Between 1987 and 2001, three documents from Mari were published and re-interpreted. They testify that this culture viewed the god Dumuzi as a dying and rising god. One of the documents is a letter from the 12th year of Zimri-līm’s reign (from the first half of the 18th c. BCE), composed by the chief of a semi-nomadic Amorite tribe. It casually mentions the death and rise of Dumuzi. The other two documents are commercial in nature. One notes Dumuzi’s burial date during the fourth year of Zimri-līm’s reign; the other, his rising. Since before the publication of these documents, we had only one testimony in cuneiform concerning the rising of Dumuzi from Sheol in contrast with innumerable ones about his death; the Mari testimonies have great importance in understanding the mythology of Dumuzi in Mesopotamia in particular and that of the dying and rising gods in Western Asia in general. However, the fact that these testimonies for this mythology were found precisely in Mari, and that the significant one was included in a letter written by an Amorite tribal chiefs (and not, for example by an ambassador or priest), raises the question about the source of this mythology in Mari: In light of Dumuzi being a Mesopotamian name, one should seek its source in Mesopotamian culture to Mari’s east. Or perhaps its mythological source is in Amorite tribes that migrated from the Levant to Mari at the end of the third millennium. Researchers have long examined the West-Semitic characteristics of the Amorite culture of Mari, whose sources were in the neighboring cultures of Syria and the Levant. Is it possible that we have before us another such characteristic?

To discuss this question, I will quickly survey the testimonies we have concerning the existence of dying and rising gods from both sides of Mari. I will start with data from Mesopotamia that are among the first discoveries in modern cuneiform studies. I will continue with comparatively newer ones from Mari, and then examine data from the Levant. In light of these findings, I would like to propose a new perspective on the question of dying and rising gods in general, and the question of Dumuzi’s resurrection in particular; questions that have been preoccupying research since the end of the 19th century.