Appendix 2‎

Additional Sources on the Storm-God’s Descent into the Netherworld

This appendix focuses on three sources from Mesopotamia, Hatti, and Israel claimed to describe the descent of the Storm-God into the netherworld. The first two sources are also purported to describe the Storm-God’s subsequent ascent in their broken sequel, although no direct evidence of this has survived. The purpose of this appendix is to thereby discern whether the sources are capable of expanding our knowledge regarding the linkage between the Storm-God and the netherworld in the literature of the ancient Near East in general, and in the literature of the Levant in particular.

‎1.‎ *Iškur and Enlil* (Ni 12501)‎

A fragmentary text from Nipur, dating to the pre-Sargonic period (Old Sumerian period or early Old Akkadian), indicates the existence of a Mesopotamian tradition regarding the Storm-God Iškur’s imprisonment in the netherworld. [[1]](#footnote-2) To our knowledge, this tradition was not continued in contemporary or later Mesopotamian texts. [[2]](#footnote-3)

The first two columns of the text are very fragmentary, but parts of the third and fourth columns are clearer. [[3]](#footnote-4)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | III 7‘His cow, in the underworld, |
|  | 8’eats grass for him. |
|  | 9’The lord, in the underworld, |
|  | 10’dwells. |
|  | 11’Iškur, in the underworld, |
|  | 12’dwells. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | IV 4‘Enlil |
|  | 5‘to the Anunna |
|  | 6‘said: |
|  | 7’“my son, to the underworld |
|  | 8‘ was banished; |
|  | 9‘[who will brin]g him back? |
|  | 10‘dIškur |
|  | 11’to the underworld was banished, |
|  | 12’who will bring him back?” |

As these two fragmentary columns indicate, Iškur the Storm-God dwelled in the netherworld against his will, and his father Enlil sought to release him at the assembly of the Anunna (= a group of the great gods). It also turns out that Iškur’s cow—about which we know nothing—was with him in the netherworld, eating grass. [[4]](#footnote-5)In the fifth column, a fox also appears:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | V3’The fox, to the underworld, |
|  | 4’went. |

The meaning of the remainder of the column is unclear. Kramer and Alster believe that a fox is mentioned here because he is the one who responded to Enlil’s call, and brought his son Iškur out of the netherworld. [[5]](#footnote-6)They learned this from a later Sumerian work, *Enki and Ninḫursaĝ*, in which a fox volunteers to bring Ninḫursaĝ from her location to Enlil[[6]](#footnote-7):

The Anunna sat down in the dust, and fox spoke to Enlil: “If I bring Ninḫursaĝ to you, what ‎will be my reward?” Enlil answered the fox: “If you bring Ninḫursaĝ to me, I shall erect two ‎birch? trees for you in my city and you will be renowned.”‏

Alster believes that the fox’s repeated responses to Enlil’s call stems from its being considered a cunning and greedy creature who knows how to exploit any situation for his own gain. [[7]](#footnote-8)Yet the fox’s character appears in other Mesopotamian texts, and not necessarily in this role. [[8]](#footnote-9)It is therefore difficult to establish her explanation that the mention of the fox alone indicates the release of Iškur from the netherworld. It is hoped that additional fragments from this work will be discovered, thereby enabling a more complete understanding thereof.

‎2.‎ *The Song of Release* (CTH 789)‎

The Song of Release is a bilingual, Hurrian-Hittie text written on at least six tablets and incorporating both mythical and epic descriptions. [[9]](#footnote-10)The source of the text is Hurrian, although it tells the story of two cities in Syria—Ebla and Ikinkali—and was therefore probably composed after the Hurrians had already settled in Syria. [[10]](#footnote-11)While we now have a number of fragmentary manuscripts of the text (and probably at least two editions), very little remains of the complete work, and few of the fragments complement one other. [[11]](#footnote-12)As a result, scholars disagree as to the order of the tablets in the work.

The epic portion of the work, which spans several tablets, narrates how the Storm-God Teššub demanded from Meki the king of Ebla[[12]](#footnote-13) to free the sons of Ikinkali, the slaves of the sons of Ebla, and that in return, he would bless their city of Ebla; but that if they refuse – he will destroy it. When Meki brought this demand to the Ebla assembly of elders, their representative Zazalla rejected it and insisted on keeping the Ikinkali sons in their work. In light of the proem of the work, which hints that Ebla was destroyed, and in light of its title *Song of Release*, the researchers surmise that because Ebla’s sons continued to hold on to Ikinkali’s men, the Storm-God fulfilled his warning, and so Ebla was destroyed and the sons of Ikinkali were released.

The mythical portion of the work, of which one tablet survives, describes the Storm-God Teššub’s descent into the netherworld together with his brother, in order to attend a feast led by the lady of the netherworld, his sister Allani (in the Hittite translation of the work she is called The Sun-goddess of the Earth (=netherworld)). The tablet is broken immediately after the description of the beginning of the feast, and hence interpretations abound regarding the end of the scene. Before discussing this further, here are some quotes from the Hittite part of this scene[[13]](#footnote-14):

|  |
| --- |
| II 9The Storm-god and Šuwaliyatt |
| 10went down to the Netherworld. |
| 11The Sun-goddess of the Earth girded herself. |
| 12She walked back and forth before the Storm-god. |
| 13She made a fine feast, |
| 14the Sun-goddess of the Earth, in the Bolts of the Earth.[[14]](#footnote-15) |
| 15She slaughtered 10000 bulls; |
| 16In front of the great Storm-god she slaughtered 10000 bulls; |
| 17she slaughtered 30000 fat-tailed sheep. |
| 18There was no counting regarding |
| 19the kids, lambs and billy-goats; such (many) |
| 20was slaughtered. |
| … | |
| 24The meal’s time |
| 25arrived, and the Storm-god the king, sat for meal |
| 26while the Primeval Gods, |
| 27she seated (them) to the Storm-god’s right. |
| 28The Sun-goddess of the Earth, in front of the Storm-god |
| 29she arrived like a cupbearer. |
| 30The fingers of her hand (are) long, |
| 31and only (her) four fingers |
| 32lie under the [rh]ython. |
| 33And [the rhytho]ns,[from] which to drink |
| 34[she gave (him), in tho]se (rhytons) lies goodness. |

At this point the aforementioned break occurs in the tablet, leaving us without the reason for the feast or its conclusion. Yet the tablet’s colophon has survived, confirming that it belongs to the *Song of Release*. This break has led to disagreement among researchers regarding the following questions: Why does the *Song of Release* include the description of the Storm-God’s descent to the netherworld? At which point in the plot is the tablet recounting the feast located? And lastly, how should one interpret the feast with the Goddess of the netherworld and the ancient gods? Of the various opinions presented, two in particular should be examined[[15]](#footnote-16):

The first, held by Haas and Wagner, [[16]](#footnote-17)places the banquet tablet before the Storm-God’s demand to release the sons of Ikinkali (as Neu likewise placed it in his edition[[17]](#footnote-18)), and links the Storm-God’s descent into the netherworld to this demand. According to these scholars, the Storm-God went to the netherworld because he wanted to reign there, but he was captured by the Goddess of netherworld, and when he was released he asked that his people likewise do with their slaves, i.e. that they release them. Hence the feast was the means whereby the Goddess of the netherworld captured the Storm-God, as she cunningly let him taste the food of the netherworld. Haas and Wagner’s interpretation rests (according to their evidence) on the plots of well-known Mesopotamian and Greek works, such as *Inana’s Descent* (Haas even suggested that Šuwalliyat remained in the netherworld as a substitute for the Storm-God), *Nergal and Ereškigal*, *Adapa*, and Ovid’s *Metamorphosis* 5.525-539.[[18]](#footnote-19) This interpretation is further supported, according to Haas and Wagner, by a description in the *Song of Release* of an argument between the King of Ebla and the city assembly, during which Meki described the Storm-God as poor and in need of money, grain, clothing, and oil. In their view, Meki described the Storm-God at the point when he emerged from the netherworld, bereft of all possession. The extent of Haas’s certainty that the Storm-God was indeed captured in the netherworld can be gleaned from his proposed completion of the colophon of the first tablet: “First tablet: Song of the Release o[f Teššub].” [[19]](#footnote-20)

Another opinion is forwarded by Wilhlem,[[20]](#footnote-21) who opposes Haas and Wagner’s explanation for two reasons: First, he maintains that the tablet that recounts the feast of the netherworld should be placed *after* the destruction of Ebla, and therefore the descent of the Storm-God should not be linked to the debate about the liberation of the sons of Ikinkali, but to the destruction of Ebla. Second, in the debate between the King of Ebla and the assembly, the description of the poor Storm-God does not constitute part of the King’s words, but rather belongs to the speech of Zazalla, who opposes the liberation of the slaves and who mocks the Storm-God by saying that he would give the “poor” Teššub anything he wants, except the release of the sons of Ikinkali. [[21]](#footnote-22)According to Wilhelm, the Storm-God therefore descended to the netherworld because he was angry with Ebla and destroyed it, and thus his behavior is reminiscent of the Hittite *mugawar* rituals, which tell of the descent of the gods’ wrath to the netherworld. [[22]](#footnote-23)Upon entering the netherworld, its inhabitants honoured the Storm-God with a feast symbolizing his joining them, similar to the *Rpˀum* banquet from Ugarit.

Due to the absence of information about the tablet’s placement and the conclusion of its text, these arguments cannot be completely refuted. It should be noted, however, that not only do they rely on familiarity with traditions from non-Hurrian or Syrian cultures, but both add information that does not exist in the text at all - whether it is Storm-God’s captivity and release or his anger. Moreover, both largely ignore the description of the feast: A glorious feast held in the netherworld whose participants all attend freely and who exhibit no apparent anger, including neither the Goddess of the netherworld (even if she feared the Storm-God’s intention to rob her of her reign) nor the Storm-God himself (if he indeed descended because of his anger).

At the same time, Wilhelm is right in pointing out the closeness between the description of the feast of the netherworld and those of the *Rpˀum* in Ugaritic literature, in which the inhabitants of the netherworld meet with the gods of heaven. Whether these encounters take place in the netherworld or elsewhere, they point to the differences among the perception of the netherworld in Mesopotamia as a place that is impossible to leave, the one in Hatti - as a dwelling-place of anger and other bad qualities, and in the cultures of Syria and the Levant - as a place that can be entered and exited without difficulty. In the feasts of the *Rpˀum*, as evidenced by the Ugaritic texts, the inhabitants of the netherworld (named *Rpˀum*, *ˀIlnym*, *(Mt) Mtm*, with some bearing first names[[23]](#footnote-24)) happily eat and drink in the company of well-known heavenly gods such as El, Koṯar, Anat and Baal. For example, here are a few lines from such a feast of ghosts, where the ghosts and gods are fed many dishes, and in the end Baal also joins the Storm-God[[24]](#footnote-25):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 8’There, *Ṯmq*, the *Rpʾu*of Baal, the warrior(/s) of Baal, |  |
| 9’and the warrior(/s) of Anat. There, *Yḥpn* the fighter, |  |
| 10’the prince, the king *ˁllmy*.[[25]](#footnote-26)As when she goes, |  |
| 11’Anat, to hunt, sets to flight the birds of heavens. |  |
| 12’They slaughtered oxen; sheep as well. They felled bulls |  |
| 13’and fatted rams,year old calves, |  |
| 14’lambs, (and) a heap of suckling lambs.… |  |
| 17’Lo, all day long they poured wine of *Ṯmk*, |  |
| 18’must, wine of *Srnm …* |  |
| 21’Lo, a day and a second, the *Rpʾum* eat |  |
| 22’(and) drink; a third (and) a fourth day; a fifth |  |
| 23’(and) a sixth day,the *Rpʾum* eat |  |
| 24’(and) drink (in the) banquet hall, on the summit (or: the first fruit of) |  |
| 25’on the peak, in the heart of Lebanon. Behold, on the seventh |  |
| 26’day,in that (day), Mighty Baal |  |
| 27 [arrives?] |  |

Unfortunately, the tablet is broken exactly in the place where Baal enters however, according to the literary pattern that precedes the mention of his name, [[26]](#footnote-27) this is probably how the text should be completed.

Apart from the ghost feasts that belong to the mythological realm, it is worth mentioning, following Wilhelm, the ritual meals that took place in Emar, which were attended by the heavenly gods (including the Storm-God) along with the gods of the netherworld. Here is a sample quote from the NIN.DINGIR ritual[[27]](#footnote-28):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | 24 They will set up four tables before the gods. They will set up one table for the Storm-god, one table for […], (and) [two? tables o]n the ground |
|  | 25 for the underworld gods.[[28]](#footnote-29) |

Further on is a description of twelve portions of bread to be distributed to the gods, possibly intended for those gods of the netherworld who, according to the Hurrian-Hittite tradition of the Primeval Gods, are twelve in number. [[29]](#footnote-30)In another ritual from Emar (the *Kissu* festival), the heavenly gods Dagan, Isḫara and dNIN.URTA sit down at two tables to feast, while two additional tables set on the ground are designated for the gods of the netherworld Alal and Amaza.‏ [[30]](#footnote-31)

The assumption that the feast of the netherworld should be understood in the *Song of Release* in light of the “feasts of the *Rpˀum*” explains not only the presence of the Storm-God and his brother at the feast without casting it in a negative light that does not exist in the text; it also clarifies why the Primeval Gods are seated beside the Storm-God. This does not seem to be a climactic encounter between enemies[[31]](#footnote-32); rather, the Hittite expression “Primeval Gods” was chosen as a translation of the *Rpˀum* prevalent in Suro-Levantine culture, on account of their being the Primeval Gods who live in the netherworld, the counterparts of the Mesopotamian Anunnaki. [[32]](#footnote-33)It should be mentioned that the literal translation of the Hurrian term for the gods of the netherworld *ammati-naene* is: the grandfather gods, a term that in many ways corresponds even better to the status of the *Rpˀum* in Ugarit (the same is true for “ghosts” in Phoenician and Biblical Hebrew), who also include the ancestors. [[33]](#footnote-34)

Although we have before us another text that probably reflects a Syrian-Levantine tradition related to the netherworld, it is neither a description of the death of the Storm-God nor of his captivity in the netherworld, as some believed, but of a different aspect of the underworld, in the ghostly feasts that are open to all gods. As I have noted elsewhere, ‏although the *Rpˀum*, like Mot, ‎are permanent residents of the netherworld according to the Ugaritic texts, each belongs to a ‎different branch. While the *Rp’um* are not mentioned in the Baal Cycle’s narrative at all – ‎neither in the description of the road to the netherworld, nor within it, Mot does not appear in ‎any of the texts relating to the *Rpˀum*.[[34]](#footnote-35) This separation, which is expressed in Ugarit, is probably also true of the Hittite text before us, which reflects an old Syrian tradition that has nothing to do with captivity in the netherworld or with death. [[35]](#footnote-36)

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‎3. Zechariah 12:10-11‎

In the prophecy in the Book of Zechariah, which is usually dated to the end of the Persian period or the beginning of the Hellenistic period, mass lamentations were recorded on the occasion of the death of the Storm-God in the Megiddo Valley[[36]](#footnote-37):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | 10And I will pour out on the House of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of pity and compassion, so they will look to me concerning the one they have pierced, and they will wail over him as the wailing over the ‘only one’, and mourn over him, as the mourning over a first-born. |
|  | 11On that day, the wailing in Jerusalem will be as great as the wailing of Hadad-Rimmōnin the plain of Megiddo. |

The Prophet, who seeks to illustrate the depth of the sorrow over the dead in a future war, draws a parallel between the mass mourning rituals to be held in Jerusalem and the wailing over the “only one”/ the first-born in Hadad-Rimmōn. Although the author connected the two eulogies together, each originated in a separate Levantine tradition.

The second eulogy (v. 11) is associated with the death of the Storm-God Hadad Rammān,[[37]](#footnote-38) known elsewhere in the Bible and beyond as a deity of Aramaic origin.[[38]](#footnote-39) In contrast to the lamentation for the death of Tammuz, an event that took place in the Jerusalem Temple (Ezekiel 18: 14), the lamentation of the death of the Storm-God took place - according to the testimony of Zechariah II - outside the Judean territory, in the Megiddo Valley. [[39]](#footnote-40)The tradition of the death of the Storm-God, reflected in Ugaritic and Hittite texts of the second millennium BCE, thus continued to exist in the Levant both in the second half of the first millennium BCE and after the adoption of other traditions of dying gods, such as Tammuz / Dummuzi.

The origin of the first eulogy mentioned in Zechariah over the “only one” / the first-born (vs. 10), is found in the tradition of the sacrifice of the firstborn, which was also prevalent in the Levant. Similar to the mythologem of the Storm-God’s descent to the netherworld, in this case most of the Levantine sources attesting to the custom of sacrifice of the firstborn are literary, not ritualistic or physical, and therefore scholars disagree about the actual existence of the custom in the Levant. But there is no question regarding the familiarity of the Levantines - Phoenicians and Israelites - with this custom. [[40]](#footnote-41)Since the discussion of the custom of the sacrifice of the firstborn deviates from the interest of the present study, it may be sufficient to quote from Philo of Byblos’s use of the original Phoenician word (in Greek): ᾽Ιεοὺδ, the equivalent of the Hebrew “the only one,” when describing the birth of the Phoenician tradition of the sacrifice of the firstborn[[41]](#footnote-42):

Now Kronos, whom the Phoenicians call El (῍Ηλ), had ruled the land and after the end of his ‎life had been deified as the star Kronos. By a local nymph named Anobret he had his only son ‎‎(μονογενῆ) who, on account of this, was called Ieoud (᾽Ιεοὺδ). For this is what the Phoenicians ‎called and still call only sons (μονογενοῦς).‎ [[42]](#footnote-43) When the land incurred the greatest military ‎dangers, he adorned his son in the regalia of kingship and, preparing an altar, sacrificed him.‎

The words of Philo indicate that the son of El (῍Ηλ) was called ᾽Ιεοὺδ and was sacrificed by his father during wartime. This is therefore an etiology for the birth of the Phoenician term ᾽Ιεοὺδ (“only one” in Hebrew) used in this ritual. Apart from Philo and Zechariah 12, other biblical writers (Jer. 6: 26 and Amos 8:10) attest to the familiarity with the ritual of mourning for the “only one”/ ᾽Ιεοὺδ' held during a war. [[43]](#footnote-44)

The Jerusalem prophet has thus merged two different Levantine traditions concerning death and lamentation: The death of the Storm-God and that of the “only one.” It is likely that it is the context – mourning the victims of the future war – that created the affinity between these two separate traditions. However, in light of Philo’s words that the father of ᾽Ιεοὺδ was El (῍Ηλ), who is also considered the father of the Storm-God Baal according to the Phoenician tradition preserved by Philo of Byblos, it is not impossible that these two traditions were combined in other places as well.

Of the three sources discussed in this chapter, the testimony of the Book of Zechariah is the closest to the traditions of the dying gods known to us both from the writings of Mesopotamia and Egypt, and from the writers of late antiquity. It can therefore be cataloged as further evidence of the existence of the ancient mythologem of the dying god in the Levant region. However, since this is a testimony given as if by chance, and for the purpose of a specific comparison to the lamentations, there is no way of knowing whether the people of the Megiddo Valley commemorated the resurrection of the Storm-God later in the year, or like many others in the ancient Near East observed only his death.

1. For the dating of the text according to its paleography, and for the few additional literary texts from this ancient period, see ... [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Cf. Hallo 2010, 68 and n. 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. The transliteration and translation follow Schwemer 2001, 179-180 (cf. PSD B 130b ]for lines IV 7-12[); cf. Kramer 1956, 106, fig, 6a. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Although it was ostensibly possible to link this cow to the one with which Baal mated before descending to the netherworld (KTU 1.5 V 18-21; cf. KTU 1.10; see above, Chapter 3), it is difficult to find support for this because this plot line has no continuation in Mesopotamian literature itself. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Cf. The *Series of the Fox* and *The Fox*, *the Wolf, and the Hyena*. In both Fox is portrayed as cunning and clever, while in the latter Enlil too takes part. Cf. Schwemer’s note regarding the discussed text above: “Von einer Deutung dieses mythologischen Textes, von dem wir nur wenige Zeilen zu verstehen meinen, muß man Abstand nehmen.“ [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. It was believed at first that the work also included fragments of animal proverbs, which were found along with fragments of *The Song of Release* (as in the 1996 edition of Neu, following Otten and Rüster 1990, and many that followed), but Wilhelm (1997; 2001; 2012; 2013) believes that these are two completely different works, and researchers have agreed even with him. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. The dating of the work’s composition is influenced by both its Hurrian register, which is earlier than 1400 BCE, and the date of the destruction of Ebla. Most scholars believe that this destruction took place around 1600 BCE, and thus attribute the work to this period. But even an earlier destruction than this can be considered. See a short summary in ... [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. The king in the text is called Meki, which was originally the title of the king in Ebla, and not a first name. The other first names in the work are not known from other texts, and therefore they are also of no help in dating the work. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Although the Bolt of the Earth is also recognized as Allani’s epithet, here it is used as the name of Allani’s palace, and therefore the author added to it the Dat-Loc pl. attribute. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. For additional views, see the survey in.... [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. For a discussion of the various names of the groups of the inhabitants of the netherworld in Ugarit [Or: Ugaritic?], see Spronk 1986, 195-196, though he probably includes too many groups under this category. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. Many have translated this term as eternity, following *ˁlm* and in light of the occurrence of *mlkˁlm* (“king of eternity”) in *KTU* 1.181, a text that also describes a “ghost feast.” However, in the present case the different spelling casts doubt on this translation (cf. Pardee 2011, 45, 54-55). This spelling also appears in *KTU* 1.161 7, a text in which ghosts also appear, in relation to *ṯrˁllmn*, which can be translated as “the bull of *ˁllmn*.” [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. This is according to the Hittite alliances (in other lists their number varies). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. Emar 385, ll. 7-9. Cf. Arnaud 1986, PP; Fleming 2003, 442; Wilhelm 2009, 62. It should be noted that in contrast to the ghostly feasts of Ugarit, these feasts place more emphasis on the differences between the gods of heaven and those of the earth through the placement of the tables. However, these feasts differ from the description of godly feasts in Mesopotamian literature (such as in *Nergal and Ereškigal*), which do not allow for the existence of a joint feast for the gods of the netherworld and the gods of heaven. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. As may be surmised in light of a Hurrian-Hittite historiola depicting the casting of the primeval gods to the netherworld by their enemy the Storm-God:

    “He offers two birds to the netherworld deities … He says as follows: ‘For you, ancients, neither cattle nor sheep will be laid out. When the Storm-god *drove you down to the netherworld* he established for you this offering.’”

    For the expulsion of the gods to the netherworld in *Song of Going Forth*, and its connection to the aforementioned citation, see the discussion in ... [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. For a comparison between the Primeval Gods and the Anunnaki in the Hurrian-Hittite literature, see ... [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. It is worth noting that both the ancient Hurrian gods and the Ugaritic *Rpˀum* (in particular the group known as *Dtn*) have been suggested as possible origins of the Titans of classical literature, on account of their descriptions, place of residence, and their appellations. In light of this, it is possible that the thread connecting the *Rpˀum* to the ancient gods is also reflected in the classical literature. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. Ayali-Darshan, forthcoming… [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. Although these findings/ details /arguments/ neither point to the location of the feast in the *Song of Release* nor explain the connection to the debate over the release of the sons of Ikinkali, it is difficult to assume, as stated above, that the feast carries a negative connotation. In fact, since little of the plot is visible to us, there may be many more reasons why this feast is held. In any case, the foregoing discussion indicates that this descent is not related to the mythologem of the dying gods, let alone of the dying and rising gods. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. The translation follows Meyers and Meyers 1993, 307, with modifications. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. This is the Aramaic pronunciation of the name of the god, as gathered from Akkadian transcriptions (cf. Greenfield 1976). Since Rimmōn’s name in the Septuagint is written similarly to the pronunciation reflected in the Akkadian sources—Remmān—it is difficult to know whether תה"ש and נה"מ present two pronunciation traditions – the Aramaicתה"ש and the local נה"מ (i.e., with a Canaanite shift), or if the punctuators of the extract punctuated the name unfamiliar to them as the name of the fruit “pomegranate.” [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. According to Kings II, 5: 18, Rimmōn (who is the aforementioned Aramaic Rammān) had a temple in Damascus, but this information has no further documentation. The other sources that attest to this deity (Aramaic, Mesopotamian, and biblical) are mostly theophoric names and few lists of deities; Cf. Greenfield 1976 for references. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. Following the ancient translations (such as the Peshitta and the Targum) and the Church Fathers (such as Hieronymus), some scholars believed that the subject of mourning was not the god Hadad-Rimmōn, but King Josiah, who was allegedly murdered at a place called Hadad-Rimmōn in the Megiddo Valley. But their opinion is not corroborated. The verses in Chronicles 35, to which these scholars refer, possibly indicate that the author of Chronicles hinted that the mourning customs in the Megiddo Valley are related to the death of Josiah, but this is doubtful nevertheless. The first commentator in the modern research tradition who deviated from the traditional interpretation and understood Hadad-Rimmōn as the name of a deity and not as a place name was Hitzig 1852, 376, who compared the mourning of Hadad-Rimmōn to the mourning of Adonis. Many have followed in his footsteps. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. For an in-depth discussion of all the epigraphic and material sources, see Vainstub 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. The explanatory sentence is probably by Philo of Byblos, but by Osebius (of Caesarea) quoting Philo and his commentary. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. In the biblical literature, two of the sacrificed children, Isaac and the daughter of Jephthah, are also referred to with the term “the only one” (Gen 22; Jud 11:34), and this does not seem to be the case. As Vainstub 2010, 169 noted, the usual way in the Bible to express exclusivity is by naming the number “one” and not “the only one.” Regarding the son of the king of Moab, about whom it is said that he was sacrificed at the time of loss in the war (Kgs 2 3: 26-27), it is stated that he was the “eldest son” of the king of Moab. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)