well but with one crucial difference: though the first three components of the theme (a-c) are ascribed to the storm god, Baal, the final element (d1) is ascribed to Mot, god of the netherworld—as documented in both narrative and ritual texts. This is precisely why the first studies of the Baal Cycle identified in Mot an analog to Dumuzi and Osiris.

Baal’s death, instead of being associated with agricultural activities, is connected to a cessation of rains that return after his resurrection (d2). This theme is otherwise unknown from the tropes of dying gods in the ancient Near East. It does, however, have some parallels to the descriptions of other gods who descended into the netherworld and returned from it—descriptions that also lack an agricultural component (d1).[[16]](#footnote-16)

Another element appearing in the Baal Cycle, but without any parallel to the regular patterns of dying gods, is that the format of the god’s death is used to describe his resurrection: upon Baal’s resurrection, the rains resume, his family members search for him and rejoice upon his return. This is displayed in the following figure:

**Figure 2: The Correspondence between the Narrative Description of Baal’s Death and the Description of His Resurrection (=Unit 2)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | ***Baal’ Death*** | ***Baal’s Rise*** |
| **a. death/rising** | Baal is dead | Baal is alive |
| **d2. raining**  | Baal takes his meteorological powers with him to the netherworld. | Oil rains from heaven, honey flows in the rivers |
| **c. mourning/rejoicing** | El is informed of Baal's death, and mourns. Anat finds the dead Baal, and mourns,  | El is informed of Baal's resurrection,and rejoices.Anat is informed of Baal's resurrection, and rejoices, |
| **b. searching and finding Baal** | and asks *Špš* to find Baal in the netherworld*.*  | and asks *Špš* to find Baal in the fields. |
| *Špš* finds the dead Baal.  | *Špš* finds the living Baal. |

The figure does not take into account the duplicate and contradictory traditions within the Baal Cycle regarding the deity’s death and resurrection; nor does it document evidence external to the Cycle which strengthens some of these elements. Nevertheless, it shows how the Ugaritic tradition relied on elements of the dying god trope to describe not only Baal’s death but also his return to life. The first section of the present chapter (C1) will discuss these traditions at length.

## C1. Baal as a Dying and Rising God in the Baal Cycle and in Additional Texts

### Baal’s death

#### Element **a**: The death

Baal’s death is recounted twice in the Cycle. In the first instance, his death is described after he has been commanded to descend to the netherworld with his rains, spirits, lads, and attendants, and before the announcement of his death which prompts great mourning among his family members. Unfortunately, the thirty lines which recount the circumstances of Baal’s descent into the netherworld are damaged. The second description of Baal’s death is a retrospective description put into the mouth of Mot. Responding to Baal’s sister, Anat, who has been searching for her dead brother, Mot says the following:

[citation]

According to this citation ascribed to Mot, Baal died upon his encounter with Mot in the pleasant land of pasture also called the beautiful field of *Šḥlmmt.* There, overcome by ravenous hunger, Mot consumed Baal. This description of a god being consumed by the god of the netherworld, unique to Ugaritic literature,[[17]](#footnote-17) is connected to Mot’s prominent characterization, alluded to in biblical literature as well, as a being who kills by eating his victims.

E.g., Hab 2:5, “Which like Sheol he widened his throat and like Mawt is never satisfied”; Isa 5:14: “Therefore Sheol gapes her throat opening wide her mouth.”[[18]](#footnote-18) It is probable that this quality of Mot is echoed in the Mesopotamian thanksgiving prayer to Marduk discovered in Ugarit, which includes some local elements including the parallelism between the mouth of Mot and that of the netherworld (ll. 40’-41’): “He saved me from Mot’s mouth, he raised me from the netherworld.”[[19]](#footnote-19)

The author of the Baal Cycle decided to accentuate this characteristic both in his discussion of the struggle between Baal and Mot over the kingship (=Unit A), as well as at the beginning of the second part of the Cycle and at its end.[[20]](#footnote-20) Thus, the story begins by quoting Mot, who argues that the throne is rightfully his by virtue of his ability to consume myriads of gods and men:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | 47Mot calls out |
|  | 48in his throat, the beloved prides himself  |
|  | 49in his heart: “I am the only one[[21]](#footnote-21) |
|  | 50who rules over the gods, who fattens |
|  | 51gods and men, who satiates |
|  | 52the multitudes of the earth.” |

Accordingly, upon dispatching his messenger for the netherworld, Baal warns him as follows: [citation]

Upon returning from the netherworld, the messenger informs Baal of Mot’s response. Once again, Mot praises his own powers of consumption: [citation]

In that same context, Baal is threatened with the prospect of being eaten by Mot:[[22]](#footnote-22)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | 6“… you will descend  |
|  | 7into the throat of Mot son of El, into the gullet[[23]](#footnote-23) |
|  | 8of El’s beloved, the hero.”… |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 2[He will set a lip to the ea]rth, a lip to the heavens, |  |
| 3[…](his) tongue to the stars. [B]aal will enter |  |
| 4his innards, he will descend in his mouth  |  |
| 5like a roasted olive (and) the produce of the earth and the fruit of  |  |
| 6trees. |  |

In the next quote, we find a similar discussion:

Mot and Baal conclude their exchange of messengers; Baal fearing the god of the netherworld, submits to him and becomes his slave.

As mentioned, when the two gods resume their struggle over the throne at the end of the story, the author once again portrays Mot as a ravenous deity. In this case, Mot demands that Baal hand over one of his siblings as food to sate his anger:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | 19“Give one  |
|  | 20of your brothers, that I would devour (him),  |
|  | 21and the anger which I suffer would go away. If |
|  | 22one of your brothers […], |
|  | 23then […] |
|  | 24[N]ow I will consume [humans]  |
|  | 25I will consume the multitu[de of earth]” |

Baal, however, feeds Mot one of the latter’s own brothers, triggering the final battle between the two gods. In this instance, it is Baal who emerges victorious, Mot conceding to the preeminence of his rival.

Mot’s consumption of Baal is thus congruous with the general characterization of Mot in both the Baal Cycle as well as the Levant more generally (as attested to by the Bible). However, unlike the use of this characterization in the description of the struggle between the two gods, when Mot actually devours Baal no hostility between the two is mentioned nor any discussion of which of the two will rule over the gods. On the contrary, the hungry Mot encounters Baal by chance; it is a simple lack of humans to feed upon that spells Baal’s fate. This anomaly indicates that the description of Baal’s consumption, although a rather marginal part of the Cycle, documents a prevailing tradition in Ugarit regarding the circumstances of Baal’s death—an inglorious death resulting from happenstance. The tradition existed, in other words, before it was incorporated into the narrative of Baal’s battle with Mot.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Alongside this tradition, the author incorporated an additional tradition into his work—one which draws a parallel between Baal’s descent to the netherworld and a lack of rain. This tradition is reflected in words spoken by a character whose name is no longer extant and who instructs Baal to descend into the netherworld along with his rains. This instruction is preceded by another one which, though not entirely clear due to the damaged tablets, can be inferred from the context of subsequent passages:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1“[…] mighty |  |
| 2[Baal…] a tunic of your bull? |  |
| 3[… a present[[25]](#footnote-25)] of your hand, a chain |  |
| 4[…] life? of the calf |  |
| 5[…] I will put him in the hole of  |  |
| 6the gods of the underworld. And you, take |  |
| 7your clouds, your winds, your bolts,[[26]](#footnote-26) |  |
| 8your rains. With you your seven |  |
| 9lads, your eight attendants. |  |
| 10With you Pidray, daughter of *ˀAr*. |  |
| 11With you, Ṭallay, daughter of *Rb*.[[27]](#footnote-27) Then  |  |
| 12you should head out for mount |  |
| 13*Knkny*[[28]](#footnote-28) Lift a mountain on (your) hand, |  |
| 14a hill on (your) palms, and go down |  |
| 15to the house of ‘escapees’,[[29]](#footnote-29) the underworld; be counted among |  |
| 16those who go down to the netherworld, and the gods will know |  |
| 17that you are dead”… |  |

That Baal obeyed these instructions is indicated by the continuation of line 17:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | 17 … mighty Baal obeys. |

Baal’s agrees, so we learn from context, to mate with a cow in the pastureland, the field of *Šḥlmmt,* bearing a son whom he proceeds to dress—all of these actions are connected to the instructions Baal received before his descent into the netherworld:[[30]](#footnote-30)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | 18He loves a heifer in the pastureland, a cow  |
|  | 19in the field of *Šḥlmmt.* He lies |
|  | 20with her seventy-seven (times). |
|  | 21She bears him up eighty-eight (times) |
|  | 22And she [concei]ves and bears a young male.[[31]](#footnote-31)  |
|  | 23Migh[ty Baa]l clothes him  |
|  | 24a tuni[c …] strong, a present[[32]](#footnote-32) |
|  | 25of [his] han[d. He put a chai]n? to his breast. |

The next lines are broken. When they begin to be legible again, Baal is already dead, in the very same place where he mated with the cow. This is also the same place—according to the quote which the author ascribed to Mot—where Baal was devoured.[[33]](#footnote-33) For this reason, we cannot know for sure what the author proceeded to describe after Baal mated with a cow and clothed his offspring. Did he at this point describe how Mot encountered and killed Baal by chance in the field of *Šḥlmmt*—Baal having arrived there to mate with a cow? Or perhaps the author had Baal simply descend with his rains into the netherworld, the deity continuing to obey the instructions given to him, but without attempting to harmonize the two divergent descriptions of Baal’s death? Regardless, the very fact that Baal’s descent into the netherworld with his rains has been recorded is of great relevance to our present discussion. This is because it preserves yet another tradition that prevailed in Ugarit regarding the circumstances of Baal’s death: one that connects his descent into the netherworld with the cessation of rain.[[34]](#footnote-34) This etiology will be described further below.

#### Elements b + c: The searching and the mourning

In the Baal Cycle, the search for the dead Baal and the lamentations over his death are ascribed to two main characters: Baal’s father El and Baal’s sister Anat. The ascription of these actions to Anat concords with the main narrative of the Baal Cycle which considers Anat Baal’s close ally.[[35]](#footnote-35) More generally, it corresponds to the traditions of dying gods in Egypt and Mesopotamia which also describe how women of the family search for the dead god.[[36]](#footnote-36) By contrast, El’s role in searching for and lamenting the dead Baal represents a departure from the unique pattern of the Baal Cycle: in most sections of the Cycle, Baal and El are presented as rivals. Moreover, the Baal Cycle—more than any other literary work—is specifically careful to refer to Baal as the son of Dagan, while his rivals, Yamm and Mot, are referred to as El’s beloved.[[37]](#footnote-37) This anomaly in the description of Baal’s death (as well as in that of his resurrection) suggests that this component of the account was not invented by the author of the Cycle and is not part of its redactionary layer, but was rather an inseparable part of the dying god mythologem in Ugarit. The independent mythologem was appropriated and incorporated into a story describing the battle between Baal and Mot.

It should be emphasized that though the role of the lamenting father has no known parallels in the dying-god traditions of Mesopotamia and Egypt, Ugaritic literature and the Bible attest to the extent to which this trope was widespread in the Levant. This is evident from a comparison to Jacob’s lament for the death of his son Joseph (Gen 37:33), which uses identical words to those of Baal’s father: “I shall descend mourning to my son, to the netherworld,” as well as other mourning fathers.[[38]](#footnote-38) What is exceptional then is not the description of a father lamenting per se, but rather that El is lamenting his son in a work that goes out of its way to emphasize the enmity between these two deities.

According to the Baal Cycle, the first to find the dead Baal are passers-by/the emissaries of El who, reporting to the latter about the results of their search, say that they have found the god’s corpse:[[39]](#footnote-39)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 3[They raise their voices and say alou]d: “We have go round and round  |  |
| 4(up) to the ed[ges of the land], up to  |  |
| 5the limit of the meadow. We arrived[[40]](#footnote-40)  |  |
| 6at the pleasant land of pasture, |  |
| 7at the beautiful field of *Šḥlmmt*. |  |
| 8We arrived at where Baal was fallen to the earth. |  |
| 9Dead is mighty Baal.  |  |
| 10Perished is the ruler, the lord of the earth.” |  |

Having received the report of his son’s death, El sits on the ground; with ashes upon his head, and sackcloth on his body, with gashes upon his face, hands, and back, he cries out:

[citation]

It is at this point that the author proceeds to recount how Anat also found the dead Baal in the beautiful field of *Šḥlmmt*, using identical words to those used in the description of Mot’s arrival to the field of *Šḥlmmt.* He does not, however, acknowledge the previous description which implies that El already knew of Baal’s death.

[citation]

After finding the dead Baal, Anat mourns, and like El dons sackcloth, gashes her flesh, and delivers her lament:

[citation]

That the laments of El and Anat resemble those delivered for the dead Dumuzi (some of them discussed ...)—in which the women of the family express their desire to follow their dead kin into the netherworld, whether to stand at the dead god’s side or to bring him succor and food—suggests that a similar theme is intended here. This is further indicated by the parallel to Jacob’s lament for his son Joseph, and the Ugaritic lament for dead kings. It is thus notable that the author of the Baal Cycle makes secondary usage of Anat’s lament, using it to link Baal’s presence in the field of *Šḥlmmt* (discussed in the previous lines) and his presence in netherworld (to be discussed in the next lines). To this end, the author changed the first-person pronoun of the lament’s subject (“I shall descend”) to a plural (“we shall descend”). Likewise, he adds Šapš, the sun goddess, to the narrative, who will soon descend into the netherworld as well.

A link between the sun and the netherworld is attested to in other passages of the Baal Cycle and in other texts. Setting each evening, the sun may have been regarded in Ugarit, as it is in other cultures, part of the netherworld. Its cyclical movement even allows it to transport objects from earth to the netherworld, and from the netherworld back to the earth.[[41]](#footnote-41) This is why it is the goddess Šapš who is said to have found Baal in the netherworld, as recounted in the following lines:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | 9As she (=Anat) sates (her) crying, |
|  | 10drinks (her) tears like wine, aloud  |
|  | 11she calls to the luminary of gods, Šapš: |
|  | 12“Load on me, please, mighty Baal.” |
|  | 13The luminary of the gods obeys; |
|  | 14She lifts mighty Baal. When, on the shoulders |
|  | 15of Anat, she places him, she (=Anat) takes him up  |
|  | 16to the heights of Zaphon. She weeps for him  |
|  | 17and buries him, places him in the hole |
|  | 18of the gods of the netherworld. |

According to these lines, the purpose of finding Baal in the netherworld was to bring him to his mountain, Mount Zaphon, where he could be buried “in the hole of the gods of the netherworld,” in a ceremony that includes lamentations and many animal sacrifices (ll. 19-31 not cited above).[[42]](#footnote-42) As we have already been told that Baal was found in the field of *Šḥlmmt* (where he was killed by Mot) it seems that each account of Baal’s discovery—the one taking place in the field of *Šḥlmmt,* the other in the netherworld—belongs to a separate tradition; it is the author of the Cycle who has combined them. The internal contradiction between Baal being brought out of the netherworld and his burial in the hole of the gods of the netherworld is also a consequence of these two otherwise independent elements being welded together. On the one hand, the author of the Baal Cycle inherited a tradition recounting how Baal was sought after in the netherworld—a tradition that perhaps continues the theme of Baal descending there with his winds and rains, and which mentions the hole of the gods of the netherworld. On the other hand, the dead were often said to be buried in the hole of the gods of the netherworld as we learn from the words of Danel in *The Legend of Aqhat*:he searches for his dead son’s remains in the bellies of birds in order to bury them in the hole of the gods of the netherworld.[[43]](#footnote-43) Combining the tradition of the search for Baal in the netherworld with the burial of the god in the pit of the gods of the netherworld is what leads to this internal contradiction.[[44]](#footnote-44)

Baal’s burial marks the end of a complex description of his death, cobbled together from multiple traditions including Baal’s murder in the field of *Šḥlmmt,* his descent into the netherworld, the search for him both in the field of *Šḥlmmt* and in the netherworld, the lamentations for his death delivered by El/Anat, and his burial upon Mount Zaphon in the pit of the gods of the netherworld. From this point forward, the author begins to recount a new episode in which ˁAṯtar is crowned by El and Aṯirat in Baal’s stead (unit C in the chart). This episode parallels the first part of the Baal Cycle, and it shares characteristics with an episode of Western-Semitic provenance which was incorporated into the Hurro-Hittite *Song of Ullikummi.* It seems, in other words, to represent yet another independent account.[[45]](#footnote-45) However, as it accords well with the general thrust of the Baal Cycle—which describes El and Aṯirat as the enemies and usurpers of Baal (unlike in the foregoing descriptions of Baal’s death and resurrection), the author was able to assimilate it into the unique story of the work more easily.

After completing this unit, the author resumes his discussion of Baal’s death and resurrection. Surprisingly, though Baal has already been found twice, he describes Anat’s search for Baal once again; she seeks him both in the field of *Šḥlmmt* and in the netherworld:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 4[A day, two days] |  |
| 5pass, and m[aiden Anat]  |  |
| 6seeks him. Like the heart of a co[w] |  |
| 7for her calf, like the heart of an ew[e] |  |
| 8for her lamb, so is the heart of An[at]  |  |
| 9after Baal… |  |
|  |  |

That this description also derives from independent traditions of searches for a dead god, can be adduced from a comparison to Mesopotamian lamentations which use similar imagery—such as the lament of Ninḫursag for her son.[[46]](#footnote-46) Moreover, as the author uses a simile to the yearning of animal-mothers for their young, this particular Ugaritic description may originate in a description of a mother searching for her son—as opposed to a sister for her brother, as is the case here.[[47]](#footnote-47) If so, the author of the Baal Cycle has completely changed the purpose of the description, going on to explain that Anat’s search leads her to Mot, her brother’s murderer. For this reason, it is possible that in the present context, the third person verb *yˁtqn* may refer to Mot, not to Baal, a reading that would better fit the narrative given that Anat already has found Baal and buried him.[[48]](#footnote-48) Nevertheless, the author’s decision to incorporate this description in its present place suggests that he was well aware of the original purposes of his sources, and it seems then that he wished to use this particular source to lead the plot back to the discussion of Baal’s death and resurrection after a digression about ˁAṯtar’s coronation.

#### Element **d2**: The raining

As mentioned above, Baal’s death is not associated with agricultural rituals (element d1) which were, it seems, associated only with the death of Mot (see below, part C2). Baal’s death is instead associated with the cessation of rains (element d2)—the necessary condition for agriculture in the Levant. His resurrection is conversely associated with the return of rain. This is in fact the second time in the Baal Cycle in which Baal’s actions—or lack thereof—are associated with the cessation of rains. The first instance appears in the first section of the Baal Cycle where the construction of Baal’s palace on Mount Zaphon is connected to rain: so long as the building remains incomplete, the rains will not fall.

It is recounted that as soon as permission to build the palace was given, Atirat calls to Baal, bidding him to finally wield his meteorological powers now that his palace has been built:

[citation]

However, as the text makes clear, Baal is still unable to bring rain so long as construction was ongoing and the palace’s windows are still unbuilt. Only after the windows are completed and opened, can Baal’s clouds finally open up as well:[[49]](#footnote-49)

[citation]

In the second part of the Cycle, as already presented above, Baal is commanded to descend to the netherworld with his winds and rains. Conversely, Baal’s rise from the netherworld (as in the dream of his father, El) is attended by the dripping of oil from the heaven and the flowing of honey in wadis, a poetic illustration of water returning to the land (see more below):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 10In the dream of Beneficent El, the Gracious-One, |  |
| 11in the vision of the Creator of creatures, |  |
| 12the heavens rained oil, |  |
| 13the wadies ran with honey. |  |

We thus have two separate etiologies in a single work, both explaining—each in its own way—the lack of rain and its return. There is, however, one important difference between them. The etiology presented in the first part of the Cycle is unknown from other inscriptions—whether from Ugarit or elsewhere—suggesting that it was invented by the Cycle’s author. In contrast, the second etiology, which ties Baal’s absence from the earth to a lack of rain and produce, is echoed in other texts from Ugarit and the ancient Levant more generally.

We find a parallel, for instance, in a statement incorporated into the *Legend of Aqhat,* and spoken by the hero who commands the rains not to fall in the middle of the summer. Though summer rains do indeed harm ripening crops, the harshness of the request (stopping the rain for seven years) seems disproportionate to the perceived damage to summer crops, and the statement may therefore represent a common saying.[[50]](#footnote-50) Regardless, the lack of rain is tied here to Baal’s absence:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | 42Seven years |
|  | 43Baal fails, eight |
|  | 44(years), the Rider of clouds. No dew, no downpour, |
|  | 45no swirling of the deeps, no |
|  | 46goodly voice of Baal (= thunders). |

In the narrative presented in the Ugaritic work *The Eaters and the Tearers,* a work that recounts a violent encounter between Baal and the eponymous entities, a similar link is drawn between the seven years of Baal’s death and dryness in the fields.[[51]](#footnote-51) The text ends with a water ritual.[[52]](#footnote-52)

Yet another source that associates Baal’s death with the cessation of rain is the *Legend of Kirta*, in its description of the long drought that beset Kirta’s kingdom. During these years, messengers are sent forth to search for the missing rain of Baal. The description is very similar to El’s search for the dead Baal: “in the edges of the land and the limit of the meadow”:

[citation]

All of these sources indicate a strong correlation between the absence of the storm god, the bringer of rain, and a lack of rain. That this was a well-established connection can be seen from the agricultural terminology of the Mishnah: the terms *sadeh Ba’al, beit Ba’al* and *shelba’al* all refer to fields that rely on rain and which do not require artificial irrigation ducts (the latter being referred to in the Mishnah as *beit ha-shlahin*). However, unlike the elements discussed until this point—(a) death (b) search (c) mourning—all of which are part of dying-god descriptions in Egypt and Mesopotamia, the element of rain (d2) is missing from all parallel accounts of dying gods outside of Ugarit. Conversely, we find the element in descriptions of gods who descend into the netherworld and reemerge, but which otherwise lack the specific characteristics associated with the dying-god mythologem.

The most prominent example of this is the Akkadian version of *Ištar’s Descent*. The first manuscripts of this work hail from the late-Middle Assyrian period, that is, shortly after the composition of the Baal Cycle. In this version of the story, like its Sumerian *Vorlage*, Ištaris described willingly descending into the netherworld and returning assisted by the god of wisdom. Unlike its Sumerian sources, however, the Akkadian version recounts that from Ištar’s capture in the netherworld to her release, fertility ceased in the land.[[53]](#footnote-53)

This pattern is also familiar from certain Hittite rituals which incorporate descriptions of vanishing gods. While these gods do not descend into the netherworld, they nevertheless disappear in a rage from their fellow deities, hiding in a secret place. This disappearance leads to a lack of fertility for those specific crops or animals over which the vanished gods are responsible. Only after their anger has been brought down into the netherworld and after the gods have reassumed their positions, is fertility restored to the affected crops or animals.[[54]](#footnote-54) It should be noted that even though these rituals were once regarded as Old Hittite myths, they contain typically Mesopotamian interpolations,[[55]](#footnote-55) and thus all extant versions of the rituals date no earlier than the late Bronze Age.

Another, later example of this trend is the Homeric hymn of Demeter from the first half of the first millennium BCE. There Homer connects Persephone’s abduction to the netherworld with the cessation of produce by her mother Demeter, goddess of agriculture.[[56]](#footnote-56) Unlike in the two previous examples, here we already see patterns of dying gods similar to those within the Baal Cycle. This may attest to the wider reception of the Ugaritic model in the Mediterranean.

Since the Mediterranean climate is divided into a rainy winter and a dry rainless summer, it is tempting to explain the connection between Baal’s death and the cessation of rain as an etiological explanation for the changing of seasons. However, as attested by the two Ugaritic texts cited above (*The Legend of Aqhat* and *The Eaters and the Tearers*) the etiology seems to be connected not to regular seasonal changes but to an exceptional seven years of drought. The broken tablets of the Baal Cycle prevent us from knowing if here also Baal was described as missing for seven years. However, as the author describes how seven years have passed since Mot’s death until he returned to fight Baal, there may be room to surmise that a period of seven years was used in the Baal Cycle in reference to both of its heroes.[[57]](#footnote-57) This theme is unique to Ugarit and is entirely different from the seasonal cycle of Dumuzi as seen from the texts discovered in Mesopotamia and Mari.

Given that seven-year cycles were part of Levantine culture—such as the Zukru in Emar and the Sabbatical year in the Bible (Lev 25:1-7; Deut 31:10)—the death of Baal in the Cycle may reflect a similar ritual, even if no explicit evidence of this is forthcoming from Ugarit. On the other hand, the seven-year period may be based on nothing more than a typological number, examples of which abound in the literatures of Ugarit and the Bible: (the seven fruitful years of Huray, wife of Kirta; the seven years of the hungry gods’ wandering; Jacob’s seven years serving Laban; the seven years of plenty and famine in Egypt, and more).

### Baal’s resurrection

The components of Baal’s resurrection, unlike those of his death, have no parallels in the contemporaneous literatures of the ancient Near East. However, as mentioned above, the details of Baal’s resurrection mirror the pattern of the dying god in the ancient Near East generally, and the description of Baal’s death in particular. That being said, and unlike the lengthy, repetitive, and contradictory descriptions of Baal’s death, the account of his resurrection welds all these traditions together into a short, harmonious whole.

#### Elements **a** + **b** + **c + d2**: resurrection, search, rejoicing and rain

As the relevant tablets are not entirely legible, we lack a description of the very moment when Baal was resurrected: it was inscribed on the forty missing lines of the third column of the sixth tablet. The next lines, however, which explicitly mention Baal’s resurrection (element a), the rejoicing of his father (element c), the search for him in the fields (element b), and the return of the rains (element d2) leave no room for any other explanation.

We learn of the return of the rains and the rejoicing upon Baal’s return from the lines which describe how El learned that Baal was alive from a dream:

[citation]

The use of the root *ḥ-y* “to live” in the G construction (l. 20) makes it clear that this is indeed a resurrection. Descriptions of water and rains returning, represented poetically as raining of oil and flowing of honey, further reinforce this reading (ll. 12-13) as does El’s joy upon learning of his son’s resurrection which is reminiscent of descriptions of the divine resurrections from late antiquity. However, just like his mourning, so too is El’s joy at odds with the main narrative of the Baal Cycle: Baal is the son of Dagan and the enemy of El; the latter sides with his own children. This suggests that the motif of joy, just like El’s mourning, was not invented by the author of the Baal Cycle but was rather a fundamental part of the dying-and-rising-god mythologem in Ugarit. The author simply incorporated the existing tradition into the narrative in its entirety.

In the next lines of the tablet, we are told how El summoned Anat, Baal’s sister, bidding her to command Šapš, the sun goddess, to begin the search for the living Baal in the fields:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 22(Then) El called aloud to  |  |
| 23Anat the girl: “Listen, O Anat the girl,  |  |
| 24say to the luminary of gods, Šapš:  |  |
| IV 1‘Look at[[58]](#footnote-58) the furrows of the fields, O Šapš, |  |
| 2look at the furrows of the vast fields. Does Baal water[[59]](#footnote-59) |  |
| 3the furrows of the ploughland?  |  |
| 4Where is mighty Baal? |  |
| 5Where is the ruler, the lord of the land?’” |  |

The text continues with Anat calling on Šapš to search for Baal at El’s behest. Šapš accedes to the request:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 17The luminary of gods, Šapš, replied: |  |  |
| 18“Pour sparkling wine from the chalice,  |  |  |
| 19put garlands on your kinfolk, |  |  |
| 20for I will search for mighty Baal.” |  |  |

The search for the living Baal thus parallels the search for the dead Baal described in earlier lines of the Cycle. It also corresponds to the more general motif of a search for the dead god evident in contemporaneous texts from Egypt and Mesopotamia as well as from texts composed in late antiquity.[[60]](#footnote-60) Just as Šapš, at Anat’s behest, searched for Baal in the netherworld, so too she searches for the living god in the fields. Unlike the descriptions of Baal’s death, however, here divergent traditions have been combined; they attribute to El the order given to Šapš but through the mediation of Anat.

Agreeing to Anat’s request, Šapš instructs her to prepare a feast. The subsequent lines are broken and so we have no description of the feast itself, but we may assume that it was situated at this point in the narrative. The feast—perhaps best called a resurrection feast—seems also to be mentioned in the *Legend of Aqhat*. There it is mentioned as part of Anat’s promise to Aqhat: she will give him eternal life like Baal, in exchange for his bow:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | 26“Ask for life, O Aqhat the hero, |
|  | 27Ask for life, and I will give (it to) you; immortality –  |
|  | 28and I will grant (it to) you. With Baal, I will make you count |
|  | 29years, with the son of El, you will count months. |
|  | 30Like Baal (you will be), like when he lives,[[61]](#footnote-61) (and then) the goodly-one[[62]](#footnote-62) gives a banquet[[63]](#footnote-63) |
|  | 31and gives him drink, chants and sings of him, |
|  | 32[and] (the participants) praise[[64]](#footnote-64) him.” |

Since the gods, unlike humans, are gifted with immortality,[[65]](#footnote-65) the passage specifically mentions Baal, the only god who has died like a human and the only to be resurrected. For this reason, he is also the only god to whom the verb *yḥw,* appearing on l. 30 here*,* can be ascribed. According to Anat’s words to Aqhat, when Baal is brought back to life (this is the verb used to describe his return from the netherworld in the Baal Cycle as well) a feast is held in his honor, in which his feats are recounted and sung.[[66]](#footnote-66)

As mentioned, the lines describing the actual feast are missing from the Baal Cycle, and we only have a description of the call for preparations. The short mention of a feast in the *Legend of Aqhat*, however, confirms that such a tradition did indeed exist in Ugarit. The next scene of the Baal Cycle, after 37 missing lines, goes on to recount Baal’s victory over his enemies, the sons of Aṯirat, and his assumption of the throne. Based on its contents, we may surmise that the scene belongs to the unit of Baal’s struggle with Mot over the throne (=Unit A).[[67]](#footnote-67) Regardless, it confirms that Baal is indeed alive and has resumed his godly duties. Thus, the description of Baal’s resurrection comes to an end.

## Conclusions

The preceding discussion has shown that Baal’s role as a dying and rising god was a deep-seated part of the culture of Ugarit. Thanks to the Baal Cycle’s general eschewal of excessive harmonization, we can with relative ease separate between the narrative layer which recounts Baal’s battle with Mot over the kingship, and other materials, telling of Baal’s death at the hands of Mot, and added to the base-narrative by the Cycle’s author. These materials are especially noticeable when they actually contradict the redactionary layer of the Cycle. This is the case for El’s mourning over Baal’s death and rejoicing over his resurrection which contradicts the enmity between Baal and El discussed in the redactionary layer. Likewise, Baal’s consumption by Mot, which occurs outside of the context of their struggle over the throne, contradicts the Cycle’s central narrative. The repetition of certain motifs drawn from outside of the Cycle and recurring in other works—such as an association between Baal’s death and the cessation of rains, or the holding of a feast upon his return—further indicates the prevalence of these motifs in Ugarit.

In light of the similarity between the two parts of the mythologem—on the one hand, the description of Baal’s descent into the netherworld, including the searches for him, the finding of his body, and the ensuing mourning; on the other hand, the description of Baal’s resurrection, including the joy upon his return, and the searches for him—it appears that the culture of Ugarit based the two components of the dying-and-rising god mythologem on the more prevalent ancient Near Eastern descriptions of divine deaths. This supports the relative antiquity of the dying-god mythologem in the ancient Near East, as opposed to the novelty and uniqueness of the rising god mythologem, as I will discuss further below.

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. . [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Cf. e.g., Burkert 1979, 188, n. 14. After denying that Dumuzi is a resurrected god he writes: “A new dying god turned up with Ugaritic Baal […]. The Fragments of the Baal poems can be arranged to fit a seasonal pattern […]. In view of the desperately fragmentary texts this must remain hypothetical.” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. M.S. Smith 1998. Another interpretation of the Baal Cycle, which implicitly rejects the possibility that Baal was a dying and rising god, was offered by de Moor 1971, 188–189. De Moor argued that the Cycle is discussing how Baal deceived Mot: Baal bore a twin brother who descended into the netherworld in his place. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Schwemer 2008, 13 has further noted that in any case, there is no known influence of Hittite texts on the literatures of Syria and the Levant. The opposite position is presented by Woodward 2020 but without any proof. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. For a comparison between the two parts of the Cycle, see Smith 1994, 15-19 and the bibliography there. This comparison led Smith 1998b, 292 to hypothesize that the author of the Baal Cycle described Mot in the second part of the Cycle based on the description of Yamm in the first part. Mettinger further concluded that the Ugaritic author “has created Mot.” However, as I will discuss, the characterization of Mot in the Cycle is based on characteristics well known in the Levant and which differed significantly from those used to characterize of Yamm. For the characteristics of Yamm, see Ayali Darshan 2020a. The connection between the two parts of the Cycle is expressed through literary devices and the course of the narrative as I will explain below. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. For a more detailed discussion of these points, see Ayali-Darshan 2020a [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. For the opposite interpretation—i.e., that it is Baal who challenges Mot at the beginning of the second part of the Cycle, see the discussion below, n. xxx. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. For a literature review, see xxx. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. For a discussion of these elements inasmuch as they apply to Dumuzi in Mesopotamia, see the relevant rubrics in the table prepared by Fritz 2003, 294-298 (additional texts have been published since, all of which correspond to the rubrics proposed by Fritz). For these elements inasmuch as they apply to the death of Osiris in Egypt, see xxx. Cf. Mettinger 2001, 208 who, though he mentions this pattern, maintains that it originates in Mesopotamian traditions, ignoring the existence of similar elements in Egypt. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. For a discussion of this element in Ugarit and elsewhere, see xxx. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. For a discussion of this element in Ugarit and elsewhere, see below... Indeed, following in the footsteps of Frazer, many (chief among them Thorkild Jacobsen, see e.g., Jacobsen 1976, 26-27; 62, and c.f., the two final rubrics in Fritz’s table of motifs, Fritz 2003) interpreted Dumuzi’s descent into the netherworld as symbolizing a cessation of fertility. This interpretation is not however borne out by the relevant texts. Some have sought to identify an allusion to this notion in the description Dumuzi’s jugs of milk being spilled during his capture (the texts describing this event were placed by Fritz, 2003 in the second rubric of his table, 294-297). This depiction, however, may be interpreted not as connected to fertility but rather as a portrayal of the violent nature of Dumuzi’s captors. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Mesopotamian texts ascribe the capture of a god and his death to bandits or galla demons (for the transition from bandits to galla, see Katz 1996). Egyptian texts ascribe the death of Osiris to the god’s brother, Seth. That being said, an idea similar to Mot’s tendency to eat humans, can be found in a saying quoted in *Ištar’s Descent, Gilgameš* 6, and *Nergal and Ereškigal* (The Sultantepe copy): if the gates of the netherworld are opened, the dead can emerge and consume the living. These works were committed to writing later than the Baal Cycle. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. For the text, see Cohen 2013, 165-175 and in the bibliography. For a discussion of the linguistic traces of Western-Semitic in this work, see Oshima 2011, 205. For a discussion of the expression *pī Mūti* see Ayali-Darshan forthcoming. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. For the placement of this unit, see Figure 1 above. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Some however, (such as xxx) have interpreted this citation as representing Baal’s own self-aggrandizing. For this reason, they have refrained from interpreting the following two verbs in the excerpt as descriptions of gluttony. Thus, the verb *ymrˀu* is understood in accordance with the Aramaic noun *mrˀ* (ruler), implying here “to order.” The previous instance of the verb is by contrast interpreted according to the Ugaritic noun *mrˀu* (fatling animal), used here in the sense of “to fatten” (cf. the reading of Isaiah 11:6 in the SP and 1QISA, where the word ימר(א)ו appears in this sense). These same scholars have interpreted the verb *yšbˁ* as belonging to the H construction, denoting “satisfy” as opposed to the G construction as above. For an identical usage of the verb *yšbˁ* to describe ravenous and glutinous characters, see *KTU* 1.23, 61-64 (for a discussion, see xxx). Given that subsequent passages describe Mot consuming humans, even if we accept these interpretations of Baal’s speech, there may nevertheless be an attempt here at wordplay, i.e., Baal describes himself using words which echo Mot’s quality as a gluttonous deity. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. As this threat appears in the third person, the identity of the speaker cannot be ascertained. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Instances of this noun in Hebrew (e.g., Ps. 102:11; JT, Mo’ed Qatan, 80c) suggest that it implies *mhmrt* that is a pit or a tunnel. This meaning also corresponds to the name of Mot’s city in the netherworld which is called *hmry* (for a discussion of this name, see e.g., Smith and Pitard 2009, 716-717). In this case, the noun functions metaphorically, reminiscent of its use in Sir 12:16. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. This also resembles the description of Dumuzi’s death, one of the major motifs of which is the lack of just cause. As shown by Katz 1996, the author of *Inana’s Descent* is an exception in this respect, as he offers a reason for Dumuzi’s death; most sources, however, seem not to have accepted this approach (for further details see above...). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. The reconstruction is based on ll. 24-25 below. On the translation of the term *mġẓ* see n...below. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. In Ugaritic texts, the word *mdl* always appears within this context. It thus clearly refers to one of the powers of the weather even though it is unclear to which one. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. The names of Baal’s attendants [, yes? בנות חסות] Tallay and Pidray also imply precipitation and fertility, fitting well in context. Regarding the name Tallay, daughter of *Rb*, scholars agree that it is derived from the verbs *ṭ-l-l* and *r-b-b* respectively, referring to different types of precipitation. As for Pidray, daughter of *ˀAr,* there are differences of opinion. Generally, Pidray is understood to refer to fat. *ˀAr* is derived from the root *ˀ-r-y* referring to fig honey or fruit gathering (see Smith and Pitard 2009, 119-120). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. *Knkny* seems to be the name of some cosmic mountain on the road to netherworld. However, as previous lines (not quoted here) mention the names of other mountains on the path to the netherworld (*Trġzz* and *Ṯrmg*) some have proposed that *Knkny* is a common noun with a first-person pronominal suffix, translating “mount of my covert” (Pardee 2003, 267) or “mount of my gullet” (Wyatt 2002, 124). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Scholars have long noted the similarity between the netherworld’s name (*bt ḫpṯt*) and the leper house in which King Uzia was interred which is referred to as בית החופשית (Kgs 2 15:5; Chr 2 26:21) but disagree as to the precise implication. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. For this reason, it is difficult to assume that Mot was the responsible for this particular command. To the contrary, it seems to have been spoken by a sympathetic figure, one of Baal’s allies, who sought to thwart Mot’s plans. The fragmentary context of the passage, however, precludes any definitive conclusions. De Moor 1971, 183-184 and Margalit 1980, maintain that the speaker is Šapš, as, later in the narrative, it is she who raises Baal from the netherworld. Most scholars, however, continue to identify the speaker as Mot. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. The meaning of *mṯ in* this context is based on the Egyptian *ms (child).* The female form of the term *mṯt* (cf. the Egyptian *mst*) is also attested in Ugaritic to denote a maiden. De Moor 1969, 106 suggested that *mṯ* be understood in light of the Akkadian term *māšu* (twin). As he understands it, the purpose of Baal’s relations with a cow was to produce a twin brother who would descend to the netherworld in his stead. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. The translation of *mġẓ* is based on parallelism to the term *mgn* in *KTU* 1.4 I 20-22 which denotes (in Ugaritic and other languages) a present. It is probable that the second part of the biblical name Ahimaatz is derived from *mġẓ* with the same meaning. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. If the author did actually try to harmonize the divergent versions of Baal’s death, he may have tried to connect Baal’s mating with a cow with the location of his death. This is because the mating took place at a site, known to us from other inscriptions, as a *pleasant* pastureland. Cf. KTU 1.10 II 9, 12: “the grassland of *Šmk*, abounding of bulls”; l. 30: “[in] the pleasant, in the beautiful, the b[an] of the *K*[*ṯr*]*t*.” Mesopotamian and Hittite parallels, like the Ugaritic account, emphasize that the field in question was an excellent place of pasture where the cow grazed and gave birth to its offspring; this it seems was one of the main elements of the story. For Mesopotamian parallels (all belonging to incantation literature), see Ayali-Darshan 2020b. For a Hittite parallel (the opening of the story *The Sun-god, the Cow and the Fisherman*), see Hoffner 1998, 85. As to the link between these different sources of the story and to the Mesopotamian incantations found in Ugarit and in Hati, see also Ayali-Darshan 2020b; 2022, in progress. For a discussion and refutation of the claim that the cow is Anat, Baal’s sister, see Walls 1992: 131–134. For a discussion of the independence of this tradition from the Baal Cycle, see Herr 1995:45, 49; Schwemer 2001, 540. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Even though we may assume that the Ugaritic writers understood the descent into the netherworld as a figurative portrayal of Baal’s consumption by Mot, the two traditions are nevertheless originally independent. This is indicated by the account of Baal’s emissary making the descent into the netherworld; there the author is careful to draw a distinction between the emissary’s going to meet with Mot in the latter’s house, and the danger that Mot might consume the emissary during the visit. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. In both the first and second parts of the Cycle, Anat is described as Baal’s closest ally; this is the case in other Ugaritic texts as well (for details, see Wells 1992). An exception to this rule is the description of the help Astarte provides Baal in his war with Yamm. This description originates in the prevalent ancient Near Eastern account of war between the storm god and the sea (see Ayali-Darshan 2020a). As Anat and Astarte play similar roles in the cultures of the Levant—both are the goddesses of desire and war, both are the sisters/wives of Baal—in various times and places the one came to overshadow the other. Our texts indicate that during the years when the Baal Cycle was being committed to writing, Anat’s importance came to surpass that of Astarte in Ugarit. In the first half of the first millennium BCE, however, Astarte would overtake Anat in Phoenicia and Israel. Redford 1973, 44 maintains that even in the second half of the second millennium BCE, Astarte was the more dominant of the two goddesses in Phoenicia and Canaan (but not in Ugarit) and he seems to be correct. In the second half of the first millennium BCE the two goddesses were amalgamated into the great Syrian goddess Athragatis. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. In Mesopotamian literature this role is ascribed variably to the mother, sister, or wife of the deceased (for sources, see Fritz 2003). In Egyptian texts the role is generally undertaken by the sisters/wives of the deceased. There are, however, references to Horus’ son taking part in the search for his dead father (for sources, see Ayali-Darshan 2017-2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. For a discussion of this prominent theme in the Baal Cycle, see Ayali-Darshan 2020a. Besides Yamm and Mot, Baal’s rivals are also identified as: [list of names?] On the tradition of Baal’s double-paternity, as well as the ascription of this quality to storm gods more generally, see Ayali Darshan 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Similar words appear in *KTU* 1.161 20 which, based on its contents, represents a lament for dead kings. The motif of a father lamenting his son’s death is also found in the Ugaritic *Legend of Aqhat* (KTU 1.19 IV 8-17), as well as the biblical account of the inheritance of David’s kingdom (Kgs 2 19:1). [kings 2 19 is about Hezekiah and Senacherib. Maybe you mean 2 Samuel 19 and David’s mourning for the dead Absalom?] [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. The text is damaged, and it is thus impossible to determine whether these are El’s emissaries or passers-by. A similar exchange can be found in the account of Baal’s resurrection (see below). There also, the text is damaged, and we do not know for certain who makes the report to El. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. The element *mh* in the term *mhyt* has led some to interpret the word as denoting a watery region—thus swamp, meadow, irrigated land etc. For this reason, Pardee 2003 translates: “(its) well-watered portion” while Smith 1994, 149 simply renders “waters.” The term appears in an identical context in *KTU* 1.16 (see discussion below) but with a slight divergence in spelling—*mˀiyt.* There it is part of a list of cosmic and geographical locations. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. For a discussion and additional sources in non-Ugaritic literature, see... [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. According to Clemens 2000, *KTU* 1.45, 1.161 and 1.101 also reflect a burial ceremony for Baal—though the evidence for this is sparse. The theme of burying a god did not play a major role in Mesopotamian mythology. In Egypt, however, it is one of the major themes of Osiris’ death, with many locations claiming to represent his place of burial. Thus, for example, pChester Beatty VIII vs. 4,1–7,5 (dated to the thirteenth century BCE), refers to five sacred places in which the dismembered limbs of Osiris are supposed to be led by the river [not sure what this means] (see Borghouts 1978, 7–11; no. 10). For a discussion of the traditions of Osiris’ burial, see Quack 2017; Smith 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. For a discussion of this unit and its parallels, see .... [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. For comparison, see below some of the lines of this lamentation:... For a parallel to this section, see also Smith 1986. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. According to Mettinger 2001, 208 this alludes to the idea that Anat’s search for Baal is of secondary importance and was influenced by the mother’s search for her son. However, it is specifically in this case that the Ugaritic author used the motif of the search for another purpose, and not for the finding of Baal. Identical imagery can be found *The Legend of Kirta* in a description of the residents of Udum yearning for their lady “Like a cow calls to her calf … so the Udumians mourn.” This suggests that in Ugarit, the imagery may have been expanded to describe any yearning of one character for the loss of one he or she loves, without any specific connection to the dying god mythologem. For the function of this imagery in *The Legend of Kirta,* see Greenstein 2001, 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Cf. Pardee 2003, 270, n. 253. As these searches result in finding Mot, we may assume that they take place in the netherworld itself. In this case, however, the author instead of describing the vistas of the netherworld, as he did when Baal and his emissary make their respective descents, presents standard mountainous backdrop. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. For a discussion of this etiology, and the discussion of Baal’s palace which was built around him אשר נבנה סביבו[?] do you mean the discussion of the palace revolves around this etiology?, see... [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Scholars have debated the interpretation of this request at length. Based on its contents, the consensus tends to be that it is a curse or an incantation. Though this is likely the case, the author has chosen to describe the statement using the verb *ṣ-l-y* which in other Semitic languages denotes prayer as opposed to casting a spell or making an imprecation. Moreover, though at this point in the plot the reader knows of Aqhat’s death, Aqhat’s father (the one making the curse) is as of yet unaware of it. For him to make a curse at this point thus seems incongruous with the plot. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. . [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Thus, for instance, in a description of the Telipinu ritual (trans. by Hoffner 1998, 15):... [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Cf. already Gordon 1949, 4–5. To these may be added the seven-year cycle of Zukru celebrations in Emar. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. The meaning of the word *pl* is the subject of debate. The present translation, which reads it as imperative f.s., is based on *p-l-y,* which in Aramaic, Arabic, and Mishnaic Hebrew denotes “to scrutinize.” Others, however, have translated the word as an adjective: “parched are the furrows” based on the Arabic *p-l-l* (*>f-l-l*). For a lengthy discussion of these interpretations and others, see de Moor 1971, 220-221. The first two interpretations, mentioned above, both fit in context and thus it is difficult to reach any definitive conclusions. However, even if we accept the latter translation, the questions raised at the end of El’s words, as well as the description of Šapš (see below) illustrate that the author wished to note Baal’s absence and the desire to find him, as we find in the description of his death. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. The meaning of this word is subject to even greater debate. For various possibilities, see Wyatt 2002, 138 n. 94 (many have followed Ginsberg, 1969, “Baal is neglecting” but without any supportive etymology). The translation here interprets the verb *yštk* from the root *n-t-k* “to pour out” in the causative conjugation Š. This interpretation further corresponds to the ritual instructions at the end of *KTU* 1.12. Cf. de Moor and Spronk 1987, 156, s.v. *ntk.* [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. For a discussion of this motif (which also appears in classical literature in the context of Demeter), cf. Gaster 1961: 213-214, 220; 1969: 605–606, and the references in n. xxx above. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Some scholars have interpreted the verb *yḥwy* as being in the D construction, denoting factitive meaning: to give a life, to revive. Indeed, this meaning occurs in the following lines (not cited here). However, as the verb *yḥwy* lacks a predicate in the line cited above, and in light of the description of Baal in the previous lines as “immortal,” a factitive meaning in Anat’s words is inappropriate. It is better to interpret the word as a verb in the G construction, “to live”, as explained by e.g., xxx It should be noted that the difference between the G and D constructions cannot be expressed in Ugaritic script, and is thus completely dependent on context. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. The servant is referred to as *nˁmn* at the end of the sentence, l. 32. The word means “handsome” or “goodly one” and it appears with an identical meaning in Baal’s victory feast cited above in n. xxx. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. The scribe has written the words *ḥwy yˁšr* twice. Several scholars have interpreted this repetition as an integral part of the text, but it seems to be nothing more than a scribal error. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Many have interpreted the meaning of the root ˁ-n-y as “to answer.” For this reason, they view the sentence as another opening to Anat’s words (like: I/she answer him [i.e. Aqhat]). However, since Aqhat has yet to speak, it makes more sense to treat the word as ˁ-n-y II (Arabic ġ-n-y), despite the letter change (ġ>ˁ), in the sense of “praise” or “sing.” An identical meaning in an identical context is attested in KTU 1.23 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. In the literature of Ugarit such an outlook is attested in the words of Kirta’s children who are amazed that their father, whom they regard as a god, is on the verge of death: “O, father, how can you die like a mortal? Do gods, after all, die?” It is further reflected, in Aqhat’s response to Anat here: “…I will die the death of everyman, I will die like a mortal.” [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. A similar practice is reflected at the beginning of KTU 1.3 of the Baal Cycle. Immediately after Baal’s victory over Yamm, the “good-voiced lad” and the “goodly one” sing of Baal’s great deeds.

[citation] [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. As the tale of Baal’s battle with Yamm also concludes with Baal fighting his enemies and assuming his place on throne, this unit may represent the original ending of the account of Baal’s battle with Mot. This would have been before the resurrection of Mot was added to the story which required another battle between the gods, and which in turn ends with Baal’s second victory and his reascent to Mount Zaphon. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)