## 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 and thus, this evidence played no role in earlier debates about Dumuzi’s status as a dying and rising god. After their publication, however, the documents from Mari were often cited as further evidence of the mythologem’s vitality within Mesopotamian culture. [[1]](#footnote-1) Three documents are relevant for our purposes:

1. A letter sent by Ḫammi-ištamar – the head of the Uprapu tribe a subset of the Amorite Bini-Yamina tribes – to his companion Yasmaḫ-Addu head of the Yariḫu tribe. In this letter, Ḫammi-ištamar casually compares his close shaves with death over the course of several battles, to the life and death of the god Dumuzi:[[2]](#footnote-2)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | As for me, look at me, I [have] almost [been k]i[lled], |
|  | I escaped fr[om de]ath! [Fr]om the mi[dst] |
|  | of Aḫuna, during the rebellion, [I escaped] 10 times! |
|  | Now, why [am I not] like Dumuz[i]? –  |
|  | At the end of the year[[3]](#footnote-3) they kill him, [and at the time of …[[4]](#footnote-4)] |
|  | he keeps returning to the temple of Annunitum. |

Dumuzi’s periodic return from the land of the dead to the temple of the goddess Annunitum, is expressed using the verb *târu “*to return” in the Gtn stem which expresses iterative action. As the netherworld is referred to in Mesopotamian literature as the “Land of No-Return,”[[5]](#footnote-5) the use of this particular verb to describe Dumuzi’s resurrection is particularly fitting (as opposed to the Sumerian verb búr used to describe Dumuzi’s liberation from the netherworld in *Inana’s Descent*).[[6]](#footnote-6) Moreover, it is likely that the choice to describe the time of Dumuzi’s return using the expression *munût šattim* – literally “counting of the year” – attests to the recurring character of this return. To describe the death of Dumuzi, the author uses the root *dâkum* (to kill) in an uncharacteristic משקל (a). For this reason, some have interpreted it as deriving from the root *dakāšum* (to stab) reading *idakkušū[šu]* accordingly. This, however, would constitute an exceptional tradition regarding the circumstances of Dumuzi’s death.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Besides its unique content, the document is important for two further reasons: first, its genre. As it is a letter, there is no concern that one of the two parts of the idea – the death or resurrection – represents the interpolation of a later scribe or a copyist; one can certainly make such a claim about a literary work, which naturally accrues additions and expansions over time. The passing mention of Dumuzi in this letter is the work of a single hand at a single time, and thus the mention of the deity’s death *and* resurrection is particularly significant.

Second, the identity of the letter’s sender: unlike letters written by temple or palace functionaries which may preserve various mythologems and literary themes (especially notable in this regard are the learned letters of Nūr-Sîn the ambassador of Mari in Aleppo),[[8]](#footnote-8) the sender of the present letter, Ḫammi-ištamar, was the head of a semi-nomadic Amorite tribe. He incorporated curses and vulgarisms into his letter, berating his correspondent to maintain his loyalty to the nomadic ethos. This would suggest that the notion of Dumuzi as a resurrected god was widespread among common people as well and not solely relegated to the purview of ritual or to scribal schools.

Lend support to the impression that the people of Mari regarded Dumuzi as a dying and rising god, and that such events were commemorated in temples, as alluded to in Ḫammi-ištamars letter, are two economic lists from Mari:

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

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| One *qa* of oil |  |
| for the bathing of (the statue of) Ištar.  |  |
| 15 shekelsof oil |  |
| for the burial |  |
| of (the statue of) Dumuzi. |  |
| Month of Abu, day 19th, |  |
| year in which Zimri-līm |  |
| offered a great th[ro]ne for <Šamaš> (=4th year of Zimri-Līm). |  |

When this tablet was first published in the 1970s, Dossin believed that the word *temrum* (l. 4) was a hapax legomenon. He therefore interpreted it as “cleansing” – paralleling the “bathing” of Ištar’s in the previous line. Three Akkadian dictionaries – on the basis of Sumerian-Akkadian lexicons – have offered another interpretation: they suggest that the term denotes a cultic meal of roasted fish, or alternatively the coals used for this purpose.[[9]](#footnote-9) In 2011, however, Jacquet suggested that the word *temrum* could be traced to the Akkadian root *temērum* “to bury” (Charpin concurred).[[10]](#footnote-10) Since this verb is used specifically to refer to the burial of objects, including statuettes and magical paraphernalia, it is particularly appropriate in the context of a ritual burial of Dumuzi’s statue.

The date appearing on the tablet is 19 Abu; Abu denotes the fourth month in the economic records from Mari. By contrast, epistolographic documents from Mari refer to the same month using the name Dumuzi, as was the practice in the Assyrian calendar commonly used in Mari before the reign of Zimri-līm. As 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.[[11]](#footnote-11)

3. A ritual in honor of Dumuzi’s return is indicated by Document 14 published in 1987 in MARI 5:[[12]](#footnote-12)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ½ qa of oil […] |  |
| for the *gibbum*-rite. |  |
| […] |  |
| ½ qa of ‘oil of the head’ from Mari  |  |
| for Dumuz[i] |  |
| when he retu[rn]ed. |  |
| Month *Bēlet-b*[*īri*], |  |
| day 9,  |  |
| […] |  |

That this is referring to the return of Dumuzi from the land of the dead is based on lines 9-10 which read: *ana Dumuzi inūma itu*[*rru*].It is true that these lines can be understood prosaically as describing the return of Dumuzi’s statue to its original place after it was used for a ritual in another temple.[[13]](#footnote-13) However, because the word *târu* is used to describe Dumuzi’s resurrection in Ḫammi-ištamar’s letter, and because the accepted term for the netherworld is *erṣet lā târi*, this may be the intention here as well.[[14]](#footnote-14) If this theory is correct, then we have 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.[[15]](#footnote-15)

These two lists may 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 be marshalled to support the possibility that in the eighteenth century Dumuzi was considered a dying and rising god throughout Mesopotamia – as many scholars had previously believed. That being said, the dominance of Amorite tribes in Mari, Mari’s geographical proximity to both Mesopotamia and Syria, and the semi-nomadic identity of Ḫammi-ištamar – not to mention, the general rarity of this mythologem in the culture to the east of Mari – must be taken into account. Perhaps the presence of the mythologem in Mari is not the result of Mesopotamian influence emanating from the east; perhaps it represents part of the Western-Semitic heritage of the Amorite tribes.[[16]](#footnote-16)

## A Dying and Rising God in the Levant: A Short History of the Scholarship, and the Textual Evidence

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 on the basis of texts from late antiquity. For this reason, in the first years after the publication of the Ugaritic Baal Cycle, scholars maintained that the god Mot – the description 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) – was an analogue to Tamuz and Adonis mentioned by writers in late antiquity in the context of agricultural rituals.[[17]](#footnote-17)

However, as the study of the Baal Cycle developed, it became clear that the mythologem of dying and rising gods was more closely associated with the god Baal. The relevant passages extend from the beginning of the cycle’s second part, until its end, constituting a single literary unit.[[18]](#footnote-18) Indeed, influenced by the opposition to Frazer’s sweeping conclusions, some wished to ignore the explicit description of Baal’s death and resurrection. While some claimed that the text was too fragmentary, and could bear other interpretations, others pointed to the lack of ritual activity connected to the mythologem – the central aspect of Frazer’s claim.[[19]](#footnote-19) However, as already mentioned by others, these doubts are not borne out by a simple reading of the text.[[20]](#footnote-20) The Baal Cycle incorporates several traditions about the circumstances of Baal’s death. In passing it recounts how he was violently consumed by his enemy Mot (1.6 II 13-23) alongside a planned descent to the netherworld with his גשמיו ורוחותיו (KTU 1.5 V) and his burial in the graves of the gods (1.6 I 15-31). It describes his family members – his father El (1.5 VI 1-25) and his sister Anat (1.5 VI 25 – 1.6 I 8) – mourning over his death. Moreover, it describes how the gods searched for his body – both in the netherworld (1.6 I 8-15) and elsewhere (1.6 II 4-9; 26-30).[[21]](#footnote-21) If the Baal Cycle would simply conclude at this point this would be no cause for surprise. Traditions of dying gods from both Mesopotamia and Egypt are well-attested. In those cases as well, the young god dies (sometimes during the harvest), is mourned by his family members, and searched for in the netherworld and elsewhere.[[22]](#footnote-22) It can be surmised that the Ugaritic account was influenced – directly or otherwise – by these traditions. However, unlike the Mesopotamian and Egyptian accounts the Baal Cycle continues, going on to describe – at some length – Baal’s resurrection. Surprisingly, this process mirrors that of the god’s death, but in reverse: the resurrection of the hero is symbolized by the return of crops, family members rejoice over the resurrection, and they search for the living god.

Since the lines which actually describe Baal’s resurrection have not been preserved, we are forced to infer events from subsequent lines. These recount how El revealed that his son Baal had returned to life – he dreamed of the heavens and the wadies full of crops (contrasting with the disappearance of the rains into the netherworld along with Baal in KTU 1.5 V) and rejoiced greatly (contrasting with his extensive mourning over Baal’s death in KTU 1.5 VI 1-25):[[23]](#footnote-23)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | In the dream of Beneficent El, the Gracious-One, |
|  | in the vision of the Creator of creatures, |
|  | the heavens rained oil, |
|  | the wadies ran with honey. |
|  | Beneficent El, the Gracious-One rejoiced; |
|  | He placed his feet on the footstool, |
|  | he unknitted (his) brow and laughed.  |
|  | He raised his voice and declared: |
|  | “(At last) I can sit, and I can rest, |
|  | and my spirit can rest in my breast, |
|  | for Mighty Baal is alive, |
|  | the Ruler, Lord of the Land, exists”. |

The use of the root *ḥ-y* (“to live”) in the G construction clearly shows that it is Baal being resurrected, as it was he who was described in the previous lines (e.g., 1.5 VI 8-10) as dying (Ugaritic *npl lˀarṣ*; *mt*; *ḫlq*) and being buried in the graves of the gods. El’s joy upon the resurrection of his son, reminiscent of the celebrations held for the god’s resurrection in late antiquity, further attest to this. However, it should be borne in mind that El’s joy over his son’s resurrection, like his mourning over his death, contradicts the primary narrative of the Baal Cycle – i.e., that Baal the son of Dagan is El’s enemy, siding with his children.[[24]](#footnote-24) This suggests that the motif of El’s mourning and joy is not the author’s own invention. Rather it was an inseparable part of the mythologem of a dying and rising god in Ugarit and the author borrowed the motif, as is, from an existing tradition.

Immediately after this, the tablet goes 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 in the fields:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | (Then) El called aloud to Adolescent  |
|  | Anat: “Listen, O Adolescent Anat,  |
|  | say to Šapšu, the Luminary of gods:  |
|  | ‘Look at[[25]](#footnote-25) the furrows of the fields, O Šapšu, |
|  | look at the furrows of the vast fields. Does Baal water[[26]](#footnote-26) |
|  | the furrows of the ploughland?  |
|  | Where is Mighty Baal? |
|  | Where is the Ruler, the Lord of the Land?’” |

The text continues with Anat, following El’s instructions and appealing to Šapšu, (ll. (6-16). The latter agrees to search for Baal:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Šapšu, the Luminary of gods, replied: |
|  | “Pour sparkling wine from the chalice,  |
|  | put garlands on your kinfolk, |
|  | for I will search for Baal.” |

The search for the living Baal thus corresponds to the search for the dead Baal – as well as to the general motif of searching for a dead god, mentioned in the contemporary texts from Egypt and Mesopotamia as well as by those from late antiquity.[[27]](#footnote-27) Moreover, Šapšu searches for the living Baal in the fields at Anat’s behest, just as she searched for the dead Baal in the netherworld (1.6 I 8-5).[[28]](#footnote-28),[[29]](#footnote-29) Here, too, El's intercession in Baal’s favor deviates from the general narrative of the Baal Cycle, indicating that the motif was borrowed from an existing tradition.

The remaining lines are broken, and we therefore do not know how Baal was found. In the next column he has already begun to vanquish his enemies, the children of Asherah, and to reassume his place on the royal throne (V 1-8). As both the first literary unit in the Baal cycle end in this fashion (1.4 VII 33-42), and the current literary unit ends this way as well (1.6 VI), this may represent the early ending of the unit.[[30]](#footnote-30)

The contents of the Baal Cycle thus demonstrate that the mythologem of a dying and rising god was known in Ugarit, and was applied directly to the storm god, Baal. Since the Baal Cycle also narrates the death of the god 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. That being said, scholars have rightly noted that no Ugaritic ceremonies connected to Baal's death and resurrection have been forthcoming. Moreover – unlike Ḫammi-ištamar’s letter from Mari and the final lines of *Inana’s Descent* from Mesopotamia – the Baal Cycle itself makes no indication of an annual recurrence.[[31]](#footnote-31) Furthermore, it may be assumed that Baal’s absence lasted for seven years – as was the case for Mot. Evidence of this can be adduced from a popular saying incorporated into *The Tale of Aqhat* which connects Baal’s absence to a lengthy drought – as in the Baal Cycle:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Seven years |  |
| Baal is missing, eight |  |
| (years), the Rider of clouds. No dew, no downpour, |  |
| No swirling of the deeps, no |  |
| Goodly voice of Baal (= thunders). |  |

The context in which this description appears in *Aqhat* – a hot and cloudy summer day, during the seasonal ripening of crops, typical of a Middle Eastern summer, does not conjure up images of a drought. Rather it seems that the saying was incorporated into the text simply to emphasize that the day was particularly hot.

A similar idea can be found in *KTU* 1.12, which recounts the violent encounter between Baal and a group of entities called “the Eaters and the Tearers.” Though the text is fragmentary, precluding a full understanding of context, there seems to be some connection between the seven years of Baal’s death and the dryness of the fields.[[32]](#footnote-32) This text concludes with a ritual – primarily revolving around water.[[33]](#footnote-33)

\*

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 the culture, literature, language, and rituals of the Levant is dramatically diminished. Moreover, the Israelite culture – which often serves in scholarship as the only witness to Levantine literature during the first millennium – rejected, like contemporary Mesopotamian culture, the mythologem of dying and rising gods. For this reason, the Hebrew Bible rarely refers to it. Nevertheless, and as Mettinger has shown again in his book, in Phoenician culture the mythologem was prevalent – not only as a literary theme but as a ritual one as well.[[34]](#footnote-34) Perhaps the clearest example of this is the maintenance of cultic personnel called the *mqm ˀlm* in Phoenician and Punic cities. The literal meaning of the title is the “raiser (Phoenician *q-w-m* in the causative conjugation) of the deity.”[[35]](#footnote-35) In light of the Greek translation of this position – ἐγερσε[ίτης] – appearing on inscriptions from Philadelphia/Amman and Ramleh – it is likely that the meaning “The Awakener of the Deity” is even more appropriate.[[36]](#footnote-36) It should be further noted that though in two different inscriptions – one Phoenician the other Greek – the position holder is referred to as “The Awakener (*mqm*/ἐγερσε[ίτης]) of Herakles/Ml(qr)t,” other inscriptions do not require that the action of awakening be directed towards Melqrat alone.[[37]](#footnote-37)

Further evidence for the ritual use of the dying and rising gods mythologem can be found, surprisingly enough, in Israelite culture. Although the Israelites rejected the mythologem itself, traces of the agricultural rituals underlying it have been preserved. This is evidenced by the verses that conclude Psalms 122 which indicate the existence of an agricultural ritual identical to that described by Origen and Jerome hundreds of years later: “Those who sow in tears do reap with songs of joy. The one who carries the seed-bag weeps as he goes; the one who carries his sheaves comes with songs of joy.”[[38]](#footnote-38) These verses, which cannot be understood without recourse to the agricultural ritual described by Origen and Jerome (see quotes above), show how deeply entrenched the mythologem of dying and rising gods was among Western Semitic peoples – even among the Israelites who ostensibly rejected it.

The shortage of evidence from the Levant ends in late antiquity, especially with the rise of Christianity. Pagan texts and patristic polemics against them were committed to writing, preserved, copied, and transmitted to future generations, in similar fashion to the books of the Bible. Unsurprisingly, we are once again treated to a surfeit of testimonies recording the traditions of dying and rising gods that prevailed in the Middle East – some of which I have cited above.[[39]](#footnote-39) These are the testimonies that led Frazer and his predecessors to assume that in antiquity all the peoples of the Middle East believed in dying and rising gods.

## Conclusions

Having analyzed accounts from Mesopotamia, Mari, and the Levant, we can return to the question with which we opened the present article: does the evidence from Mari reinforce the notion that Dumuzi was considered a dying and rising god in Mesopotamia, or perhaps it represents the first evidence of a prevalent mythologem among Western-Semitic peoples?

Though epigraphic materials from Mesopotamia abound, the sole piece of evidence of Dumuzi's rise from the netherworld appears at the end of a literary work from the eighteenth-century BCE. In addition, there are some accounts that indicate a rejection of this mythologem, and many that indicate its absence. By contrast, in the Levant, despite the relative paucity of epigraphic findings, and despite the rejection of this mythologem in biblical literature, more than one document indicates that the notion of the deity’s resurrection was prevalent in Ugarit in the second millennium and in the Phoenician cultures of the first. Indeed these findings do not necessarily preclude the origins of the mythologem in Mesopotamia; though it seems not to have stricken roots there, it may have spread from there to cultures to the west and the south, such as Mari and Ugarit. It seems, however, more likely – and this is what I would like to cautiously suggest in the present article – that the mythologem of a dying and rising god, first originated among Western-Semitic cultures, and from there spread to the north and the east. Because writing technologies spread from Mesopotamia southwards, and due to the events that took place thousands of years after the circulation of writing – first the late antique synchronization between Tamuz and Adonis, and some two thousand years later due to the trends in scholarship that drew parallels between them – it happened that before even one tablet was discovered in Ugarit, scholars were already familiar with the mythologem of dying and rising gods that prevailed in Ugarit and the Levant; they mistakenly attributed it to Mesopotamian literature, even though it seems clear that that culture had a much stronger preference for the mythologem of a dying god.

If this proposal is correct then the circulation of the mythologem of dying and rising gods in Western Asia can be tentatively summarized as follows: In Mesopotamia (as well as in Egypt) the prevailing mythologem in the third millennium describes the descent of a god into the netherworld. This event is attended by mourning and a search for the dead god and is connected to the crops and especially the harvest. Cultures in the Levant were exposed to these traditions from neighboring peoples – as evidenced by the similarity between Ugaritic traditions and their parallels in Egypt and Mesopotamia. Besides, however, simply applying the mythologem to their own gods, the peoples of the Levant added a new motif: the god returns from the netherworld. This return echoes the characteristics of his death: the living god is searched for by his family members, and his resurrection is linked to the growth of crops. Due, however, to the gradual spread of literacy first in Mesopotamia and only afterwards westwards and southwards, the first cultures to record the mythologem were Mari and Babylon – where Amorite tribes had established their kingdoms toward the end of the third millennium and at the beginning of second. Only at a later period, when Ugarit began to use the local script, can examples from the Levant itself be added to this list. As mentioned above, a similar assumption is made about various customs and mythologies such as intuitive prophecy, the treaty ritual “*qatālum ḫayaram*”, the Zukrum festival and the myth of Baal vs. the Sea; though evidence of these customs in the Levant is relatively late, they seem to have arrived in Mari with the Amorites.[[40]](#footnote-40)

As the findings from Mesopotamia shows, the motif of a god returning from the netherworld was not accepted among writers and priests.[[41]](#footnote-41) This is perhaps due to the well-entrenched characterization of Dumuzi as a dead god in Mesopotamia, and perhaps also 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 – as it was destroyed at the hands of Hammurabi, we have no way of knowing how the mythologem developed there. However, the existence of two pieces of evidence attesting to Dumuzi’s return, one of which was written by the head of an Amorite tribe, suggests that the Amorite immigrants continued to maintain this belief even in their new settlements. It is not surprising that the object of this mythologem is Dumuzi who was regarded as a dying god in Mesopotamia at that time.[[42]](#footnote-42) It is difficult to know, however, whether this represents the adoption of the Mesopotamian Dumuzi, or the use of his name as an ideogram to denote another Amorite god who functioned as a dying and rising god. In the Levant, the mythologem’s birthplace – we can now advance its terminus post quem to the years before the eighteenth century[[43]](#footnote-43) – it continued to develop and diversify over the course of thousands of years. It influenced neighboring cultures and was in turn influenced by them, from the beginning of the second millennium to the end of antiquity, and perhaps even until the present day.

1. 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-1)
2. For original text and French translation, see Marello 1992; Durand 1997, 147-151. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In another letter from Mari (ARMT 13, 29:9; CAD M2, 206a) the term *munûtum* refers to the end of a month-long period; literally it means: “counting the period of month/year.” 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-3)
4. Marello 1992, adds *ina dīšim* (in the spring), and though many have agreed with him, there is no evidence to back up such a reading. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Sumerian: kur-nu-gi4/gi; kur-nu-gi4/gi-a; kur-nu-gi4-gi4; Akkadian: *erṣet/māt lā târi* , meaning, whoever arrives in the netherworld (kur; *erṣetum*; *mātum)* does not return from there (nu-gi4; *lā târi*). For a discussion of the occurrences of these terms in Sumerian and Akkadian, see Horowitz 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The analogous Akkadian verb *pašāru* may have later been incorporated into the name of one of the days of the Taklimtu rituals held for Dumuzi in the first millennium BCE. The names of the ritual’s first three days, mentioned in Neo-Assyrian letters (LAS 5 + LAS 6) are: 1) *killu* “day of wailing”; 2) *pašāru* “day of release”; and 3) Dumuzi “day of dumuzi.” If there is indeed a relationship between the name of the Taklimtu ritual’s second day (a ritual intended for all of humanity’s dead) and the description of Dumuzi’s rise from the netherworld in *Inana’s Descent* – this may constitute yet another proof that the mythologem of Dumuzi’s resurrection was interpreted in the only way known to Mesopotamians at that time: Dumuzi rises with other dead souls from the netherworld in order to participate in the ritual of his periodic descent (as opposed to a semi-annual resurrection). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 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. (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-7)
8. See, e.g., Sasson 1994. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Dossin 1975, 27-28; *AhW* 1346, s.v. *temrum*; CAD T, 419, s.v. *timru*; CDA, 404, s.v. *temrum*. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Jacquet 2008, 410-411 and 418-419; 2011, 139; Charpin 2012, 77. Another stem [נטייה, not sure AK] 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-10)
11. Kutscher 1990, 40 has suggested that document Arm IX 175 – which prescribes a large amount of barley for female mourners – “ *ugar (=3600 qa) še’um ana* mí.meš*bakkītim*”and which is dated to 9 Abu (the fourth month) – is also describing a mass ritual mourning for Dumuzi’s death. However, the document ARM XII 437 – also dated to 9 Abu and also mentioning large amounts of basic goods for the *Kipsum* ritual – indicates that there may be other explanations for the presence of female mourners. Cf. Sasson 1979, 124; Mettinger 2001, 200-201 and n. 91. For later evidence of funerary rituals connected to Dumuzi during these months, see n. … above. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Charpin 1987. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Cf. Cohen 2015, 319. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Charpin 2012, 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Mettinger 2001, 201, n. 94 suggests that tablet A.512 (*ARMT* XXVI/3) which reports Dumuzi’s entrance into the temple of Anunnitum (ll. 7-15) seems to reinforce the evidence from Ḫammi-ištamar’s letter. This tablet uses the hapax legomenon *pudûm*, which may derive from the root *padûm –* “to set free.” Even though the context in which the word appears is not entirely clear, Mettinger notes that the root *p-d-y* as “to ransom” is unique to Hebrew and may have some connection to Dumuzi’s fate as portrayed in *Inana’s Descent*. Alster 2005-2006, however, finds the evidence unconvincing. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. A similar view was voiced by Durand 1995, 206-207. He, however, maintains that several cultures were familiar with the mythologem of dying and rising gods, and therefore considered the Amorite tradition of Dumuzi unexceptional in this regard. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. See for instance, Virolleaud 1931, 172; Dussaud 1931, 353-408. For further bibliographical sources, see de-Moor 1971, 212, n. 1; Ayali-Darshan 2017-2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. The first part of the Baal Cycle constitutes an originally independent literary unit, based on an account of the war between the storm god [Baal?] and Yam, the former’s coronation, and the construction of his palace – another prevalent tradition in the ancient Near East. For the traditions which comprise this unit, see Ayali-Darshan 2020a. Line 42 on tablet KTU 1.4 bridges between the first literary unit and the second, the latter recounting Baal’s struggle with Mot, based on a set of traditions different from those which comprise the first part of the Baal Cycle. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Cf. for instance, Burkert 1979, 188 n. 14 who, after denying that Dumuzi was a resurrected god, writes: “A new dying god turned up with Ugaritic Baal [punctuation?] The Fragments [capitalized in source?] of the Baal poems can be arranged to fit a seasonal pattern […]. In view of the desperately fragmentary texts this must remain hypothetical.” The lack of rituals was adduced as evidence by J.Z. Smith 1987 and M.S. Smith 1998 that Baal was not a dying and rising god, at least not according to Frazer’s criteria. The description of Baal’s death was explained either as an illusion “[it is] as if he is dead” (J.Z. Smith) or as a real 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 Hattian [or Hittite?] texts (as opposed to the Baal Cycle) no verbs denoting death are employed nor is any mention made of “descending into the netherworld.” There is, needless to say, no mention of burial (for indeed the gods, in these contexts, have not actually died). Since these scholars interpreted Baal’s death as a mere disappearance, they had no need to pay any particular attention to his resurrection, which is nothing more than a return from his absence. 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: Baal bore a twin brother who descended into the netherworld in his place. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Cf. Mettinger 2001, 15-17, 55-64, and the bibliography cited there . [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. As their outcome is the discovery of Mot, god of the netherworld, one could perhaps assume that these searches took place in the netherworld as well. In these instances, 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) in which Baal and his emissary descend into the netherworld. Instead a normal mountainous terrain sets the scene. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. For a discussion of these motifs as they apply to the Mesopotamian Dumuzi, see the relevant rubrics in the table prepared by Fritz 2003, 294-298. For funerary rituals held in his honor during the harvest, see CT 58.21 (Old Babylonian; cf. Katz 2003, 162-165); VAT 10099 (Neo-Assyrian; cf. Livingstone 1986, 116-121). For a discussion of these motifs in relationship to Osiris in Egypt, see Ayali-Darshan 2017-2019, 12-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. This translation from the Baal Cycle follows Smith 1997, 158; Wyatt 2002, 137; Pardee 2003, 271. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. This narrative appears only in the Baal cycle, and belongs it seems to a later redactionary layer. See Ayali-Darshan 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Scholars are divided over the meaning of the word *pl.* The current translation, as imperative f.s., 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 an extensive discussion of these interpretations and of others, see de Moor 1971. Both interpretations fit in context, and it is thus difficult to decide in favor of one or the other. However, even if we follow the second suggestion, the question at the end of El’s words, and the ensuing description of Šapšu (see above) illustrate that the author wished to indicate the absence of Baal and the desire to find him – similar to the descriptions of Baal’s death. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Scholars are even more sharply divided over the interpretation of this word. 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 causative conjugation Š. 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-26)
27. For this motif (which appears 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. This is most likely due to the prevalent conception in many ancient Near Eastern cultures, including Ugarit, that the sun goddess is one of the most exalted denizens of the netherworld, descending there each night. Cf. Healey 1980; Lewis 1989: 35-46; Ayali-Darshan 2020b. However, it is only in Ugarit that the motif of a search is connected to the sun goddess. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. It should be noted that in contrast to the present passage, the author, when he describes the search for the deceased Baal, separates between the scene of El’s mourning (1.5 VI 1-25), and the scene of his body being found by Anat and Šapšu (1.6 I 8-15). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Cf. Ayali-Darshan 2020b. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Cf. Gordon 1949, 4-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. 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. To these examples, the seven-year cycle of the Emar and Zukru celebrations should be added. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. 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-33)
34. Mettinger 2001, and see his extensive discussion and preliminary [מוקדמת?] bibliography. For full citation of the texts from the Hellenistic and Roman periods discussed by Mettinger, and for an additional bibliography, see Cook 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. For a recent discussion 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-35)
36. 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. It is likely the same position being referred to in an inscription from Ashkelon, which uses an identical formulation to that appearing in the Ramle inscription. See Boehm and Eck 2012; Cook 2018, 127, n. 387. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Cf. Zamora 2017, 82-83. For a different view, see Lipinski 1970, 33; Bonnet 1986, 215-216. In this context, the testimony of Josephus (Ant. Jud.) is traditionally cited. Ddd8.5.3; and cf. *Contra Ap.,* 1.18). Josephus claims that the king of Hiram was the first to celebrate the “awakening (ἔγερσις) of Heracles” in the month of Peritius. For a summary, including a discussion of an opposing approach which translates the Greek and Phoenician verbs as “the erecter of...” see Mettinger 2001, 89-90; Cook 2018, 126-127. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. For the Levantine mythological and ritual background of these verses, see: Weiser1962, 762–763; Hvidberg 1962, 132–134; Anderson 1981, 865–866. They, however, were apparently unaware of the texts of Jerome and Origen. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. As we began with the patristic accounts of pagan practices in the Levant and Egypt, 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 writes the following about the cult of Adonis in Byblos:... Likewise, Damascius, the last scholarch of the Neoplatonic academy in Athens, writes the following about the Phoenician Eshmun:... While the impact of the classical story of Adonis on these two authors is certain, the resurrection of the protagonist is unique to Middle Eastern sources (among pagans and patristic sources alike) and has no record in early classical sources. On this, cf. Burkert 1979, 101 and n. ‎10; Reed 2002, 220 and n. ‎4. For a discussion of the sources and further bibliography, see Mettinger 2001, 131-137, 155-164. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Furthermore, this was already suggested (cf. Lambert 1987, 313–314) in reference to the single use of *lex talionis* in Babylonian law – i.e., it is originally a Western-Semitic motif that made its way to Babylon with the Amorites. It was only recorded in the Code of Hammurabi, and in the place of the cedar forest [?] in a version of the *Epic of* *Gilgameš* from the Old Babylonian Period, from Iran and Lebanon, which also originates in this area. [לא ברור לי]. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Similar to the principle of *lex talionis* in Babylonian law, which appears nowhere else besides the Code of Hammurabi (see n. xxx above). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Cf., Katz 2003, 163. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. It goes without saying that the story Ugaritic Baal Cycle is not the first story belonging to this genre, but rather the first to reach us in near complete form. We may assume that in other versions of the story from the second millennium importance was ascribed to Alah [? A name or just generic “goddess”], the wife of the dying and rising god, as the evidence from Mari and later Middle Eastern accounts indicate. Similarly, in the first part of the Baal Cycle, which recounts Baal’s war with Yam, the role played by the goddess is quite modest. This is as opposed to other versions of the story, in which she is one of the protagonists (see Ayali-Darshan 2020a). [↑](#footnote-ref-43)