# The Resurrection of Dumuzi in Light of the Evidence from Mari: A Reevaluation

The years 1987 to 2001 saw the publication and reinterpretation of three documents from Mari, attesting to the mythologem of Dumuzi as a dying and rising god. One of the documents is a letter dated to the twelfth year of Zimri-līm (first half of the eighteenth-century BCE). Composed by the head of a semi-nomadic Amorite tribe, it mentions in passing the death and return of Dumuzi. The other two records are economic in nature: one of them, from the fourth year of Zimri-līm, notes the calendar-date of Dumuzi’s burial, the other, the day of his return. Prior to the publication of these records, only a single cuneiform reference regarding to Dumuzi’s ascent from the netherworld was extant – standing in stark contrast to the innumerable accounts of his death. To view the new evidence from Mari as having some bearing on the Mesopotamian mythologem of Dumuzi is thus only natural.[[1]](#footnote-2) However, the provenance of these three records in Mari, and the fact that the most decisive piece of evidence was included in a letter written by the head of an Amorite tribe (and not, for instance, by an ambassador or a priest) raises some broader questions about this mythic pattern’s relationship to Mesopotamia. Does the use of the Mesopotamian appellation ‘Dumuzi’ in the Mari records necessarily point to the mythologem’s origin in Mesopotamian culture? Or perhaps this mythic pattern should be traced back to the Amorite tribes that migrated from Western-Semitic regions to Mari towards the end of the third millennium BCE? After all, scholars have long drawn attention to the Western-Semitic characteristics of Mari’s Amorite culture, such as intuitive prophecy, the “*qatālum ḫayaram*” treaty ritual, the Zukru(m) festival and their acquaintance with the myth of the Storm-god vs. Sea;[[2]](#footnote-3) might this be another one of those characteristics?

In order to broach this question, I will survey in brief the available evidence for the mythologem of dying and rising gods in the cultures neighboring Mari to the East and to the West: beginning with Mesopotamian records, some of which belong to the earliest discoveries of cuneiform scholarship; proceeding to the relatively new records from Mari; and concluding by examining records from the Levant, primarily represented by Ugaritic literature. In light of these findings, I will suggest a new perspective on the question of dying and rising gods in general, and the resurrection of Dumuzi in particular, questions that have engaged scholars since the late nineteenth century.

## A. Dumuzi as a dying and rising god in Mesopotamia: A brief overview of the textual evidence and related scholarship

References to Dumuzi’s death and the mourning rituals dedicated to him have been preserved in textual traditions from outside of Mesopotamia – such as the Jerusalemite women “bewailing the Tammuz” in Ezekiel 8, and pagan women weeping over Tāwuz in An-Nadīm’s *Fihrist*.[[3]](#footnote-4) Therefore, when modern scholars of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries first encountered cuneiform texts lamenting the death of Dumuzi, they rightfully connected them with those extra-Mesopotamian texts*.* Another set of non-Mesopotamian texts which refer to Tammuz, familiar to Western scholars for generations, was the patristic writings of the first centuries CE, which identify the biblical Tammuz with the resurrected god Adonis.[[4]](#footnote-5)

Influential examples include the commentaries of Origen (c. 185-253 CE) and Jerome (c. 345-419 CE) to Ezekiel 8. Both residents of Palestine, they comment upon the women who weep over the Tammuz, likening the latter to Adonis, both of whom die and arise from the dead, in step with the agricultural calendar:

The one whom the Greeks call Adonis, is called Tammouz by the Hebrews and the Syrians, as they say… It seems that they perform a sort of rite every year: first they mourn him as dead, second they rejoice for him as if he had risen from the dead (δεύτερον δὲ ὅτι χαίρουσιν ἐπ’ αὐτῷ ὡς ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἀναστάντι)… Those who understand the principle of the Greek myths… say that Adonis is a symbol of the fruits of the earth, which are mourned when they [i.e., the farmers] sow, but which rise from the dead, and therefore give joy to the farmers when they [i.e., the crops] grow (ἀνισταμένων δὲ, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο χαίρειν ποιούντων τοὺς γεωργοὺς ὅτε φύονται) (Origen, *Selecta in Ezechielem* VIII).[[5]](#footnote-6)

What we have translated as Adonis,[[6]](#footnote-7) both Hebrew and Syrian speech calls Thamuz… They celebrate a solemn anniversary festival to him, in which women mourn for him as a dead man, and after he comes back to life, they sing of him and praise him… Paganism of this sort… honor[s] the death and resurrection of Adonis by mourning and rejoicing, the former of which is shown in seeds that die in the earth, the latter in the harvest that the dead seed are reborn (Jerome, *Commentariorum in Ezechielem prophetam* III).[[7]](#footnote-8)

The writings of Cyril of Alexandria (c. 376-444 CE) and Aristides the Athenian (second century CE) represent another variation of this type of comparison. While they too identify the biblical Tammuz with Adonis, they point not to shared agricultural rituals but rather to the account of Adonis’ descent to the netherworld and Aphrodite’s attempt to save him. Thus Cyril, commenting that “Tammuz is interpreted as Adonis (Διερμηνεύεται δὲ ὁ Θαμμοὺζ ὁ Ἄδωνις)”, elaborates upon the story as follows:

Then, they say, Aphrodite… fell in love with him (=Adonis), kept him company and was always caressing him. At this, Ares, a rival for Aphrodite’s affections, was upset; he took the form of a boar, attacked him when he was hunting and immediately did away with him, something that proved the occasion of lament for Aphrodite, they say. She fell into such depth of distress and grief as to descend into Hades to him with the intention of bringing her lover back (Καθίκετο δὲ δυσθυμίας εἰς τοῦτο καὶ λύπης, ὥστε καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν καταφοιτῆσαι τὸν ᾅδην, ἀνακομίσαι θέλουσα τὸν ἐρώμενον). But when the wife of Pluto made a strong claim to the young man and would not release someone of such wonderful aspect, they made an agreement to divide the course of the year and keep him for half of it (ὥστε μερίσασθαι τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ τὸν κύκλον· καὶ ἐξ ἡμισείας ἔχειν αὐτόν). When Aphrodite returned and announced this to her familiars, friends or attendants, a festival and celebration was held. So the Greeks developed such a festival for this occasion, pretending to grieve and lament with Aphrodite in her mourning on account of the death of Adonis, and to rejoice with her and to leap for joy when she claimed to have found the object of her search (καὶ μὴν καὶ ηὑρῆσθαι λεγούσης τὸν ζητούμενον, συνήδεσθαι καὶ ἀνασκιρτᾷν). Until our day this farce used to be celebrated by the priests in Alexandria (*Commentarius in Isaiam Prophetam* XVIII). [[8]](#footnote-9)

An earlier version of this plot appears in the Syriac translation of Aristides’s Greek work *The Apology.* While the work was discovered only towards the end of the nineteenth century, its contents were long known (without the parallels to Dumuzi) through the medieval composition *Barlaam and Ioasaph*:

Again they say of Aphrodite that she is a goddess; sometimes she dwells with their gods, and sometimes she commits adultery with men. But sometimes she has Ares for her lover and sometimes Adonis, who is Tammuz (*ˀdwks d-ˀytwhy Tmuzˀ*). And sometimes Aphrodite herself was wailing and weeping the death of Tammuz. And they say that she went down to Sheol in order that she might ransom Adonis from Persephone (*d-nḥtt l-šywl ak d-tzbnywhy l-ˀdnws mn Pryspwnws / καὶ εἰς ᾅδου καταβαίνειν ὅπως ἐξαγοράσῃ τὸν Ἄδωνιν ἀπὸ τῆς Περσεφόνης*), who was the daughter of Sheol (*Apology of Aristides* [Codex Sinaiticus 16] XI 3).[[9]](#footnote-10)

It was with such texts in mind that late nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars, such as Wilhelm Mannhardt, Archibald Henry Sayce, and Heinrich Zimmern, approached the Akkadian work *Ištar*’*s Descent to the Netherworld*, which has just been deciphered*.*[[10]](#footnote-11)They assumed they were reading a Mesopotamian version of the story of Adonis and Aphrodite and were quick to draw parallels between Ishtar’sdescent into the netherworld and Aphrodite’s descent to Hades to save Adonis. Although no evidence for such a plot in the Akkadian composition was forthcoming, this interpretation became standard for many years – both because no explanation is provided for Ishtar’s decision to descend into netherworld, and because Dumuzi is mentioned at the very end of the work, immediately after Ishtar’s reemergence, two details which left the text open to multiple interpretations. For example, this is how Sayce, one of the first scholars to subscribe to this approach, characterized the work:

On the one hand, we now know who was that Tammuz in whose honour Ezekiel saw the women of Jerusalem weeping at the gate of “the Lord’s house.” On the other hand, it is clear that the Tammuz and Ištar of the Babylonian legend [i.e. *The Descent of Ištar*] are the Adonis and Aphrodite of Greek mythology. Like Tammuz, Adonis, the beloved one of Aphrodite, is slain by the boar’s tusk of winter,[[11]](#footnote-12) but eventually ransomed from Hades by the prayers of the goddess…

Sayce could adduce no textual evidence to support the notion of Dumuzi’s return. Nevertheless, he assumed that the only possible explanation for Ištar’s descent to the netherworld was to save Dumuzi. Going a step further, Sayce assumed – again based on the parallel to Aphrodite and Adonis, but without any internal, textual evidence – that the Babylonians must have held celebratory rituals for Dumuzi’s return:

It is clear that the Babylonian poet who sang of the descent of Ištar into Hades had no conception of a festival of joy that followed immediately upon a festival of mourning. Nevertheless, the whole burden of his poem is the successful journey of the goddess into the under-world for the sake of the precious waters which should restore her beloved one to life. Even in Babylonia, therefore, there must have been a season when the name of Tammuz was commemorated, not with words of woe, but with joy and rejoicing.[[12]](#footnote-13)

Had this misinterpretation remained within the purview of Assyriology it might have been soon forgotten, since no textual evidence was forthcoming until the 1960s. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, however, James George Frazer used the then-accepted interpretation of *Ištar’s Descent* as one of his main proofs for characterizing the Mesopotamian Dumuzi as a dying and rising god. This theory appears at length already in the first edition of his book *The Golden Bough* (1894):

In a Babylonian legend, the goddess Istar (Astarte, Aphrodite) descends to Hades to fetch the water of life with which to restore to life the dead Thammuz, and it appears that the water was thrown over him at a great mourning ceremony, at which men and women stood round the funeral pyre of Thammuz lamenting. This legend, as Mannhardt points out, is probably a mythical explanation of a Babylonian festival resembling the Syrian festival of Adonis. At this festival, which doubtless took place in the month Thammuz (June- July) and therefore about midsummer, the dead Thammuz was probably represented in effigy, water was poured over him, and he came to life again. This Babylonian legend is, therefore, of importance, since it confirms the view that the purpose for which the images and gardens of Adonis were thrown into the water was to effect the resurrection of the god, that is to secure the revival of vegetation.[[13]](#footnote-14)

Thus, along with the significant impact of Frazer’s book on the humanities and social sciences of the time, the concept of Dumuzi’s resurrection, which was based on a misinterpretation, became commonplace.[[14]](#footnote-15)

Up to the mid-twentieth century, dozens of cuneiform texts referring to Dumuzi had been deciphered. Many of them – belonging either to literary or administrative genres – reference Dumuzi’s death, but not even one mentions his resurrection. Nonetheless, these findings proved insufficient to uproot the prevailing theory. It was only in the early 1950s, with the partial publication of the Sumerian *Inana’s Descent to the Netherworld* by Samuel Noah Kramer,[[15]](#footnote-16) that scholars began to rapidly disassociate themselves from the erstwhile consensus.

*Inana’s Descent*, its earliest copies dated to the Old Babylonian period, was considered an earlier and more extensive version of *Ištar’s Descent* (the latter having been composed apparently in the late Middle Assyrian period).[[16]](#footnote-17) Like the Akkadian work, the Sumerian one tells of the goddess descending into and ascending from the netherworld. Like the Akkadian work, it also lacks an explanation of the motivations for the goddess’ descent. However, while *Ištar’s Descent* concludes by mentioning Dumuzi with no discernible connection to the narrative, *Inana’s Descent* – as it was known to scholars in 1951 – ends with Inana herself handing Dumuzi over to the netherworld. Since in the 1950s *Ištar’s Descent* still (allegedly) remained the only textual evidence for Dumuzi’s characterization as a dying and rising god, the partial publication of *Inana’s Descent* proved devastating to the prevailing theory. It became clear to scholars that Inana did not descend to netherworld to find Dumuzi, but, to the contrary, it was she who had been responsible for putting him there in the first place. Kramer, who had published the text of *Inana’s Descent* at the time, presented the issue as follows:

The prevalent view that Dumuzi is resurrected every spring is quite without basis in fact. To judge from the available evidence – it is to be noted that we find only laments for the god’s death, but no songs of joy for the god’s return – the Sumerians believed that once Dumuzi had died, he ‘stayed dead’ in the Nether World and never ‘rose’ again.[[17]](#footnote-18)

A more scathing assessment was offered by scholar of Greek religion, Walter Burkert:

And it was an unexpected shock to Frazerism when in 1951 the hitherto missing conclusion of the Sumerian myth of Inanna and Dumuzi was published. Scholars had been sure that Inanna, or Ishtar, by her Babylonian name, goes down to the nether world in order to bring the ‘god of vegetation’ back to life; now quite the contrary was seen to happen: Inanna comes back from the nether world to kill Dumuzi, who had been alive and prosperous on his throne among the living; Inanna hands him over to her demoniac retinue, the *gallu*, to be put to death as a Substitute for herself. This is anything but an allegory of vegetation.[[18]](#footnote-19)

As Kramer notes, the fact that scholars were so quick to dismiss the prevailing characterization of Dumuzi stemmed from the fact that all extant texts at the time merely characterize him as a dying god, or perhaps better-put a ‘dead god,’ much like the Sumerian gods Ningišzida, Damu, and others.[[19]](#footnote-20) This corpus includes the literary works and laments dedicated to Dumuzi’s death and which describe his relatives’ mourning and searching for him;[[20]](#footnote-21) literary works which mention funerary rituals for Dumuzi in passing or which count him among the denizens of the netherworld;[[21]](#footnote-22) and funerary rituals mentioned in letters, calendars, and ritual texts.[[22]](#footnote-23) Moreover, as mentioned above, those non-Mesopotamian texts related to Dumuzi which do not draw parallels to Adonis (such as Ezekiel 8 and the *Fihrist*) refer only to his death, but never to his resurrection. Thus, in the early 1950s, a new consensus was reached: no evidence could support the notion that Dumuzi, or any other Mesopotamian god for that matter, had ever been considered a resurrected god.[[23]](#footnote-24)

Then, in 1965 the scholarly consensus would shift once again. Two years earlier, Kramer had published the final lines of *Inana’s Descent*, housed in the British Museum, which relate Dumuzi’s fate after he is delivered to the netherworld at the hands of demons (UET 6/1 10: 10-12 = ETCSL 1.4.1 407-409). Kramer proposed the following reading and translation:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 10 Your […] half the year, your sister half the year. | [ .. ]-zu mu-maš-àm nin9-zu mu-maš-àm |
| 11 [The day your…] comes, that day […], | [u4 ..-zu] al-di-di-e u4-bi íb-ba?-[…] |
| 12 The day your sister comes, that day […]. | u4 nin9-zu al-di-di-e u4-bi íb-[…] |

Since he was already convinced that Dumuzi is not a resurrected god, Kramer asserted that “Line 10 seems to say that Dumuzi will have two visitors the year round in the Nether world; one is his sister (presumably Geštinanna) while the identity of the other is uncertain.”[[24]](#footnote-25) This approach was based on the use of the Sumerian root di in the verb al-di-di-e, meaning “to come” – sometimes Dumuzi’s sister will come to visit him, sometimes another member of the god’s family.

But two years later Falkenstein suggested that the same word should be read as a compound verb: al-dug, meaning “to want.” In addition, he proposed a reconstruction of the partially broken cuneiform signs at the beginnings of lines 10 and 11 as the second person pronoun za-e (“you”), and of the broken signs at the end of lines 11 and 12 – as “to rise.”[[25]](#footnote-26) This yielded his translation:

Du (=dumuzi) ein halbes Jahr, deine Schwester (=Gestinanna) ein halbes Jahr!

Am Tage, an dem du es wünscht, (an) diesem Tage wirst du dar[aus?...].

 Am Tage, an dem deine Schwester wünscht, (an) diesem Tage wird sie dar[aus?...].

According to this proposal, which at the time relied primarily on uncertain reconstructions, the final lines of *Inana’s Descent* do not describe relatives visiting Dumuzi in the netherworld, but rather an exchange between Dumuzi and Geštinana every half-year. Falkenstein’s proposal was adopted with enthusiasm by all scholars at the time – including Kramer, who went so far as to retract his previous assessment:

If Falkenstein’s interpretation is correct – and it seems to me most convincing – my conclusion that Dumuzi dies and “stays dead” forever was quite erroneous: Dumuzi, according to the Sumerian mythographers, rises from the dead annually and, after staying on earth for half the year, descends to the Nether World for the other half.

In a footnote, Kramer added: “Note the obvious parallel to the Adonis.”[[26]](#footnote-27) To others however, the reading more closely resembled the Greek story of Demeter and Kore – which ends with Demeter spending half of every year in the underworld .[[27]](#footnote-28)

In subsequent years, further fragments of UET 6/10 were identified, reinforcing Falkenstein’s suggestion. Thus, today, the common reading of the final lines is as follows: [[28]](#footnote-29)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| You for half the year, and your sister for half the year. | ˹za-e˺ mu maš-àm nin9-zu mu maš-àm |
| On the day that you are demanded, on that day you will stay, | ud za-e al di-di-e ud-bi ḫé-tuš-[e] |
| On the day that your sister is demanded, on that day you will be released. | ud nin9-zu al di-di-e ud-bi ḫé-búr-[e] |

And so, some seventy years after being proposed on the basis of a misinterpretation of an Akkadian text, scholars had finally found the first (and only) piece of evidence to suggest that Dumuzi was not only a dying god, but a rising one as well.

Given the dating of this work to at least the eighteenth-century BCE, one would expect additional Mesopotamian texts to refer to Dumuzi’s return in one way or another during subsequent millennia. However, despite the vast amount of extant Mesopotamian materials – outstripping that of any other ancient Near Eastern civilization – and despite the many Mesopotamian texts which mention Dumuzi in particular,[[29]](#footnote-30) no other evidence has been found to date. This holds true even for those works that seem to be familiar with *Inana’s Descent*; they too either omit any mention of Dumuzi’s rising from the netherworld (this is the case in *Dumuzi and Geštinana*),[[30]](#footnote-31) or interpret his return as a participation in a funerary ritual such as the *Taklimtu*, in which the dead souls ascend from the netherworld for the occasion (as at the end of *Ištar’s Descent*).[[31]](#footnote-32) In fact, the latter interpretation of Dumuzi’s return was what ultimately enabled earlier modern scholars to reinterpret it mistakenly as a resurrection; even they, however, could not ignore the presence of mourners in the ceremony, clearly marking it as a funerary rite.[[32]](#footnote-33)

Moreover, as Katz and Alster have already noted, *Inana’s Descent* itself – the only account of Dumuzi’s ascent from the netherworld – recounts this mythologem briefly in its final lines, contradicting previous themes that, unlike Dumuzi’s ascent, are based on earlier sources with greater substance.[[33]](#footnote-34) In light of all these findings, it seems that the mythologem of Dumuzi’s resurrection, although clearly attested at the end of an eighteenth-century Mesopotamian work and despite being considered one of the best-known ancient mythologems, did not strike roots in Mesopotamia, remaining a marginal tradition there.

## Dumuzi as a dying and rising god in Mari: the textual evidence

As mentioned above, modern scholars only became aware of the relevant documents from Mari in recent decades. Therefore, these documents played no role in earlier debates about Dumuzi’s status in Mesopotamia as a dying and rising god. After their publication, however, they were often cited as further evidence of the mythologem’s vitality within Mesopotamian culture.[[34]](#footnote-35) The documents are as follows:

1. A letter (A.1146) sent by Ḫammi-ištamar head of the Uprapu tribe, to his companion Yasmaḫ-Addu, head of the Yariḫu tribe, both belonging to the Amorite Bini-Yamina group. In his letter, Ḫammi-ištamar compares his close shaves with death over the course of several battles, to the periodic life and death of Dumuzi:[[35]](#footnote-36)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 39As for me, look at me, I [have] almost [been k]i[lled], | *yâtima amranni ad*[*ī*]*ni u*[*ḫt*]*all*[*iq*] |
| 40 I escaped fr[om de]ath! [Fr]om the mi[dst] | *in*[*a m*]*ūtim ūṣīm*[*a in*]*a li*[*bbi*] |
| 41 of Aḫuna, during the rebellion, [I escaped] 10 times! | *Aḫuna ina bārtim 10-šu* [*ūṣi*] |
| 42 Why, now, […[[36]](#footnote-37)] like Dumuz[i],  | *ammīnim inanna kīma* D*Dumuz*[*i …*] |
| 43 at the end of the year they kill him, [and at the time of …[[37]](#footnote-38)] | *munût šattim idakkūšu* […] |
| 44 he keeps retur[ning] to the temple of Annunitum. | *ana bīt Annunitimma ittanâ*[*rma*] |

Dumuzi’s periodic return from the land of the dead to the temple of the goddess Annunitum, is expressed by the verb *târu “*to return” in the Gtn stem which denotes iterative action. As the netherworld is referred to in Mesopotamian literature as the “Land of No-Return” (*erṣet/māt lā târi*),[[38]](#footnote-39) the use of this verb to describe Dumuzi’s resurrection is particularly fitting.[[39]](#footnote-40) The term *munût šattim* – literally “counting of the year”[[40]](#footnote-41) – which indicates the time of Dumuzi’s return, also attests to its recurring character. To describe the death of Dumuzi, the author uses the root *dâkum* (to kill), though he employs a vowel uncharacteristic of that root (a). For this reason, some have interpreted it as deriving from the root *dakāšum* (to stab), reconstructing *idakkušū*[*šu*]accordingly.[[41]](#footnote-42)

In addition to its unique content, this letter is important for two further reasons: first, its epistolary genre. In contrast to literary works – which naturally accrue additions and expansions (as well as omissions) by scribes and editors – an epistolary text does not develop in such a fashion. Therefore, it cannot be argued that one of the two parts of the mythologem – the death or resurrection – was interpolated at a later stage. Rather, the passing mention of Dumuzi’s death *and* resurrection in this letter is the work of a single hand at a single time.

Second, is the identity of the letter’s author. Unlike letters written by temple or palace functionaries which may preserve various mythologems and literary themes thanks to their authors’ scholarly education,[[42]](#footnote-43) the author of the present letter, Ḫammi-ištamar, was the head of a semi-nomadic Amorite tribe. That his Amorite identity was still very significant to him is testified by the curses and vulgarisms he uses in his letter to exhort his addressee to remain loyal to the nomadic ethos. This would suggest that the notion of Dumuzi as a resurrected god was widespread among the common people in Mari, including the tribes which had yet to urbanize.

Two economic lists from Mari supports the impression that arises from Ḫammi-ištamar’s letter, namely, that the people of Mari regarded Dumuzi as a dying and rising god, and that such events were commemorated in temples.

1. Tablet A.4540 from Mari attests to a funerary ritual held for Dumuzi. It records the amounts of sesame oil needed to clean and polish the deity’s statue in preparation for the burial:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1 One *qa* of oil | 1 SÌLAÌ.GIŠ |
| 2 for the bathing of (the statue of) Ištar.  | *ana rummuk* D*Ištar* |
| 3 15 shekelsof oil | 15 GÍN Ì.GIŠ |
| 4 for the burial | *ana temrim* |
| 5 of (the statue of) Dumuzi. | *ša* D*Dumuzi* |
| 6 Month of Abu, day 19th, | ITI *Abim* UD.19.KAM |
| 7 year in which Zimri-līm | MU *Zimri-Līm* |
| 8 offered a great th[ro]ne for <Šamaš> (=4th year of Zimri-Līm). | GIŠG[U.Z]A GAL *ana <*DUTU*> ušē*[*l*]*û* |

When this tablet was first published in the 1970s, Georges Dossin believed the term *temrum* (l. 4) to be a hapax legomenon. He therefore interpreted it as “cleansing” – paralleling the “bathing” of Ištar in the previous line. The three Akkadian dictionaries (*AHw*, *CAD* and *CDA*) have offered a different translation: on the basis of Sumero-Akkadian lexical lists, they have concluded that the term denotes a cultic meal of roasted fish, or alternatively the coals used for this purpose.[[43]](#footnote-44) In 2011, however, Antoine Jacquet – followed by Dominique Charpin – suggested that the term *temrum* is derived from the Akkadian root *temērum* “to bury.”[[44]](#footnote-45) Since this verb refers to the burial of objects, including figurines and magical paraphernalia, it is particularly appropriate in the context of a funerary ritual revolving around Dumuzi’s statue.

The date appearing on the tablet is Abu 19th; Abu denotes the fourth month in the economic records from Mari, while epistolary documents from Mari refer to the same month by the name “Dumuzi,” as was the practice in the Assyrian calendar commonly used in Mari before the reign of Zimri-līm. Since the present document is dated to the fourth year of Zimri-līm, it represents in effect the earliest attestation of funerary rituals connected to Dumuzi, rituals held in the fourth and fifth month in Mesopotamia and elsewhere.[[45]](#footnote-46)

1. A ritual in honor of Dumuzi’s return is indicated by the following tablet, published as no. 14 in MARI 5, 1987:[[46]](#footnote-47)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1 ½ qa of oil […] | ½ SÌLA Ì […] |
| 2 for the *gibbum*-rite. | *ana gibbi*[*m*] |
| 3 […] | *ina ḫa-x-x-x* |
| 4 ½ qa of ‘oil of the head’ from Mari  | ½ SÌLA Ì.SAG *mārītu*[*m*] |
| 5 for Dumuz[i] | *ana* DDumuz[i] |
| 6 when he retu[rn]ed. | *inūma itu*[*rru*] |
| 7 Month *Bēlet-b*[*īri*], | ITI d *Bēlet*-*b*[*īri*] |
| 8 day 9,  | UD 9[.KAM] |
| 9 […] | *li-mu* […] |

The conclusion that this document refers to the return of Dumuzi from the land of the dead is based on lines 9-10: *ana Dumuzi inūma itu*[*rru*].[[47]](#footnote-48) The root *târu* (here in the G present) was used by Ḫammi-ištamar to describe Dumuzi’s resurrection, and – as mentioned above – is part of the common Akkadian appellation for the netherworld *erṣet/māt lā târi*. According to this interpretation, the present document is not only the *earliest* evidence of a ceremony held in honor of Dumuzi’s return from the netherworld, but the *only* evidence of such a ceremony being held in Mesopotamia or its neighboring regions.[[48]](#footnote-49)

These two records thus reinforce the evidence from Ḫammi-ištamar’s letter – that the divinity referred to in Mari as Dumuzi was characterized as a dying and rising god, and that his worship was part of the yearly cycle of the temple rite. All of these considerations could also support the premise that in the eighteenth-century BCE Dumuzi was considered a dying and rising god throughout Mesopotamia. Nevertheless, the dominance of the Amorite tribes in Mari, the location of Mari between Mesopotamia and Syria, and the semi-nomadic identity of Ḫammi-ištamar on the one hand, as well as the extreme rarity of this mythologem in Mesopotamia on the other hand, may lead to a different conclusion – that is, that the presence of this mythologem in Mari is not the result of Mesopotamian influence, but rather represents a characteristic of Western-Semitic culture brought by the Amorite tribes who settled in Mari.[[49]](#footnote-50)

## A dying and rising God in Ugaritic literature and later writings: A brief overview of the textual evidence and relevant studies

When the ruins of Ugarit were discovered in 1929, scholarship was still beholden to the anachronistic criteria developed by Frazer for identifying dying and rising gods based on texts from late antiquity. Therefore, in the early years during which the Ugaritic Baal Cycle was being deciphered, scholars maintained that the god Mot – the portrayal of whose murder entails the use of agricultural tools (KTU 1.6 II 30-36; V 10-19) and whose return after seven years is alluded to (1.6 II 37; V 7-10) – is an analogue to Tammuz and Adonis.[[50]](#footnote-51)

However, as the study of the Baal Cycle proceeded, it became clear that this mythologem was much more closely associated with the god Baal, whose death and rising from the dead is narrated throughout the second part of the Cycle.[[51]](#footnote-52) Yet, influenced by the opposition to Frazer’s dogmatic conclusions, some ignored the explicit description of Baal’s death and resurrection, claiming that the fragmentary condition of the Baal Cycle allows other interpretations of the text, or that the lack of Ugaritic rituals connected to Baal’s resurrection is a crucial proof for the mythologem’s absence from Ugarit as a whole.[[52]](#footnote-53) However, as has been already claimed, these doubts have ignored a simple reading of the Baal Cycle’s plot.[[53]](#footnote-54)

The Baal cycle avails itself of several, sometimes-divergent traditions to recount the death of Baal. On the one hand it tells how Baal was violently consumed by his enemy Mot (1.6 II 13-23), on the other, it describes Baal being ordered by an unknown figure to descend to the netherworld with his servants, his rains and his winds. It portrays his burial in the tomb of the gods (1.6 I 15-31); describes how Baal’s family – his father El (1.5 VI 1-25) and his sister Anat (1.5 VI 25 – 1.6 I 8) – mourned over his death; and recounts how they searched for him – both in the netherworld (1.6 I 8-15) and elsewhere (1.6 II 4-9; 26-30).[[54]](#footnote-55)

Had the Baal Cycle concluded at this point, its plot would be similar to those found in other Near Eastern cultures, such as Mesopotamia and Egypt. In their writings as well, the young god dies, is mourned by his relatives, and is searched for in the netherworld and elsewhere.[[55]](#footnote-56) However, unlike the Mesopotamian and Egyptian accounts, the Baal Cycle continues, going on to describe at length the resurrection of Baal. Remarkably, this process mirrors that of the god’s death, but in reverse: the resurrection of the hero is accompanied by the return of the water to the rivers, his family rejoices over his resurrection, and searches for the living god.

Since the lines which actually describe Baal’s resurrection have not been preserved, we must infer that this event transpired from the subsequent lines. These recount how El revealed that his son Baal had returned to life after he dreamed of the heavens raining oil and the wadies running with honey (a superlative of rains and flooding) and rejoiced greatly:[[56]](#footnote-57)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1.6 III10 In the dream of Beneficent El, the Gracious-One, | *b ḥlm . lṭpn . ˀil d pˀid* |
| 11 in the vision of the Creator of creatures, | *b ḏrt . bny . bnwt* |
| 12 the heavens rained oil, | *šmm . šmn . tmṭrn* |
| 13 the wadies ran with honey. | *nḫlm . tlk . nbtm* |
| 14 Beneficent El, the Gracious-One rejoiced; | *šmḫ . lṭpn . ˀil . d pʾid* |
| 15 He placed his feet on the footstool, | *pˁnh . l hdm . yṯpd* |
| 16 he unknitted (his) brow and laughed.  | *w yprq . lṣb . w yṣḥq* |
| 17 He raised his voice and declared: | *yšˀu . gh . w yṣḥ* |
| 18 “(At last) I can sit, and I can rest, | *ˀaṯbn . ˀank . w ˀanḫn* |
| 19 and my spirit can rest in my breast, | *w tnḫ . b ˀirty . npš* |
| 20 for Mighty Baal is alive, | *k ḥy . ˀalˀiyn . bˁl* |
| 21 the Ruler, Lord of the Land, exists”. | *k ˀiṯ . zbl . bˁl . ˀarṣ* |

The use of the root *ḥ-y* (“to live”) in the G stem clarifies that Baal – who was described in the previous lines (e.g., 1.5 VI 8-10) as dead (Ugaritic *npl lˀarṣ*; *mt*; *ḫlq*) and being buried in the tomb of the gods – has finally been resurrected. El’s joy upon his resurrection, reminiscent of the celebrations held for the god’s resurrection in the writings of the late antiquity (cited above), further attest to this. However, it should be noted that El’s joy over his son’s resurrection, like his mourning over his death, contradict the primary narrative of the Baal Cycle – i.e., that El is hostile to Baal, whose appellation is “the son of Dagan.”[[57]](#footnote-58) This suggests that the motif of El’s mourning and joy is not a result of the author’s own creativity. Rather it was an integral part of the mythologem of a dying and rising god in Ugarit which the author borrowed, as is, from an existing tradition.

Following the portrayal of Baal’s rising from the dead, the tablets go on to narrate how El called to Baal’s sister Anat, and told her to command the sun goddess, Šapšu, to search for the living Baal:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 22 (Then) El called aloud to Adolescent  | *gm . yṣḥ . ˀil . l btlt*  |
| 23 Anat: “Listen, O Adolescent Anat,  | *ˁnt . šmˁ . l btlt . ˁnt* |
| 24 say to Šapšu, the Luminary of gods:  | *rgm . l nrt . ˀil<m> . špš* |
| IV 1 ‘Look at[[58]](#footnote-59) the furrows of the fields, O Šapšu, | *pl . ˁnt . šdm . y špš* |
| 2look at the furrows of the vast fields. Does Baal water[[59]](#footnote-60) | *pl . ˁnt . šdm*[ .]*ˀil . yštk* |
| 3the furrows of the ploughland?  | *bˁl . ˁnt . mḥrṯt* |
| 4Where is Mighty Baal? | *ˀiy . ˀalˀiyn . bˁl*  |
| 5Where is the Ruler, the Lord of the Land?’” | *ˀiy . zbl . bˁl . ˀarṣ* |

The text continues with Anat appealing to Šapšu to search for Baal in the fields (ll. 6-16), paralleling her earlier request from Šapšu to search for the dead Baal in the netherworld (1.6 I 8-5).[[60]](#footnote-61) Šapšu agrees:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 17 Šapšu, the Luminary of gods, replied: | *w tˁn . nrt . ˀilm . špš* |
| 18 “Pour sparkling wine from the chalice,  | *šd yn . ˁn . b . qbˁt . t* |
| 19 put garlands on your kinfolk, | *bl . lyt . ˁl . ˀumtk* |
| 20 for I will search for Baal.” | *w ˀabqṯ . ˀalˀiyn . bˁl* |

The search for the living Baal thus corresponds to the search for the dead Baal, as well as to the common motif of searching for the dead god, appearing in texts from Egypt and Mesopotamia and discussed in texts from late antiquity.[[61]](#footnote-62) However, here, too, El's intercession in favor of Baal deviates from the general narrative of the Baal Cycle, indicating that the motif was borrowed from a different tradition.

The remaining lines are broken, and we therefore do not know how exactly the living Baal was found. However, since the next column portrays him as vanquishing his enemies, the children of Athirat, and reassuming his place on the royal throne (V 1-8), there is no doubt that he was ultimately found alive.

The Baal Cycle thus demonstrate clearly that the mythologem of a dying and rising god was known in Ugarit, and was applied to the storm god, Baal. Furthermore, it is to date the longest and most detailed account of a divine resurrection prior to late antiquity. Since the Baal Cycle also narrates the death of the lord of the netherworld, Mot (*KTU* 1.6 II 30-36; V 10-19) and his return seven years later (1.6 II 37; V 7-10) – as noted already by the earliest scholars of Ugarit – it seems that this motif was applied to other gods as well. In the case of Mot, however, the Baal Cycle describes his death as being accomplished by agricultural tools (*KTU* 1.6 II 30-36; V 10-19), as does *KTU* 1.24 which involves a viticultural ritual – both reminiscent of the agricultural rituals dedicated to the death of Dumuzi and Osiris, and later to the death of Adonis in writings from late antiquity.[[62]](#footnote-63) In contrast, scholars have rightly noted that no Ugaritic rituals connected to Baal's death and resurrection have been discovered.

Moreover, unlike Ḫammi-ištamar’s letter from Mari and the final lines of *Inana’s Descent* from Mesopotamia –the Baal Cycle does not indicate that Baal is resurrected annually.[[63]](#footnote-64) Rather, it seems plausible that Baal’s absence lasted in effect for seven years – as was the case for Mot in the Baal Cycle. Evidence of this can be adduced from a saying incorporated into *The Tale of Aqhat* which connects Baal’s absence to a lengthy drought lasting seven years:[[64]](#footnote-65)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1.19 I 42 Seven years | *šbˁ . šnt* |  |
| 43 Baal is missing, eight | *yṣrk . bˁl . ṯmn . rkb* |  |
| 44 (years), the Rider of clouds. No dew, no downpour, | *ˁrpt . bl . ṭl . bl . rbb* |  |
| 45 no swirling of the deeps, no | *bl . šrˁ . thmtm . bl* |  |
| 46 goodly voice of Baal (= thunders). | *ṭbn . ql . bˁl . …* |  |

A similar notion can be found in *KTU* 1.12, which recounts the violent encounter between Baal and the entities called “the Eaters (*ˀaklm*) and the Tearers (*ˁqqm*).” Though the text is fragmentary, precluding a full understanding of context, there seems to be a connection between the seven years of Baal’s death (*šbˁ . šnt . ˀil . mlˀa / w ṯmn . nqpnt . ˁd*) and the dryness of the fields (*trˁ . trˁn .* […] / *bnt . šdm . ṣḥr*[*rt*]).[[65]](#footnote-66) The text concludes with a ritual which primarily revolves around water.[[66]](#footnote-67)

While these literary works, *The Tale of Aqhat*, and *KTU* 1.12, strengthen the impression that no annual resurrection of Baal was commemorated in Ugarit, they also significantly support the existence of the mythologem of Baal in Ugarit as a dying and rising god. To those motifs presented in the Cycle in detail – the death of Baal accompanied by drought, the mourning of his family and their searching for him, as well as the rising of Baal accompanied by flooding, the joy of his family and their searching for him – we may add the seven year-period of Baal’s absence.

\*

With the destruction of Ugarit towards the end of the second millennium, and with the transition to a linear alphabetic script written on perishable materials, our knowledge of Levantine cultures, literatures, and rituals is dramatically diminished. Moreover, biblical literature – which is often used to represent the Levantine literature of the first millennium due to the loss of almost all other corpuses – mostly rejected, like the Mesopotamian culture, the mythologem of dying and rising gods. Despite these difficulties, there is evidence to suggest that this mythologem continued to be prevalent in the Phoenician culture, not only as a literary theme but as a ritual one as well. Since it has been discussed recently at length by Tryggve M.D. Mettinger,[[67]](#footnote-68) I will suffice with just two examples of the cultic use of this mythologem preserved in Western-Semitic languages, prior to late antiquity.

The first and best-known instance is the cultic functionary referred to as the *mqm ˀlm* who served in Phoenician and Punic temples. The literal meaning of the title is “Raiser (Phoenician *q-w-m* in the H stem) of the Deity.”[[68]](#footnote-69) In light of the Greek translation of this position (ἐγερσε[ίτης]) preserved in inscriptions from Philadelphia/Amman and Ramleh – it is likely that the meaning “The Awakener of the Deity” is even more appropriate.[[69]](#footnote-70) It should be noted that although in two different inscriptions, one Phoenician the other Greek, the functionary is referred to as “The Awakener (*mqm*/ἐγερσε[ίτης]) of Ml(qr)t/Herakles,” this role does not necessarily relate to Melqart in other occurrences.[[70]](#footnote-71)

A second piece of evidence for the cultic use of this mythologem in the Levant, is preserved, rather remarkably, in biblical literature.[[71]](#footnote-72) While most biblical texts rejected the mythologem itself, as mentioned above, traces of the agricultural rituals underlying it have nevertheless been found in Psalms 126:5-6:

Those who sow in tears (הזרעים בדמעה) do reap with songs of joy (ברנה יקצרו). The one who carries the seed-bag weeps as he goes (הלך ילך ובכה נשא משך הזרע); the one who carries his sheaves comes with songs of joy (בא יבא ברנה נשא אלמתיו).

These verses, which predate the writings of Origen and Jerome (quoted above) by hundreds of years, portray the exact same practices of weeping during the sowing, and joy during the harvest performed by the pagan residents of Palestine, as reported by these patristic authors. While the psalmist did not (or could not) explain the mythological ideas underlying the ritual, the comments of the patristic authors disclose its earlier roots.[[72]](#footnote-73)

As the writings of Origen, Jerome, Cyril and Aristides (quoted above) and many others testify, the relative lack of evidence from the Levant ends abruptly in the late antiquity, around the rise of Christianity, when pagan texts and patristic polemics against pagans were beginning to be preserved, copied, and transmitted. Then, unsurprisingly, we are once again treated to a wealth of evidence recording the traditions of dying and rising gods that prevailed in the Syro-Levantine region.[[73]](#footnote-74) These are the very same documents that led Frazer and his predecessors to assume that the mythologem of the dying and rising god was shared by *all* the peoples of the ancient Near East.

## Conclusions

Having analyzed records from Mesopotamia, Mari, and the Levant, we may return to the question with which we opened the present article: should the documents from Mari be deemed Mesopotamian, reinforcing the assumption that Dumuzi was considered a dying and rising god in Mesopotamia, or perhaps they represent the first evidence of this mythologem among Western-Semitic peoples?

Despite the vast amount of epigraphic materials from Mesopotamia in general, and regarding Dumuzi in particular, there appears to be only a single description of Dumuzi’s rising from the netherworld in Mesopotamian literature, occurring at the end of a literary work from the eighteenth-century BCE. All other texts referring to Dumuzi and other dying gods do not treat them as resurrected gods. In the Levant, on the other hand – despite the relative paucity of epigraphic findings, and despite the rejection of this mythologem by biblical authors – numerous indications for the prevalence of the deity’s resurrection in Ugarit of the second millennium and in the Phoenician cultures of the first have been preserved.

These findings do not completely preclude the possibility that the origin of this mythologem was in Mesopotamia; perhaps, while it seems not to have stricken roots there, it was inherited by cultures to the west and the south, such as Mari and Ugarit. It is more likely, however, in light of the evidence presented above, that the mythologem of a dying and rising god originated initially among the Western-Semitic cultures and from there was disseminated to the north and the east. Nonetheless, due to the limited textual evidence from the Levant prior to the last quarter of the second millennium BCE, and due to the events that took place thousands of years later – first the identification between the biblical Tammuz and Adonis made by the patristic writers of late antiquity, and then the imitation of this trend by modern scholars – the latter were already familiar with the mythologem of a dying and rising god, before even one relevant tablet from Ugarit or Mari had been deciphered. These complex circumstances led scholars to mistakenly attribute the mythologem of the dying and rising god to Mesopotamian literature, even though the Mesopotamian textual evidence shows a clear preference only for the first part of the mythologem, that of a “dead god.”

According to this claim, the development of the mythologem of dying and rising gods in Western Asia might be portrayed as follows: In third-millennium Mesopotamia (as well as in Egypt), the mythologem of the ‘dead god,’ including the mourning and the search for him, was widespread. Over time, Levantine cultures inherited these traditions – as evidenced by the similarity between Ugaritic traditions regarding the death of Baal, and their parallels in Egypt and Mesopotamia. However, while applying the mythologem to their own deities (who had not previously been regarded as ‘dead gods’), an additional, new motif was added by the Levantine people – that of god’s eventual return from the netherworld. This return was formulated in parallel to the characteristics associated with the deity’s death: after his return is announced, his joyous relatives search for him. Due, however, to the gradual spread of literacy from Mesopotamia westwards and southwards, the first cultures to record the full mythologem were Mari and Babylon – where the Amorite tribes had established their kingdoms toward the end of the third millennium/beginning of second. Only at a later period, when the Ugaritians began to use a local script, could records from the Levant be added to this list. As mentioned above, a similar conjecture is made about various customs and mythologies documented in Mari, such as the intuitive prophecy, the treaty ritual “*qatālum ḫayaram*,” the Zukrum festival and the myth of the Storm-god vs. the Sea; though evidence of these in the Levant is relatively late, it is agreed that they had arrived in Mari with the Amorites.[[74]](#footnote-75)

As the findings from Mesopotamia shows, the foreign motif of a god returning from the netherworld was not accepted by the local populations.[[75]](#footnote-76) This is perhaps due to the well-entrenched characterization of Dumuzi as a dead god, or due to the characterization of the netherworld itself – which in Mesopotamia was considered a place from which one cannot return, except via extreme measures. As for Mari – while its destruction by Hammurabi prevents us from seeing how the mythologem would be developed there, the very existence of two documents attesting to Dumuzi’s return, one of which was written by the head of an Amorite tribe, suggests that the Amorites continued to maintain this tradition in their new settlements. Given the fact that at that time Dumuzi was regarded as *the* ‘dead god’ of Mesopotamia[[76]](#footnote-77) it is not surprising to find him playing the role of a rising god in Akkadian documents from Mari. It is, however, difficult to determine whether this represents the adoption of the Mesopotamian Dumuzi, or the use of his name as an ideogram to denote another Amorite god. By contrast, in the Levant, the presumed birthplace of this mythologem –its *terminus post quem* turning out to be as early as the eighteenth century BCE (thanks to the findings from Mari)[[77]](#footnote-78) – it continued to develop and diversify over the course of thousands of years, up to late antiquity, at the very least.

1. Cf. e.g., Frahm 2003; Alster 2005-2006. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. For a discussion of the various Western-Semitic characteristics of Mari Amorite culture, and its relation to the Syro-Levantine cultures of the second and first millennia BCE, see the overview of Malamat, 1998; and cf. Held 1970; Durand 1993; 2008; Fleming 2000. For the Western-Semitic Onomasticon in Mari, see Streck 2000. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Ezekiel 8:14: “Next He brought me to the entrance of the north gate of the House of YHWH; and there sat the women bewailing the Tammuz”; An-Nadīm’s *Fihrist*, Dodge edition, 758: “[The month of] Tammūz: In the middle of this [month] there is the feast of al-Būqāt, that is, of the weeping women. It is the Tāwuz, a feast dedicated to the god Tāwuz. The women weep for him because of how his master killed him and ground his bones in the hand-mill and then winnowed them to the wind. The women do not eat nothing ground in a hand-mill; they only eat moistened wheat, chick-peas, dates, raisins and other similar things.” The translation follows HÄMEEN-ANTTILA 2002, 101. For a discussion of the pagan communities and beliefs in Haran and Iraq during the 10th century CE, see also idem, 2006. For the alteration between kāf and qāf in the appellation al-Būqāt which evidently preserves an old tradition, see Dodge YEAR 758, n. 63 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Pagan works, such as *de Dea Syria* attributed to Lucian of Samosata, also attest to the resurrection of Adonis (Lightfoot 2003, 250-251, passages 6-8, and see the quotation in n. xxx, below); however, the identification with Tammuz occurs only in patristic writings, whose authors were familiar with the biblical Tammuz. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. For the text, see Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae Graeca* 13, cols. 797–800. I am grateful to Dr. Guy Darshan for his assistance in translating this text and the following ones. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. The Vulgate renders Tammuz in Ezekiel 8 as Adonis. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. For the text, see Migne (ed.) *Patrologiae Latina* 25, cols. 85–86. The translation follows (with modifications) Scheck 2017, 96. Mettinger 2001, 129–130, argues that despite Jerome’s acquaintance with Origen’s writings, it is unlikely that he was basing himself on Origen here given the fact that he adds the etiological tale of Adonis which is missing from Origen. Most scholars, however, do not agree; see, e.g. de Vaux 1972, 227. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. For the text, see Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae Graeca* 70, cols. 440-441. The translation here follows Hill 2008, 34 with the modifications proposed by Cook 2018, 104. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. For the Syriac text (dated to the fourth or fifth century CE), see Rendel Harris 1891, 44; Pouderon and Pierre 2003, 218-219. I am grateful to Dr. Yifat Monnickendam for her assistance in translating this text. For a discussion of the Greek, *Barlaam and Ioasaph*, and its relation to the Syriac work, see Simpson 2015. Note that in the passage cited, the name of Adonis has been corrupted due to scribal errors. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Mannhard 1877, 274-275; Sayce 1887, 178-221; Zimmern 1903, 397-399. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. He may have reached this conclusion from works related to Melito, Bishop of Sardes of the second or third century CE (*Oration before Antoninus Caesar* preserved in Ms. Brit. Libr. Add 14,658), that recount how Tammuz (obviously identified with Adonis) was slain by a boar: “The people of Phoenicia worshipped Balthi (בלתי), queen of Cyprus, because she fell in love with Tamuz, son of Cuthar (מטול לרחמת לתמוזא בר כותר), king of the Phoenicians, and left her own kingdom, and came and dwelt in Gebal, a fortress of the Phoenicians, and at that time she made all the Cyprians subject to the king Cuthar: for before Tamuz she was in love with Ares, and committed adultery with him, and Hephaestus her husband caught her, and was jealous over her, and came and slew Tamuz in Mount Lebanon, while he was hunting the wild boar (ואתא קטל לתמוזא בלבנן טורא כד עבד חזירא בורזא); and from that time Balthi remained in Gebal, and died in the city Aphaca where Tamuz was buried” (Cureton 1885, 44; cf. Brown 1995, 24). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Sayce, ibid, 227, 230. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Frazer 1894, 287-288. Regarding the general identification of all the dying and rising gods in antiquity, see pp. 278-279: “But it is in Egypt and Western Asia that the death and resurrection of vegetation appear to have been most widely celebrated with ceremonies like those of modern Europe. Under the names of Osiris, Adonis, Thammuz, Attis, and Dionysus, the Egyptians, Syrians, Babylonians, Phrygians, and Greeks represented the decay and revival of vegetation with rites which, as the ancients themselves recognised were substantially the same, and which find their parallels in the spring and midsummer customs of our European peasantry.” In 1906 Frazer published a volume dedicated entirely to the subject of dying and rising gods. Once again, he cited the “definitive” evidence from *Ishtar’s Descent* to support the notion of Dumuzi’s resurrection. This volume was eventually added to the third edition of the *Golden Bough*; see Frazer 1914, 8-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. For a discussion of the *Golden Bough*’s significant influence on the scholarship and Western culture in general, see Vickery 1973. Though Frazer had many detractors, they did not oppose his description of Dumuzi, which was the prevailing interpretation of *Ištar’s Descent* at the time (cf. e.g., de Vaux 1971, 231-232). Among Assyriologists, Langdon (1914) was particularly impressed by Frazer’s analysis, going on to add further Mesopotamian gods to Frazer’s list of dying and rising gods. Marduk was added to the list by Zimmern (1918) – based on his interpretation of *KAR* 143 (see ibid., pp. 2-3). It was only in the 1950s that this interpretation was refuted by von Soden (1955). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Kramer 1951. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. For a discussion of the relation between the Sumerian *Inana’s Descent* and the Akkadian *Ištar’s Descent*, see Sladek 1974, 43-51; Katz 1995. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. Kramer 1959, 198, n. 1; 1961, 10. In fact, even earlier, during the publication of isolated fragments of the Sumerian work, scholars noted that Inana emerged from the netherworld by herself, meeting Dumuzi on her way out. See, e.g., Falkenstein 1941-1944, 138: “Inanna kommt allein aus der Unterwelt, das heisst: sie bringt nicht, wie man vielleicht vermuten könnte, Tamüz auf die Erde zurück. Somit muss für die alten Sumerer der Kernpunkt des Mythos darin bestanden haben, dass es Inanna durch das Eingreifen Enkis möglich geworden ist, den Gesetzen des „Landes ohne Wiederkehr" zum Trotz den Weg nach oben wieder anzutreten.” Falkenstein’s last conjecture would only be revisited by scholars forty years later (cf. Katz 1996; Alster ???). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Burkert 1979, 101. Burkert’s remarks reflect enthusiasm prompted by Kramer’s discovery, although by the time the former’s book was published the latter had already retracted his original conclusion based on Falkenstein’s corrections (see below). Elsewhere in his book (p. 109) Burkert shows an awareness of this. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. The term “dead god,” as opposed to a dying god, was first coined by Frankort 1978, 185 (first published in 1948), in relation to Osiris who like Dumuzi was defined by Frazer as a dying and rising god; but in light of findings from ancient Egypt, it turns out that he was not a resurrected god. As for Ningišzida – while some Assyriologists (since Langdon 1914 up to by Lambert 1990, 330) took it for granted that he had returned from the netherworld, in this case as well, only laments about his death are extant; cf. Alster and Jacobsen 200, 331 and n. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Such as *Dumuzi’s Dream* (ETCSL 1.4.3); *Dumuzi and Geštinana* (ETCSL 1.4.1.1); *Dumuzi and His Sisters* (ETCSL 1.4.1.3); *Inana and Bilulu* (ETCSL 1.4.4); *The Most Bitter Cry =* *An Eršemma of Inana and Dumuzi* (no. 97; Cohen, Sumerian Hymnology, 71-84); *An Eršemma of Dumuzi and Ṣirtur* (no. 88; Cohen 1988, 84-87); *An Eršemma of Dumuzi* (no. 165; Cohen 1988, 87-89); *An Eršemma of Dumuzi* (no. 60; Cohen 1988, 89-93); *The Lament of the Reed* = *An Eršemma of Dumuzi* (Bruschweiler 1990); *The Death of Dumuzi* (Kramer 1980), etc. For further compositions, see Fritz 2003. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. Such as *The Death of Gilgameš* (ETCSL 1.8.1.3): version B from Nippur, ll. 8-18; a version from me-Turan, seg. F, ll. 38-41, 82-86, 131-134; *The Death of Urnamma* (ETCSL 2.4.1.1): a version from Nippur, ll. 102-105; a version from Susa, Seg. C., ll. 33-37; *Gilgameš* VI 46-47 (George 2003, 621-621); *Adapa*, the Amarna version, ll. 21’-25’, 41’-45’ (Izre’el 2001, 18-19). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. Such as YOS XII 427 (Old Babylonian; cf. Kutscher 1990, 42); CT 58.21 (Old Babylonian; cf. Katz 2003, 162-165); Astrolab B = *KAV* 218 A I 50 (reign of Tiglath Pileser I; cf. Kutscher 1990, 42; Livingstone 1986, 138); *Attī Ištar ša ḫaramša Dumuzi* 3-4 (Neo-Assyrian; cf. Farber 1977, 128, 140-141); VAT 10099 (Neo Assyrian; cf. Livingstone 1986, 116-121); *ABL* 1097 = *LAS* 6; *ABL* 35 = *LAS* 5 (Neo-Assyrian; cf. Livingston 1986, 139-140); *SBH* VIII obv. III 1-4 (Seleucid period; cf. Kutscher 1990, 42; Livingstone 1986, 139); BM 34035 33 (Seleucid period; cf. Livingstone 1986 256). For the rituals from Mari, see below. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. See further, e.g., Witzel 1952; Gurney 1962; Yamauchi 1966. In light of this new consensus, scholars revisited the nineteenth century interpretation of the concluding passage of *Ištar’s Descent*, arguing that it is indeed a funerary text lamenting Dumuzi’s death, and not a description of his ascent from the netherworld. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. Kramer 1963, 514-515. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. Falkenstein 1965, 281; 1968, 107 ff.; and cf. Sladek 1974 who suggests reconstructing the root e11. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. Kramer 1966, and cf. the excerpt from Cyril of Alexandria cited above. In classical sources, however, no connection is drawn between the death of Adonis, and the division of his time between Aphrodite and Persephone (occurring before his death). See e.g., Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 3.14.4, and cf., Reed 2002, 220. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. This plot appears already in the Homeric hymn to Detemer. Cf. Alster 1996, 1, no 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. ETCSL 1.4.1, 407-409; and cf. Alster 1996. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. For additional texts, beside those mentioned in n. xxx, see Fritz 2003. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. For *Dumuzi and Geštinana*’s familiarity with motifs first introduced in *Inana’s Descent*, see Katz 1996; 2003, 294-300. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. See ll. 136-138 (Lapinkivi edition):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *ina ūmē Dumuzi ellânni malīl uqnî šemer sāmti ittišu ellânni* | When Dumuzi will rise to me, the lapis lazuli pipe and the carnelian ring will rise with him to me, |
| *ittišu ellânni bakkā’ū u bakkāyātu* | the male and female mourners will rise with him to me, |
| *mītūtu līlûnimma qutrinna liṣṣinū* | may the dead rise to me and smell the incense.  |

A comparison of several funerary texts nevertheless indicates that the concluding lines of *Ištar’s Descent* present a reverse order of the funerary ritual: first Dumuzi is dressed and anointed (ll. 127-130) and finally he and the dead are brought up from the netherworld (ll. 136-138). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. In addition to the studies mentioned in n. xxx above, cf. also Jeremias 1887, 7-8, who compares [p. 44] the playing of the flute mentioned in these lines to Mishnah Ketubot 4:4: “Rabbi Judah says: even the poorest man in Israel must provide no less than two flutes and one female mourner”. As mentioned above, this approach was reiterated by scholars from the 1960s and onwards – after most of *Inana’s Descent* as well as neo-Assyrian letters which mention the *Taklimtu* ritual, revolving around the figure of Dumuzi, being held at the end of the month of Duzu’u for three days, were published; see Yamauchi 1966, and cf. Sladek 1974, 46-47; Reiner 1985, 47; Dalley 2000, 154; Scurlock 1992. For the NA letters, see LAS 5 and 6, and see further n. xxx below. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. Katz 1996; 2003, 275-284; Alster 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. Cf. Parpola 1997, p. xciv, n. 127; Mettinger 2001, 201-202; Frahm 2003; Alster 2005-2006, 353-354; Cohen 2011, 262. By contrast, Durand 1995, 206-207 maintained that most occurrences of the name Dumuzi in the records from Mari do not refer to the Mesopotamian deity but rather to a god of Amorite provenance, who shares certain characteristics with the Mesopotamian Dumuzi and was thus referred to using the Mesopotamian name. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. For the text and (French) translation, see Marello 1992; Durand 1997, 147-151. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. Marello 1992 reconstructs *lā anāku* (‘am I not’…). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. Marello 1992 reconstructs *ina dīšim* (in the spring), and though many have agreed with him, there is no evidence to support it. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. Sumerian: kur-nu-gi4/gi; kur-nu-gi4/gi-a; kur-nu-gi4-gi4.For a discussion of the occurrences of these terms in Sumerian and Akkadian, see Horowitz 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. *Inana’s Descent* alternatively uses the Sumerian verb búr (“to release”) to describe Dumuzi’s rising from the netherworld. The analogous Akkadian verb *pašāru* may have later been incorporated into the name of the second day of the *Taklimtu* rituals held for Dumuzi in the first millennium BCE. The names of the ritual’s three days, mentioned in Neo-Assyrian letters (LAS 5 + LAS 6) were: 1) *killu* “day of wailing”; 2) *pašāru* “day of release”; and 3) Dumuzi (“day of Dumuzi).” The assumed relation between the name of the *Taklimtu* ritual’s second day – a ritual generally intended for human dead – and the rising of Dumuzi from the netherworld in *Inana’s Descent*, reveals again that Dumuzi’s semi-annual resurrection was interpreted in the only way known to Mesopotamians at that time: Dumuzi rises with other dead from the netherworld in order to participate in the ritual of his periodic descent. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. In another letter from Mari (*ARMT* 13, 29:9; *CAD* M2, 206a) the term *munûtum* refers to the end of a month-long period. Cf. the biblical term תקופת השנה (Ex 34:22) which is parallel to צאת השנה (Ex 23:16) – meaning the end of the year. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. Thus Durand 1997, 150, note n, but cf. Marello 1992, 120, n. l. By contrast, Frahm 2003, suggests that the verb is derived from the root *dekû (idakkûšu*) meaning “to arouse from sleep, to raise.” If this suggestion is correct, Mari’s version of Dumuzi’s resurrection would more closely resemble the resurrection of gods and men in Greek (ἐγείρω, ἀνίστημι), Phoenician (*q-w-m*), and Hebrew (*y-q-ṣ/q-y-ṣ, q-w-m*) texts from the first millennium BCE and CE. (For a discussion of these verbs, see Cook 2018, 7-30 and see more below). We lack, however, evidence of such a tradition regarding the gods of Syria and Mesopotamia in the second millennium BCE. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. Especially notable in this regard are the sophisticated letters of Nūr-Sîn the ambassador of Mari in Aleppo; see, e.g., Sasson 1994. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. Dossin 1975, 27-28; *AhW* 1346, s.v. *temrum*; *CAD* T, 419, s.v. *timru*; *CDA*, 404, s.v. *temrum*. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. Jacquet 2008, 410-411 and 418-419; 2011, 139; Charpin 2012, 77. Another conjugation of the root – *timirtum* – with a similar meaning, is also attested in Mari, and in the plural – *timrāni* – in a Neo-Assyrian letter (*CAD* T, s.v. *timirtu*, *timru*). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. For later evidence of funerary rituals connected to Dumuzi during these months, see n. … above. Kutscher 1990, 40 suggests that document *ARM* IX 175 from Mari – which prescribes a large amount of barley for female mourners (“3 *ugar* (=3600 *qa*) *še’um ana* mí.meš*bakkītim*”)and which is dated to Abu (= the fourth month) 9th – is also referring to a ritual mourning for Dumuzi’s death. However, an additional document from Mari, *ARM* XII 437, which is also dated to Abu 9th, mentions large amounts of products for the *Kipsum* ritual, thus supplying another explanation for the presence of female mourners on this date. Cf. Sasson 1979, 124; Mettinger 2001, 200-201 and n. 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. Charpin 1987, 599. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
47. Cf. Charpin 2012, 77. However, it cannot be ruled out that this line denotes the return of Dumuzi’s statue to its original place after it was used for a ritual in another temple; see Cohen 2015, 319 [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. Mettinger 2001, 201, n. 94 suggests that document A.512 (*ARMT* XXVI/3) from Mari which reports Dumuzi’s entrance into the temple of Anunnitum (ll. 7-15) may also reinforce the evidence from Ḫammi-ištamar’s letter. This text uses the hapax legomenon *pudûm*, which may derive from the root *padûm –* “to set free.” Although the context in which the term appears is not entirely clear, Mettinger notes that the analogous Hebrew root *p-d-y* denotes “to ransom” and therefore it has some connection to Dumuzi’s fate as portrayed in *Inana’s Descent*. Alster 2005-2006, however, finds the evidence unconvincing. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. As mentioned above (n…), a similar view is held by Durand 1995, 206-207. He, however, maintains that several cultures were familiar with the mythologem of dying and rising gods; among them were the Amorites and their tradition regarding Dumuzi. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. Cf., *inter alia*, Virolleaud 1931, 172; Dussaud 1931, 353-408. For further bibliographical sources, see de-Moor 1971, 212, n. 1; Ayali-Darshan 2017-2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
51. The Baal Cycle is composed of two parts, each constitutes an independent literary unit. The first tells of the combat between Baal and Yamm, the former’s coronation, and the construction of his palace, while the second tells of the combat between Baal and Mot. For the traditions which comprise the first unit, known from additional compositions prevalent in the ancient Near East, see Ayali-Darshan 2020a. *KTU* 1.4 COLUMN 42 bridges between the first literary unit and the second. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
52. Cf., e.g., Burkert 1979, 188 n. 14 who, after denying that Dumuzi was a resurrected god, 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.” J.Z. Smith 1987 and M.S. Smith 1998 argue that the lack of rituals of mourning or resurrection is evidence that Baal was not a dying and rising god, at least not according to Frazer’s criteria. The account of Baal’s death was explained either as an illusion “[it is] as if he is dead” (J.Z. Smith) or as a disappearance into the netherworld (M.S. Smith) – similar to the stories of disappearing gods that prevailed in Hatti. This is despite the fact that in the Hittite texts, as opposed to the Baal Cycle, no verbs denoting death or descending to the netherworld are employed, nor is there any mention of burial and mourning (for indeed the gods, in these contexts, have not actually died). Another interpretation of the Baal Cycle, also implicitly denying that Baal was a dying and rising god, was offered by de Moor 1971, 188-189. He maintained that the Baal Cycle is recounting how Baal deceived Mot by giving birth [literally? from a womb or from seed?] to a twin brother who descended into the netherworld in his place. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
53. Cf. Mettinger 2001, 15-17, 55-64, and the bibliography cited there. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
54. As the outcome of the last searching is the discovery of Mot, the god of the netherworld, one could assume that these searches took place in the netherworld as well (cf. Smith…). In these cases, however, the author does not describe the vistas of the netherworld, as he does elsewhere (KTU 1.4 VIII 1-12; 1.5 V 11-14), but rather a common mountainous terrain sets the scene. Since in contrast to the Mesopotamian view, Mot is not necessarily limited to the netherworld, this view is doubtful. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
55. For the occurrences of these motifs in Mesopotamian texts related to Dumuzi, see the relevant rubrics in the table prepared by Fritz 2003, 294-298. For a discussion of these motifs in relation to Osiris in Egypt, see Ayali-Darshan 2017-2019, 12-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
56. The translation follows Smith 1997, 158; Wyatt 2002, 137; Pardee 2003, 271. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
57. This narrative appears only in the Baal Cycle and seems to belong to an editorial stratum; see Ayali-Darshan 2013. For the double paternity of Baal, see there. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
58. Scholars are divided over the meaning of the lemma *pl.* The current translation, as an imperative feminine singular, is based on the root *p-l-y* in Aramaic, Mishnaic Hebrew, and Arabic, which means “to scrutinize” (thus Ginsberg 1933-1934, 115-116; Dussaud 1934, 204; Margalit 1980, 170; Wyatt 2002: 137). Others, however, have interpreted it as an adjective (“parched are the furrows…”) based on the Arabic *p-l-l* (> *f-l-l*) (thus Ginsberg 1969, 141; Driver 1956, 113, 163; de Moor 1971, 220; Smith 1997: 158; Pardee 2003: 271). For a discussion, see de Moor 1971. Both interpretations fit in context. Nevertheless, even if we follow the second suggestion, the question at the end of El’s speech (ll. 4-5), and the ensuing description of Šapšu (see above, l. 20) indicate that the author sought to portray the absence of Baal and the desire to find him. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
59. Scholars are even more sharply divided over the interpretation of the lemma *yštk*. For different suggestions, see Wyatt 2002, 138, n. 94. Many have followed Ginsberg, 1969, 141, translating “Baal is neglecting” but without any etymological basis. The translation above interprets the verb *yštk* as deriving from the root *n-t-k* (“to pour out”) in the Š stem. This interpretation also fits the instructions for the ritual at the end of *KTU* 1.12; Cf. de Moor and Spronk 1987, 156, s.v. *ntk*. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
60. The motif of the sun goddess searching in the netherworld fits well with the prevalent conception in the cultures of the Ancient Near East, including Ugarit, that the sun is one of the netherworld’s denizens, descending there every night. Cf. Healey 1980; Lewis 1989: 35-46; Ayali-Darshan 2020b. However, it is only in Ugarit that the motif of the search after the dead god is connected to the sun goddess. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
61. For this motif (which appears also in classical literature in relation to Demeter) cf. also Gaster 1961: 213-214, 220; 1969: 605–606, and see the references in n. xxx above. In contrast to the present passage, the author of the Baal Cycle separates between the scene of El’s mourning over the dead Baal (1.5 VI 1-25), and the scene of Baal’s body being found by Anat and Šapšu (1.6 I 8-15). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
62. For discussion, see…. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
63. Cf. Gordon 1949, 4-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
64. While the following lines are interpreted sometimes as a literary description of the weather, or as a curse (SCHOLARS), the context in which it appears – a hot and cloudy summer day during the seasonal ripening of crops – is typical of a Levantine summer, and does not conjure up images of a long drought. Therefore, this line seems to be a saying that was incorporated into the text simply to emphasize that the day was particularly hot. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
65. Cf. Driver 1956, 73, 153; Wyatt 2002, 166-167. For a discussion of the theme of seven-year cycles, which appears in other Ugaritic texts and in the Bible, see Gordon 1949, 4-5. In addition to the examples brough there, the seven-year cycle of the Zukru celebrations in Emar should be mentioned (see…). [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
66. Cf. de Moor 1987, 134; Tropper 1990, 47-48; Dietrich and Loretz 1997, 1211-1212; Wyatt 2002, 167-168. For other interpretations of this section, see Dietrich and Loretz 1997, n. 94. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
67. Mettinger 2001, and see also Cook 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
68. For a reevaluation of all the occurrences in Phoenician and Punic inscriptions, see Zamora 2017. For a discussion of the Phoenician verb *q-w-m*, denoting “rising after death” (in light of Biblical Hebrew), see Greenfield 1987, 397-399. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
69. The reconstruction and translation of the Greek phrase follow Clermont-Ganneau 1906; 1924a; 1924b; Lipiński 1970, 31, 56; 1995, 238-243; Mettinger 2001, 90-91; Cook 2018, 126-127. The same position is apparently referred to also in an inscription from Ascalon, which uses an identical formulation to that appearing in the Ramleh inscription. See Boehm and Eck 2012; Cook 2018, 127, n. 387. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
70. Cf. Zamora 2017, 82-83. For a different view, see Lipiński 1970, 33; Bonnet 1986, 215-216. The statement of Josephus (Ant. Jud. 8.5.3; and cf. *Contra Ap.,* 1.18) about king Hiram who was the first to celebrate the “awakening (ἔγερσις) of Heracles” in the month of Peritius is usually mentioned by scholars in this context. For a discussion, including the opposing approach which translates (without grounds) the Greek and Phoenician verbs as “the erecter of...,” see Mettinger 2001, 89-90; Cook 2018, 126-127. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
71. In addition to the mourning rites for the dying gods Tammuz (Ezekiel 8) and Hadad-Rimmon (Zechariah 12), since the end of the nineteenth century, Isa. 17:10-11 is often mentioned as referring to a resurrection rite, due to the ritual of נטעי נעמנים “planting of Naamanim,” occurring there: see Robertson-Smith 1887, 307, and the earlier bibliography there, followed by Frazer 1894, 280. The example above is much less discussed. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
72. For the Levantine mythological and ritual background of these verses, see further Weiser 1962, 762–763; Hvidberg 1962, 132–134; Anderson 1981, 865–866. They, however, were apparently unaware of the texts of Jerome and Origen. The fact that the beginning of Psalms 126 describes the returning of the god to his land, the joy of his people and the flooding of the wadies, is apparently related to the same mythologem. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
73. As we began with the patristic accounts of pagan practices in the Syro-Levantine region, it would only be fitting to conclude with two examples from the accounts of pagans themselves attesting to their own customs and literature. Lucian of Samosata (c.125 – after 180 CE) thus writes the following about the cult of Adonis in Byblos: “I also saw in Byblos a large temple of Byblian Aphrodite, in which they perform the ritual to Adonis. I also learnt the rites. They say that the affair of Adonis and the boar took place in their country, and in memory of the sad event they beat their breasts each year and lament and perform the rites, and there is much mourning throughout the country. after they have finished beating their breasts and lamenting, they first make offerings to Adonis as to the dead, and afterwards, on the next day, they claim that he lives and send him into the air (*de Dea Syria* 6; Lightfoot 2003, 250-251).” Likewise, Damascius (c. 458 – after 538 CE), the last scholarch of the Neoplatonic academy in Athens, writes the following about the Phoenician Eshmun: “The Asclepius of Berytus is neither Greek nor Egyptian but a local Phoenician […]. Being an extremely beautiful young man, ravishing to the eye, he was loved, according to the myth, by the Phoenician goddess Astronoe, the mother of the gods. He was hunting, as was his custom, in these glens when he saw the goddess chasing after him; as she continued her pursuit and was about to catch him, he fell into a state of frenzy and cut of his own organs of procreation with an axe. Devastated by grief at this misfortune, the goddess summoned paean and, reviving the youth with her life-giving warmth, she made him a god, called by the Phoenicians Eshmun after the warmth of life” (*Vita Isidori* frag. 142 B; Athanassiadi 1999, 315). While the influence of the classical Adonis on these two authors is certain, the resurrection of the protagonist is unique to Near Eastern sources (among pagans and patristic sources alike) and has no record in early classical sources. Cf. Burkert 1979, 101 and n. ‎10; Reed 2002, 220 and n. ‎4. For a discussion of these sources and further bibliography, see Mettinger 2001, 131-137, 155-164. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
74. Regarding Babylon, note that the same interpretation for the single use of the *lex talionis* principle in the Code of Hammurabi of the Old-Babylonian period as well as the transmission of the Cedar Forest in the *Gilgamesh* epic from the east to Lebanon, was suggested by Lambert 1987, 313–314. According to him, these are originally Western-Semitic motifs that made their way to Babylon with the Amorites. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
75. Similar to the principle of *lex talionis* in Babylonian law, which occurs once in the Old Babylonian period (see n. xxx above), just to disappear later without leaving a trace. This new, imported motif was also not accepted in Mesopotamian culture. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
76. Cf., Katz 2003, 163. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
77. Therefore, the account of Baal in the Ugaritic Baal Cycle cannot be considered the first belonging to this mythologem, but rather the first extant instance. We may assume that in other versions of this account, the goddess – the spouse or sister of the dying and rising god – played an important role, as is evidenced in Mari and later Near Eastern texts. Similarly, the first part of the Baal Cycle, which recounts Baal’s combat with Yamm, is silent regarding the role played by the goddess in the combat, as opposed to other versions of the story, in which she is one of the protagonists (see Ayali-Darshan 2020a). [↑](#footnote-ref-78)