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## Drought, death and the sun in Ugarit and ancient Israel

### A philological and comparative study

Wikander, Ola

2014

*Document Version:*

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Wikander, O. (2014). *Drought, death and the sun in Ugarit and ancient Israel: A philological and comparative study*. (Coniectanea Biblica, Old Testament Series; Vol. 61). Eisenbrauns.

*Total number of authors:*

1

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*A Philological and Comparative Study*

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CONIECTANEA BIBLICA  
OLD TESTAMENT SERIES 61

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**CB**

CONIECTANEA BIBLICA  
OLD TESTAMENT SERIES

61

ISSN 0069-8954

Editors:

Fredrik Lindström and Göran Eidevall

# Drought, Death, and the Sun in Ugarit and Ancient Israel

*A Philological and Comparative Study*

Ola Wikander

Winona Lake, Indiana

EISENBRAUNS

2014

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www.eisenbrauns.com

Printed in the United States of America

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Wikander, Ola.

Drought, death, and sun in Ugarit and ancient Israel : a philological and comparative study / by Ola Wikander.

pages cm. — (Coniectanea biblica. Old Testament series, ISSN 0069-8954 ; 61)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-57506-827-5 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Ugaritic literature--Relation to the Old Testament. 2. Ugarit (Extinct city)—Religion. 3. Bible. Old Testament—Comparative studies. 4. Droughts.

5. Death—Religious aspects. 6. Sun—Religious aspects. I. Title.

BS1184.W55 2014

221.6—dc23

2014008515

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.®™

For Rebecca

*d'qh ib iqni*  
*p'ph sp trml*

(CAT 1.14 VI 29-30)





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## Preface

My first heartfelt thanks go to my thesis supervisor, Prof. Sten Hidal, who has overseen and helped my work in many inspiring ways. Sten has always been extraordinarily generous with his time, with his encyclopedic knowledge of things biblical and classical and with his great sense of humor. Working under his tutelage has been a most agreeable experience. I would also like to thank my assistant supervisor, Prof. Bo Holmberg.

Prof. Em. Tryggve Mettinger has been a mentor and friend during this and other projects of mine; his sharp exegetical and religio-historical acumen—and his enormous knowledge of the relevant literature—have improved the text in innumerable places. He was the one who introduced me to the study of the Ancient Near East, and his help and inspiration have been invaluable.

The Old Testament seminars in Lund and Uppsala have provided generous and stimulating milieux in which to take my ideas for a test drive, and I extend my humble thanks to all the members who suggested improvements and further ideas. Prof. Fredrik Lindström has been very supportive of my work and offered valuable comments. The Lund seminar has also benefited from the participation of New Testament scholars, and also I thank the members of that seminar, who have contributed many valuable suggestions. The *OTSEM* network—consisting of scholars from Northern Europe, Germany and Great Britain—has also been an inspiring setting in which to present parts of the material and receive constructive criticism. My fellow doctoral candidates Lasse Berndes, Linnéa Gradén and David Willgren—and fellow Hebrew teacher Blaženka Scheuer—have been very inspiring and helpful. I also thank Prof. Bo Johnson and Prof. Stig Norin as well as Ulf Bergström and Jonas Nilsson for their comments and suggestions.

I would especially like to thank Prof. Reinhard Kratz (Göttingen) and Prof. Martti Nissinen (Helsinki), who read and commented on parts of my text, providing many fruitful ideas. My visit to Göttingen in January of 2009 was an important impetus for my study, and I thank my hosts for the warm reception I was given.

This book is in a sense “version 1.1” of the study. The text was published in a local, Swedish dissertation edition in 2012; the differences between that edition and this one lie in certain revisions, as well as in the addition of a number of literature references—and of course in the physical look and pagination. It should, however, be pointed out that the main text is the same. This is, therefore, a “mild revision” of the dissertation, not a rewrite.

However, since this is “edition 1.1,” I have been able to incorporate a number of suggestions which were aired by readers of the “1.0” version. Among these I would especially like to mention Ass. Prof. Marjo Korpel (Utrecht), who did me the honor of serving as the *opponent*, or public examiner, of the text when I received my doctorate. Her many insightful comments have led to a number of additions within the present text, and I am very happy to thank her for this contribution. A similar source of creative input has been a 2012/2013

review of the first edition by Prof. Mats Eskhult (Uppsala), who also acted as the examiner of the text at the final in-department seminar session. Ideas from that review have also influenced a number of revisions. I have also benefited from input from Prof. Bertil Albrektson. A number of typographical mistakes were caught by Prof. Göran Eidevall (Uppsala), who was also a member of the examination committee when the dissertation was presented. I would also like to thank Prof. Casper Labuschagne for sending me an article of his when I was very pressed for time, and Prof. J.C. de Moor for kindly letting me quote a pre-print version of one of his articles in the “1.0” version.

Any remaining errors are of course my own.

The date of submitting this manuscript to the publisher means that during the writing of the main text, I was not able to make use of the third edition of *KTU/CAT*, the standard publication of the Ugaritic texts (as of this writing, the third edition has recently been released from the press). Ugaritic texts in this book are therefore normally quoted according to the second edition of *CAT*.

I would like to express my especially large thanks to Jim Eisenbraun and Andrew Knapp at Eisenbrauns for much help regarding the practicalities of preparing a self-produced, professional-looking PDF for publication. A special and very heartfelt thank you to Andrew for helping me check the third edition *CTA/KTU* readings of what I refer to in this book as the “Refrain of the Burning Sun,” as the edition had just appeared while I was finishing the book for publication and was only physically available to me at a very late stage.

Robert Goldsmith and my good friend Ass. Prof. Martin Gansten provided stylistic improvements. Martin also performed the enormously helpful service of typing the new version of the index into the computer based on the version earlier typed by my wife, Rebecca Bugge. The indexing job itself was done by my father, Örjan Wikander, who has been as supportive and helpful as always during the entire project, always assisting and generous with his time and great knowledge. My discussions with him have, as always, been the nourishment of my intellectual life. In the editing phase of the “1.0” edition as well as the present one, Sara Kylander provided much practical assistance, for which I am deeply grateful. My dear departed mother, Charlotte Wikander, helped, read, commented and supported me during writing. I deeply saddens me that she cannot see the final product.

There is one person in this list of thank-yous that must be mentioned again—the one who has followed me and the project from the very beginning: Rebecca Bugge, for many years my partner in life and now my wife. Her love, support and intellectual partnership has kept me going these years of scholarship, and she has also helped me in many very concrete ways (assisting me with the work on the index, for example). I dedicate this book to her—the one who removed the killing drought from my life.



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Overview: The Questions, and Why they Need Asking

Drought, Death and the Sun.

The title of this study contains three highly universal, almost archetypical concepts. Every human being on earth has an intrinsic connection and relation to two of them, and the third is of great importance to very many people indeed. Two of the words almost automatically conjure up images of gloom and doom, while the third is much more ambiguous. To some, for example those who, like myself, live in a Nordic country, the sun is one of the most inviting and positive symbols known. In other parts of the world, however, the sun can have much more negative connotations, as that which scorches and burns and thus brings on the other two words of the title: drought and death. The present book constitutes an investigation into certain specific instances of humankind's thinking concerning these three concepts and their interrelations, focusing on two closely related religious cultures: those of the Old Testament and of ancient Ugarit.

Almost since the start of the modern interpretation of the mythological and religious texts from Ugarit, it has been very common to see in those texts many references to the destroying power of intense heat as a manifestation or symbol of the forces of personified Death at work in the natural world. For a time, indeed, this was so common that it was taken as a self-evident fact of how the Ugaritic religion worked. Later, the pendulum somewhat changed its direction, and from about the 1980s and onward, the axiom was less often taken for granted. However, regardless of one's position, few scholars asked themselves what such an idea of "heat in the service of death" might really mean religio-historically, and even less how such a conception might relate to the texts of the Hebrew Bible, in which references to droughts and aridity abound. These are the issues that the present volume is intended to tackle.

The basic questions underlying the study and its construction are the following:

- How do the concepts of drought, death and the sun relate to each other in Ugaritic religious literature? How are these concepts used as metaphors to express basic tenets of Ugaritic myth and theology?
- How are these concepts and their use reflected in the literature and religion of Ancient Israel? How can the identification of these ancient reminiscences of a shared Northwest Semitic religious background contribute to the interpretation of various difficult passages in the biblical text and to our understanding of the relationship between Old Testament theology and that of the surrounding Northwest Semitic cultures?

The fact that the interplay between drought and fertility plays a large part in the preserved Ugaritic mythology has been noted from the beginning of Ugaritological scholarship. The conflict between Baal and Mot in the Ilimilku version of the so-called *Baal Cycle* is the most salient example of this, the temporary defeat of the storm god Baal being heralded by drought and the death of vegetation, while his return is accompanied by visions of fertility. A similar perspective has often been seen in the two other major mythological stories from Ugarit, those concerning Kirta and Aqhat: both of these seem to include passages in which the death of the hero results in a sympathetic “death” of the land, taking the form of an all-encompassing drought.

In the texts of the Baal Cycle, there are a number of interesting passages linking this “death of the land” through heat and drought to the natural phenomenon most closely associated with it, namely the sun, as manifested by the Ugaritic sun goddess, Shapshu. The most famous of these is the passage I have chosen to call “The Refrain of the Burning Sun,” which is often interpreted as a description of this blasting heat, manifested through the sun deity when under control of the god of death, Mot. The importance of drought to Ugaritic society may be illustrated by the fact that it is one of the proposed reasons for the collapse of Ugarit as a political entity.<sup>1</sup> Drought is also one of the main proposed causes of the Bronze Age collapse in general.<sup>2</sup>

The figure of the sun is a strangely liminal<sup>3</sup> and contradictory one in Ugaritic religion: Shapshu is the messenger and “all seeing eye” of the gods, but she is also connected with the underworld and with the funerary cult. A major issue of the study will thus be that of the metaphorical interconnections between the sun, the heat she causes and her innate chthonic associations (her daily passage through the underworld and her connections with the *Rāpī’ūma*, the deified royal ancestors). I will investigate how, in the Baal Cycle, the ideas of drought and death are connected with each other through the medium of the solar deity, whose characteristics appears to merge the concepts of heat and the land of the dead in a way otherwise impossible. I would argue that this constitutes a clear *sui generis* facet of Ugaritic mythology, as opposed to the ones found for example in the Hittite kingdom or in Mesopotamia, where the sun more clearly has royal and juridical functions. At Ugarit, these solar functions also occur, but, as I shall attempt to demonstrate, there are deeper connections to be found. The phenomenon of the “chthonic sun” and its relationship with the phenomenon of drought in the texts will form a central part of my investigation.

---

<sup>1</sup> Proposed in Schaeffer 1983.

<sup>2</sup> Most recently in Langgut, Finkelstein and Litt 2013. That article argues (based on analysis of pollen) that the period between 1250 and 1100 BC represented an unusual attack of dry climate in the Eastern Mediterranean area, and that this was a factor in the Bronze Age collapse. Note, however, that along with drought, attacks of cold in the Northern Near East are also mentioned.

<sup>3</sup> I use here the word “liminal” in the general sense of “having to do with borders.”

Given the close relationship between the Ugaritic and early Israelite cultures, it is not surprising that a number of reminiscences of the old drought-death motif seem to occur in the Hebrew Bible. One example of this is the story of Elijah and the great drought in 1 Kings 17-18. In this text, I believe one finds a (proto-)monotheist reinterpretation of this classical mythological image.

Similar biblical uses of the conception of the dying land abound in the book of Hosea, as well as in the book of Joel. There are also passages from the Psalms in which I believe this conception can be found. An important part of the study of these phenomena will concern the relationship between biblical uses of drought imagery and the so called "solarization" of the Israelite God. One text that will be important in this context is Mal 3:19-21.

As already indicated, one of the main goals of the study is to investigate the ways in which the Ugaritic/ancient Northwest Semitic conceptions of the death/drought/sun-imagery survive and are transformed in the text of the Hebrew Bible. In view of the prominence of these motifs in the Ugaritic textual tradition and the shared heritage of the Israelite and Ugaritic religious cultures, it would almost be strange if survivals and/or transformations of this cluster of ideas were not in evidence under various guises in the Old Testament texts.

Such an approach has certain methodological implications in terms of the way in which the relevant biblical texts will be analyzed. It means, for example, that the main object searched for is the continuity or discontinuity between the two corpora concerning the motifs mentioned. It will be a working assumption of the study that the Ugaritic texts and the Hebrew Bible are parts of the same Northwest Semitic cultural sphere which, although often differing in tendency, historical setting and theological outlook, can be seen as branches of a common tree of mythemes and narrative structures.

Although this statement may seem far-reaching and almost simplistic, I believe that such an attitude can be very helpful *as a methodological device* which can be used to uncover allusions and meanings that might be lost on a study concentrating on only one of the cultures in question.

The Israelite reception and transformation of these concepts can thus become markers of some of those issues in terms of which that religion differed from its contemporaries and its forbears in the greater Northwest Semitic cultural milieu. In studying similarities alone, one risks missing and downplaying the differences between religious cultures, whereas studying them and making a special task of highlighting the places in which very similar theological constructs in fact diverge from one another enables one to pinpoint those characteristics which are most central to the definition and construction of religious boundaries, possibly both on an emic and etic level. After one has established the similarities and shared cultural and literary background of the texts one is studying, it is interesting to look closely at the places where they differ from one another within this general framework.

The central literary unit employed in the study will be the *motif*.<sup>4</sup> However, I shall try to regard the ideas of the drought-death-sun complex as being more than simply building blocks of literature and/or mythology: I shall endeavor to explore how these concepts function in the texts as parts of the framework used to create their symbolic universes. It is my hypothesis that the interplay between drought/death on the one hand and precipitation/life on the other is a very central one in both of the corpora here under discussion, one which can be found in many contexts, not only as a simplistic (and perhaps 19<sup>th</sup>-century-sounding) “nature mythology” but as ideological constructs, as ideas welded together through intricate metaphors, ideas that can themselves be used as metaphors for creating meaningful illustrations of theological statements. When Deutero-Isaiah juxtaposes wilting flowers and the everlasting word of God, he is not using mythology as a way of describing the changing seasons. Rather, it is the imagery of the drought and the seasons that *create* the “mythology” needed in order to drive home his message.

The question of whether—and, if so, to what extent—the central Ugaritic mythological texts (above all the Baal Cycle) represent “allegorical” or aetiological descriptions of the shifting seasons of the Levantine environment is of course of central importance to any study of this sort. The most classic example of such a view is the work of Johannes de Moor, who interpreted the Baal Cycle in an outspokenly seasonal manner and even ventured as far as providing detailed expositions of the exact climatological transitions he saw in the texts. He even produced tables of Syrian temperatures during the year and tried to fit the Baal Cycle into this pattern.<sup>5</sup> This very far-reaching approach has been criticized. However, when reading the text of the Baal Cycle—especially the episode of Baal’s battle with the god of death, Mot—one can scarcely ignore such markers of seasonal imagery as descriptions of parched furrows, burned

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<sup>4</sup> A *motif* is defined by Prince (2003: 55) as a “minimal thematic unit” that, if occurring with sufficient regularity in a work, should be regarded as a “*Leitmotif*.” He explicitly warns against confusing this term with the concept of theme, which is more of an abstract representation of what a given text is really about. One simple yet clear illustration of this distinction can be found in discussing Evelyn Waugh’s novel *Brideshead Revisited*. Waugh himself wrote of the book in a memo to the film studio MGM: “The theme is theological (...) The novel deals with what is theologically termed ‘the operation of Grace’, that is to say, the unmerited and unilateral act of love by which God continually calls souls to Himself (...)” However, the main motif of the story is rather that of building and in various ways preserving Brideshead Castle, a great English country house. Confusing motif and theme could in this case lead one to state that *Brideshead Revisited* is at its core a book about architectural history. As I will later attempt to show, a similar situation may well obtain in the case of the Ugaritic texts: drought is certainly a major motif in the larger narrative texts from Ugarit (perhaps even a *Leitmotif*), but it is less certain that it is their theme. This is a distinction that appears sometimes to have been lost in the discussions about what the Baal Cycle and the other texts are trying to tell us.

<sup>5</sup> de Moor 1971; the climatological data is specifically found on pp. 251-269.

olives, rain, thunder, etc. being used as parts of the narrative framework. Thus, I remain firmly convinced that the opposite view, represented for example by Nicolas Wyatt—who boldly states in the introduction to his translation of the Baal Cycle that “[a]ttempts to demonstrate a seasonal allegory as basis of interpretation [...] have proved groundless”<sup>6</sup>—stands in direct contradiction to the texts as preserved to us.

However, one should realize that descriptions of natural phenomena in connection with mythological actions are not to be interpreted in an overly formalist manner. Mechanically applying a seasonal formula to the Ilimilku texts is not a necessary result of acknowledging the references to drought and fertility that do seem to appear in them. The classical stance, that these references (and much of the story itself) constitute an allegory (or aetiology) for the natural phenomena in question is not the only possible interpretative framework for them. Just as in the case of Deutero-Isaiah, one could imagine that the author(s) or redactor(s) used these pieces of imagery as a way of metaphorically illustrating the life/death-struggle between Mot and Baal, rather than as an explanation of the seasons (or a combination of both). The descriptions of the burning sun, the parched furrows and the hot sky could be taken as literary devices rather than as a form of “nature mythology.” One should not discount the possibility that the seemingly recurring connections between dying and drought in the major Ugaritic literary texts could be due partly to the special literary characteristics typical of Ilimilku’s personal style.<sup>7</sup>

For many scholars, the role of burning, solar drought has been taken for granted, and the notion has often been tied to presuppositions of seasonality. My point is not that such views are necessarily incorrect, but that the role of drought and its relationship to death have rarely been subjected to thorough analysis. Those that have accepted it have often seen the motif as relatively self-explanatory, and those that reject often do so in the basis of philology (in particular, lexicography) alone.

Whatever the reasons and manifestations, it can hardly be denied that the juxtaposition of drought/death and fertility/life is a common one in the Ugaritic myths. Through this opposition the theology of the Baal Cycle is given a concrete correspondence in the visible world. Perhaps the ways in which these conceptions are used by Ilimilku, Malachi, Hosea and the Deuteronomists simply represent different receptions and interpretations of a motif common to an entire cultural complex, one that cannot be easily reduced to “natural mythology” but still constitutes one of the most important parts of the symbolical universes of the texts.

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<sup>6</sup> Wyatt 2002: 35. Similar negative views of seasonal interpretation of the Baal Cycle can be found in Grabbe 1976.

<sup>7</sup> The existence of special literary characteristics in Ilimilku’s versions of Ugaritic mythology have been highlighted by Marjo Korpel in her article “Exegesis in the Work of Ilimilku of Ugarit”—Korpel 1998.

In some cases, the perspectives applied in this study may be of direct exegetical import for certain biblical passages, providing possibly new understandings of their translation and import. I would especially like to point to my analyses of a number of difficult passages from the Book of Job, the interpretation of which I hope to have furthered. Passages from chapters 18 and 28 of that Book are given new elucidations by means of the methodologies here applied. Another important case is a passage from Malachi 3, for which I hope to have provided a new religio-historical background. I also believe that the Carmel narrative of 1 Kings 18 is given further exegetical background through the perspectives put forth in the present study.

## 1.2 Earlier Scholarship at a Glance

As interesting and central as these questions are, it feels somewhat strange to note that the literature on the connections between Shapshu and death/the underworld is not larger than it is. The fact that such a connection exists is often stated as a matter of fact, but only seldom has this phenomenon been the object of thorough, scholarly scrutiny. The relations between the sun and the underworld in both Ugarit and Mesopotamia are discussed in a short paper by J. F. Healey (1980), which touches upon a number of important points, but only very briefly, as the paper is no more than a couple of pages long. Healey notes a number of cases in which Shapshu and Shamash are connected with death, dying and the underworld, and he summarizes his review of the relations between the sun and the underworld with the following remarks: "In fact, these themes of a link between the sun and the underworld are not rare and are based on the notion that the sun enters the underworld at night. However, it is now quite clear that these features must have been a part of the original characterisation of the Semitic sun deity, presumed originally to have been female."<sup>8</sup> He thereby clearly identifies the sun's nightly journey under the horizon as the underlying metaphorical reason for the links in question.

A similar link, but this time one explicitly associating Shapshu's role as drought-giver with her underworldly characteristics, is found in the 1978 article by R. du Mesnil du Buisson. Although one can hardly concur with his view that a certain Ugaritic text (*CAT* 1.12) refers to a desert close to Byblos, the article touches in passing on some of the points that I consider here. An early study of the Ugaritic solar deity is André Caquot's 1959 article "La divinité solaire ougaritique," in which the author briefly discusses Shapshu's drought-inducing characteristics from a classical, "nature mythology"-perspective. He also mentions Shapshu's connection to the netherworld (her role as psychopomp).

Another discussion of the netherworldly capacities of the Ugaritic solar deity appears in Theodore J. Lewis' 1989 publication *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit*. Lewis devotes nine pages to the relations between Shapshu and the underworld and makes a strong case for the centrality of this

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<sup>8</sup> Healey 1980: 240.

relation to the Ugaritic views of the chthonic world. Because of the orientation of his work, Lewis relates these conclusions primarily to the question of the chthonic cults that he is studying, and not to the character of the sun goddess in particular. However, the work is one of the few that highlights Shapshu's chthonic characteristics and describes them in a thorough way. An almost opposite attitude is taken by Brian B. Schmidt in his book *Israel's Beneficent Dead* (1994). Schmidt discusses the relationship between Shapshu and the netherworld on pp. 84-88, but he is quite skeptical in this regard and does not place much credence in the idea of the connectedness between the solar deity and the land of the dead.

The recent volume by Juliane Kutter (2008) constitutes the hitherto largest and most comprehensive study not only of the Ugaritic sun goddess but of the very complex of solar deities in the Northwest Semitic cultural sphere from the Late Bronze Age down through the Roman period. Kutter attacks the material with great skill and systematically dissects the texts, using comparative evidence to flesh out her analysis. However, the ideas of death and drought fall rather into the background in her work. She notes the many chthonic associations of the Ugaritic solar deity, but no link is made between this and the drought-giving aspects. Juliane Kutter subscribes to the view of de Moor, who in his study of the "seasonal pattern" (1971) argued that the above-mentioned "Refrain" does not describe the heat of the sun, but rather its being obscured and "dust-colored," possibly reflecting the sirocco. Kutter's book has served as a constant inspiration and dialogue partner for me during the course of my work, and I must express my sincere admiration for her gigantic corpus-based effort, while I must concede that I have very often arrived at radically different conclusions than she has.

Another example of the recent trend to downplay the role of the sun as sender of drought in the Ugaritic texts is the 1996 article by Steve A. Wiggins, "Shapsh, Lamp of the Gods," which, as I will discuss in the section on the Refrain of the Burning Sun, in large part represents an attack on a drought-centred reading of Shapshu in the Baal Cycle. Wiggins is, however, quite open to the role of the solar deity as connector between the lands of the living and the dead, as is the 1997 article "Shapash psychopompe et le pseudo hymne au soleil (KTU 1.6 vi 42-53)" by Jean-Marie Husser. I have, however, found no study that thoroughly analyzes this aspect of the Ugaritic sun deity in relation to a drought reading. It is to a large extent this gap that the present volume is meant to fill—as well as investigating whether such a drought-based understanding is indeed philologically defensible.

Despite the fact that there have in later years been a number of studies which challenge the drought-sending roles of Shapshu, it should be pointed out that the traditional understanding in this matter is reflected in the magisterial commentary of Smith and Pitard (2009), which does not, however, provide a deeper discussion of the meaning of the phenomenon. An interesting, if somewhat deviant, view of Shapshu's hotness when connected to the god of

death is propounded by Barker (2006), who regards the Leviathan as being a coconspirator of Mot's and the "heating up" of the sky as being a normal part of Shapshu's role in the universe, one which is then "perverted" by the adversaries of Baal (namely, Mot and the sea monster together).

Of course, there exists a vast literature on the relationship between YHWH and the sun in general and what is sometimes referred to as his "solarization." Specifically, one can mention such important modern contributions as those of Stähli (1985), Langer (1989), Smith (1990), Taylor (1993), Dion (1994) and Janowski (1995). Most of these works do not concern the relationship between drought, sun and death specifically, but occasional reference to some of these studies will be made in due course.<sup>9</sup>

Another study touching on the matters discussed here is the 2005 volume by Joseph Azize, *The Phoenician Solar Theology*, which attempts to trace a late comment by Emperor Julian on the alleged religious views of the Phoenicians back to Northwest Semitic sources. Azize claims that Julian's remarks reflect actual Phoenician theology. This audacious proposal is beyond the bounds of the present study, but Azize does at times touch upon the question of the netherworldly characteristics of solar deities in the Northwest Semitic milieu, and I will therefore have reason to cite him. His book does include a section on the Ugaritic Shapshu, whose chthonic functions he underscores. The drought phenomena, however, play no role in his analysis.

Gönke Eberhardt's 2007 volume *JHWH und die Unterwelt* touches on some rather important examples of how YHWH's increasing power over the sphere of death and dying can be related to his "solarized" characteristics. She also explicitly (p. 289) associates his appropriation of Death's power with control over drought.

In a very short article from 1971, "The Connection between the Concepts of Darkness and Drought as well as Light and Vegetation," A.P.B. Breytenbach presaged some of the ideas that have proven important to the present study. Breytenbach discusses the (somewhat paradoxical) relationship that seems to exist in some biblical texts between the ideas of death, drought and darkness (a type of connection which is central to this study, not least to the Appendix). However, Breytenbach's analysis is only five pages long and does not discuss any evidence outside the Bible. Neither does he discuss the burning sun. The article is interesting in that it uses a methodology of comparative etymology parallel to the one used here, but it is perhaps somewhat too audacious in trying to define how "the semite" in general looked at the ideas in question.

A recent (2010) study by Warren C. Robertson examines Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern attitudes towards natural disasters in general (droughts, earthquakes, famines and plagues). Robertson tries to provide a snapshot of the naturally assumed understandings of these phenomena that were prevalent in

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<sup>9</sup> For further and ample references to works discussing the "solarization" of YHWH, see Janowski 1995: 217-218.



ancient Israel and of how these disasters related to constructions of theology. He deals with some of the same texts that I do, but from a rather different perspective: Robertson's mode of inquiry is less historically comparative than mine, concentrating more on synchronic cognitive strategies and ideological patterns.

The article by Horst D. Preuss on the verb *yābēš* in the *TDOT* mentions the drought-death connection in passing (referring to Job 14:11) but concentrates mainly on the drying powers as an instrument of divine judgment.

There is of course a very large amount of literature concerning the specific textual entities discussed in this volume. These authors and works cannot, however, all be enumerated here but will be referred to when necessary. Similarly, there is a vast literature on the existence or non-existence of "seasonality" in the Ugaritic material, but most of this falls outside the scope of the present study, which focuses more specifically on drought, death and the sun and not on the general "climatological" analysis of Ugaritic religious literature. In later years, there has also been an increase in the study of the actual climate of Ancient Israel; for an introduction to this area one may recommend the 2007 popularizing article by Wolfgang Zwickel, which applies paleoclimatological methodology to the Palestine of Antiquity. But again, such minute studies of the actual historical climate of different periods reflected in the Hebrew Bible are not the main focus of this book.

### 1.3 Aims and Scope of the Present Study

One or two words should be said regarding what this book is—and what it is not. It *is* a study of how the Ugaritic and Israelite corpora use the images of drought and the drought-giving sun to illustrate ideas about death, and the other way around. It is *not* a digest or catalogue of all places in which the Old Testament writers mention or talk about drought or being dry: such a volume would not very well fit the questions posed as the main points of inquiry.<sup>10</sup> Rather, the book aims at highlighting a number of instances in which the connections between sun, drought, netherworld and death seem to play a part or be in the forefront. This necessarily means that a certain amount of subjectivity will be apparent in the choice of studied texts (and in the allotment of space to their respective analyses). The principles of selection have, however, been relatively straightforward. The texts that have been chosen for closer study fall into the following categories:

- Texts that overtly associate the concepts of death, drought and the sun with each other and express one or more of these in terms of the other.

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<sup>10</sup> For example, dryness is used as a metaphor of suffering, shame and humiliation at many points in the Hebrew Bible in contexts not directly associated with death, the netherworld or the sun. Isa 15:6, Isa 33:9, Jer 8:13, Jer 50:12, and Ps 129:6 are just a few instances.

- Texts that use the power over drought as an image of divine might (or the opposite thereof) in a way that appears to invoke these associations intertextually or religio-historically.
- Texts that make use of terminology or etymological material that seems to carry with it references to this ancient sphere of motifs.

The phenomena delineated in the list above form a complex of ideas that I shall refer to as the *drought-death motif*. This ideological and literary conception, which has for such a long time been a commonplace assumption in the study of the religious texts from Ugarit, demands a deeper and more thorough study as part of the religious history of the Northwest Semitic cultural area of the Ancient Near East, and especially in relation to the texts of the Hebrew Bible. It has been common to ascribe the existence of this motif to a specifically Ugaritic or “Canaanite” religious sphere, but—as is the case with so many other religious phenomena and ideas attested in the Ugaritic texts—it would be rather strange if it had not in some way left an imprint on the Hebrew canon, though be it in a transformed and/or reinterpreted way.

In addition to the list of characteristics given above as typical of the drought-death motif, there is yet another conception that will figure tangentially (though importantly) in the study. This is the oft-recurring imagery of burning, feverish illness associated with the rule of the deathly powers in a number of texts in the Hebrew Bible and, as I shall attempt to show, in the Ugaritic texts as well. This phenomenon is important to the present line of inquiry because it implicitly associates the influence and power of death with the physical manifestation of heat in a way reminiscent of the drought motif described above. I shall endeavor to elucidate possible connections between these conceptions at appropriate places in the course of the study.

## **1.4 Methodology**

### ***1.4.1 Basic Methodological Assumptions***

As to the methodological outlook of the study and the general view of biblical (and, indeed, textual) scholarship concerning the history of ideas and motifs on which it is based, I would like to quote the words of Thomas Karlsson:

In the history of ideas, empirical material which is produced through observation and experiment plays a subservient role, and the central issue is not whether a theory can be verified or falsified based on the criteria of Popper, but whether or not it can give us a heightened understanding of a text.<sup>11</sup>

My quoting this passage should, of course, not be taken to mean that I believe this type of scholarly endeavor to be entirely (or even partly) a matter of

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<sup>11</sup> Karlsson 2009: 26 (my translation from the Swedish original).

completely *ad hoc* solutions without any sort of verifiability or falsifiability, but rather that textual studies—and especially those concerned with unearthing traditions of motifs and transmissions of ideas—involve a different form of testability than do, say, many of the natural sciences or even comparative linguistics. The main “test” of a theory or hypothesis in the history of religious ideas and motifs is not some singular proof case or experiment, but rather the applicability of the theory as a whole in creating a deeper, more nuanced and more plausible explanation of the textual entity at hand. For example, it is not easy to *prove or disprove* (in the Popperian sense) that the movement of Deuteronomism played a large part in the editing and redaction of the Book of Jeremiah as handed down to us, but such a supposition does make the book much more understandable.<sup>12</sup>

Another important question in the study of religious material (be it textual or anthropological) is that of one’s personal attitude towards the object of study. In some cases, there is a danger of becoming too personally involved or partisan in one’s approach to the material, especially if one is in some way or other part of the movement or ideological tradition one is studying. But there is also the danger of viewing the material as too inherently “foreign” for one to be able to understand it on a deeper level. This has to be taken seriously when studying material that is separated from the scholar by vast gaps of time and differences in cultural outlook, such as is the case when researching material from Ugarit or Ancient Israel. In these cases, it may be fruitful to think of views such as those put forward by Alexis Sanderson on the subject of the study of the Kaśmīrī Śaivist school of Hinduism. Sanderson pointed out that one cannot objectively study a religious tradition without at least *trying* to look at the material in terms of “the subjective perception of its practioners.” He emphasized the need for an empathic understanding of the tradition one studies.<sup>13</sup> That is, in order to understand the texts we have before us, we have to at least make the attempt to understand the general perspective that these texts attempt to convey, rather than simply viewing them as foreign objects to be processed mechanically. Trying to understand their words and motifs is no less than attempting temporarily to envelop oneself in their specific symbolic universe.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Indeed, this proposition (which is an often accepted “fact” of Biblical scholarship) would hardly qualify as a scientific hypothesis at all in Popperian terms, as it cannot be said to meet Popper’s criteria of falsifiability. How could one falsify the idea that “people associated with Deuteronomistic theology had a hand in the redaction of the Book of Jeremiah”? Even if no overt traces of such activity were to be found, the proposition as such would not be falsified as this would be an entirely *e silentio* argument. Different possible versions of a text are not epistemologically comparable to different outcomes of a laboratory experiment.

<sup>13</sup> From an interview in Ames 1998: 265-266.

<sup>14</sup> On the complex and interesting relations between a classical historical perspective and the hermeneutical roles of the scholar and the studied object, see Nissinen 2009 (esp. pp. 482-487).

### ***1.4.2 Methodological Prerequisites of Ugaritic-Israelite Religio-Historical Comparison***

The scholarly comparison between Ugaritic and Israelite religious materials involves a number of important methodological problems, problems that are sometimes overlooked. There can, of course, be no doubt that the two religious cultures in question are intimately related to each other, and that the study of Ugaritic has shed enormous light on almost every aspect of Old Testament studies. The present book, too, explicitly constitutes such a comparative study. Such comparisons have been taken almost as a matter of course for over half a century now, but I believe that, in carrying out this type of religio-historical study, one must first answer one simple question: What are we really comparing with what?

The first thing to realize when discussing this form of comparison is the great gap between the two textual corpora, in terms both of chronology and contextual background. The Ugaritic texts were written down during a relatively short period of time in the Late Bronze Age, in a context in which a polytheistic sacrificial cult was in active practice and formed a natural ideological and theological background against which to understand them. The Hebrew Bible has a very different, and much longer, history, one that involves multiple layers of redaction and several different ideological strata, most importantly of course the pervasive influence of Deuteronomism.

What this means is that the interpretive framework for the two comparanda is, and must be, vastly different. Simply noting similarities between Ugaritic and Israelite texts and treating the relationship between them as some simple case of inheritance from Canaanite to Hebrew religion risks missing parts of the picture.

One fact to be noted is the rather trivial one that Israelite religion must not be regarded as some form of descendant or derivative of the religious culture found at Ugarit. There is no direct historical link between the two—rather, they must *both* be regarded as separate expressions of a shared Northwest Semitic cultural background. I believe that there has sometimes been too great an emphasis on Ugaritic religion being *the* Canaanite religion, the “ancestor,” so to speak, of the religious world of the Hebrew Bible. One must realize that both the Ugaritic and Israelite corpora are only two individual examples of this wider religious milieu. Israelite religion is not a descendant of “Canaanite” religion as preserved to us at Ugarit: rather, both Israelite and Ugaritic religion carry forth the inheritance from (or better: are expressions of) the same common background.

This simple observation also leads to another prerequisite for Ugaritic-Israelite comparison: the attention to the great time-gap between the two cultures and the difference in religio-historical setting. The Israelite texts are the products of a long and complicated literary development of many hundreds of years and are overlaid with reworkings of Deuteronomistic and monolatrist types. Also, the main body of the Hebrew Bible was composed during periods much later than the Ugaritic texts, which means that there has been a greater

timespan—as well as significant religio-historical events such as the Babylonian Exile—to separate Israelite religions as preserved to us in the texts from the common Northwest Semitic background. This means that the actual “sister”-religion to the Ugaritic one is not the classical version of Israelite faith as codified in the main parts of the Old Testament, but rather the elusive but sometimes reconstructable entity that Reinhard Kratz has referred to as “*Reste Hebräischen Heidentums*.”<sup>15</sup>

The Proto-Hebrew, probably micro-polytheist religion preserved to us here and there in the Psalms, sometimes in parts of the historical writings and in extrabiblical texts such as the Elephantine Papyri and the Kuntilet Ajrud inscriptions is what lay between the shared “Canaanite” religious culture and the classical Hebrew religion that the main body of the Old Testament presents—or tries to construct. Brian B. Schmidt refers to a similar conception as “polytheist Yahwism.”<sup>16</sup> This Israelite “micropantheon”-religion is the immediate source of the Ugaritic-style archaisms of the Hebrew Bible, and the existence of this intermediate stage must always be borne in mind when Ugaritic-Israelite religious comparisons are attempted.

One example of the necessity of recognizing the difference between the theologically processed “ideal vision” of Israelite religion and the “remnants of Hebrew paganism” can be found in the view of death and its divine personification, Death (Māwet), which is of course of central importance to this study. It is not uncommon to encounter in the literature the view that death and the underworld were relatively unimportant concepts in Israelite religion.

“[O]ne of the most striking aspects about the Hebrew Bible,” writes Wayne T. Pitard, “is how little it actually talks about death and the afterlife.”<sup>17</sup> Philip S. Johnston adds in the same vein: “So arguably the underworld was not a particularly important concept for the canonical writers and redactors.”<sup>18</sup> Such a state of affairs would perhaps appear to undermine the very object of inquiry of this study, which, after all, concerns a specific form of powers related to death and the netherworld in Israel just as much as at Ugarit. But if one looks not only at Israelite religion as programmatically manifested in the biblical texts, but also at other contemporary material, one will discover the startling fact that there are epigraphically attested proper names from the time of the Israelite monarchy that use the name of the god of Death as a theophoric element, such as the rather remarkable name Mārmawt (*mrmt*), which appears to mean “Death is lord.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Kratz 2004.

<sup>16</sup> Schmidt 1994: 292.

<sup>17</sup> Pitard 2002: 146.

<sup>18</sup> Johnston 2005: 105.

<sup>19</sup> Schüle 2000: 236.

### 1.4.3 A Note on “Etymological Poetics”

In discussing the methodological presuppositions of this study, there is one specific aspect that needs especially to be stressed and stated clearly. This is that—in a number of places within the book—I have consciously applied a methodology that I like to call “etymological poetics,” that is, using comparative linguistics as a source not only of the meaning of individual words and roots but possibly also of shared poetic significance. I am very well aware that this form of etymological analysis is met with considerable skepticism in much of the modern exegetical world; overuse of “etymologizing” was, after all, a problem plaguing much of the field during the first two thirds of the twentieth century, especially when applied to the field of textual criticism. One example of this hyper-etymologizing tendency was of course the work of Mitchell Dahood and his school, and I do definitely hope that I have not gone as far in my etymological assumptions as he did, making him rewrite much of the established text of the Psalms, for example (the well-known work of James Barr<sup>20</sup> did much to temper these hyper-emendatory tendencies grounded in etymologies). Nonetheless, it is my belief that some reference to etymology and comparative linguistics as tools for elucidating not only words and grammatical forms but also modes of expression and poetic motifs can be highly illuminating and yield many accurate perspectives that might otherwise go unnoticed. The importance of the comparative philological method in the elucidation of texts from the Hebrew Bible—when applied with methodological stringency, especially as pertaining to strict application of sound-laws—has been well pointed out by Kevin J. Cathcart in his 2005 article “The Comparative Philological Approach to the Text of the Old Testament.”

In other, parallel fields, the call for “etymological poetics” would be much less provocative than it is in Biblical Studies.<sup>21</sup> In Indo-European studies, for example, this type of methodology is regarded as standard, and has been as far back as the famous identification of the identical, inherited character of such poetic phrases as the Homeric Greek κλέος ἄφθιτον and the Vedic *akṣitam* ... *śravas*—both meaning “imperishable fame,” a phrase created from the exact same, highly specific etymological material, and thus usually regarded as being an inherited Proto-Indo-European poetic collocation.<sup>22</sup> Reconstructing inherited poetic structures and mythemes is, to be sure, a precarious exercise, yet the methodology has been put to good use for example by Calvert Watkins in his volume *How to Kill a Dragon: Aspects of Indo-European Poetics* (1995); even though one can hardly agree with all of his conclusions, Watkins demonstrates

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<sup>20</sup> Barr 1968.

<sup>21</sup> One should, however, note, that e.g. Lipiński (1997: 550-551) points out the relationship between the history of ideas and specific lexemes and their semantic development, using Semitic examples such as *nepeš/naḥs/napištu*.

<sup>22</sup> This equation was made already in Kuhn 1853: 467 and has become one of the “mainstays” and classical examples of Indo-European comparative poetics.

in quite an advanced way the relevance of comparative linguistic poetics as a valid scholarly tool. In the Indo-European field there have of course also been abuses of this method—I am thinking first and foremost of the work of Georges Dumézil, but I hope that my small forays into this field are not fraught with the kind of difficulties inherent in the Dumézilian hypotheses.<sup>23</sup>

It should be noted that there are a number of instances of “poetic inheritance” of this sort that are not questioned by any biblical scholar today: the most famous example is the almost verbatim parallel between parts of Isa 27:1 and the Ugaritic of *CAT* 1.5 I 1-2, using etymologically unique material to describe the serpent Leviathan/Lotan. Again, it should be emphasized that such correspondences are in no way indicative of the Hebrew tradition “borrowing” from the tradition known from Ugarit—rather, it is a question of a shared Northwest Semitic cultural heritage. This is exactly the type of cultural poetic inheritance that I am referring to. The basic idea is that concepts and motifs can sometimes be attached to specific etymological material and can thus be inherited along with them, albeit often in quite a transformed manner.

It should be pointed out that the literary growth of the biblical texts discussed is not the main focus of the present volume. Arguments concerning *Literarkritik* will occasionally be employed, but only in specific cases. The redactional history of each and every biblical passage here studied is beyond the scope of the study, and as the main issues in analysing these texts here is the way in which they retain and/or transform ancient Northwest Semitic literary, mythological and poetic material, the exact inner chronology of different passages is often of comparably minor relevance to the issues at hand (though, as previously stated, there are exceptions: see, for example, the discussion concerning the literary history of the Carmel narrative in 1 Kings 18 in section 3.1.1.2). The traces of the Israelite “micropantheon”-religion mentioned above can manifest themselves in texts of different age; the above-mentioned example Isa 27:1 is a prime example of this, as that verse forms part of the Isaiah apocalypse, a textual collection which is not highly ancient, yet it constitutes one of the clearest examples of poetic retention from ancient Northwest Semitic known from the entire Hebrew Bible.

### 1.5 The Outline and Structure of the Study

The basic structure of this book is relatively simple. The central passages from the Ugaritic and Hebrew corpora are discussed in a running commentary format, being analyzed from the perspective of what they can contribute to an understanding of the motifs studied in the volume. Occasionally, there are digressions or special studies that touch in greater detail upon points of specific philological interest. The initial part of the commentary-style section of the book is devoted mainly to the Ugaritic texts, and the next to the biblical ones.

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<sup>23</sup> For a detailed evaluation and critique of Dumézil’s theories, see Belier 1991.

However, this allocation is not absolute: sometimes the line of reasoning has necessitated a certain overlap between these two parts of the book. In some cases, it would have created nothing but confusion not to mention relevant parallels from the biblical corpus in the Ugaritological section of the book, and vice versa. Therefore, I have called the former section *Ugaritic Focus* and the latter one *Biblical Focus*, a wording that expresses this editorial choice. The word “biblical” is given a broad definition, as that major section also includes a chapter dealing with a few texts from the Deuterocanon. As can be seen from a quick look at the table of contents, the largest portion of the Ugaritic material discussed stems, as might be expected, from the Baal Cycle. It should be mentioned that the analyses of passages from that text presuppose a general familiarity on the part of the reader with the Cycle and its contents; for those not well acquainted with the Baal Cycle, there are many good translations available. The same may be said for the other Ugaritic texts.<sup>24</sup>

After these two main sections of the work, there follows a rather large stand-alone chapter which is thematically oriented, as opposed to the running commentary of the earlier parts. This chapter, entitled *Religio-Historical Trajectories of Drought, Death and the Sun*, discusses in a more general historical manner the developments, parallels and differences between the Ugaritic and Israelite conceptions of the motifs that are the focus of the volume. The texts discussed in this chapter have a broader frame of reference than those in the commentary sections, in which the selection criteria given above are more closely adhered to. In the chapter *Religio-Historical Trajectories*, the selection process has been more pragmatic, being based not on formal criteria but on the illustrative quality of the examples. After that section follow the general conclusions of the study, as well as lists of references and an index of cited textual passages. There is also an appendix on two philologically difficult textual entities (one of them Ugaritic and the other a passage from the Deir Alla inscription), the contents of which do not directly or definitely concern the motifs I have chosen to study but are still possible to read in this light. This appendix is not of crucial significance to my line of reasoning; rather, it is meant to raise a few further questions and possibilities.

One possible methodological objection to the approach taken in this study is the relative lack of Mesopotamian (and, for that matter, Hittite and Egyptian) material; texts from these areas are referred to and quoted on occasion, but only when relevant to the subject at hand, which is normally a piece of Hebrew or Ugaritic text. The reasons for this are twofold. The first one is simply the need for practical demarcation of material in order to make a study of this type feasible. The other reason is more methodological in nature. The Hebrew and Ugaritic textual corpora are connected to each other linguistically, culturally and

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<sup>24</sup> See for example the renderings of Ugaritic texts in Gibson 1978, de Moor 1987, Wyatt 2002 and the anthology *UNP* (edited by Simon B. Parker), in which the Baal Cycle is translated by Mark S. Smith.



religio-historically in a way that is simply not the case for the other Ancient Near Eastern milieux mentioned. The Hebrew Bible and the texts from Ugarit are the two main representatives of a shared Northwest Semitic background, and, as already indicated, this background is highly important to my study and to its aims. They constitute the only two corpora that provide major evidence of the religious literature within that cultural sphere, and thus it is only natural that they form the bulk of the texts studied.

## 1.6 Nomenclature and protocols

Like most other writers on the subject, I have chosen in this volume to represent the well-known divine names Baal and El with common forms of the onomastic versions known from the Hebrew Bible, when they occur in the running text, instead of with the actual Ugaritic forms *ʾilu* and *baʿlu*. For other Ugaritic names in the main text (that is, outside of actual transcriptions of Ugaritic), I represent their Ugaritic forms in simplified transcriptions of the usual type. Normally, I do not include the nominative ending *-u*, but I do make exceptions to this rule for names whose stems end in two consonants: Shapshu and Niqmaddu seem preferable (for euphonic reasons) compared to Shapsh and Niqmadd.

On a sidenote, I would like to make a special point of not referring to the Ugaritic sun goddess as “Shapash,” which one sometimes comes across in modern literature. This form (probably based on Akkadian *status absolutus* forms such as Shamash) is linguistically impossible, since the occurrence of *p* as second radical of the Ugaritic word *špš* (“sun”) where one would on comparative grounds have expected an *m* (cf. Akkadian *šamšu*, Arabic *shams*, Hebrew *šemeš* etc.) is explicable only as a result of a plosivization of the labial nasal *m* into *p* when directly followed by a sibilant—a development exactly paralleled in non-standard Latin, where *hiems* (“winter”) often becomes *hiemps*. That this sound change occurred in Ugaritic is clear evidence that the *p* (<\**m*) and *š* were indeed adjacent to one another and that no “segolate” (or other) vowel was present in that language. Indeed, there is direct evidence of this pronunciation of a derivative of the word for “sun” in Northwest Semitic in the Greek LXX form of the name Samson, Σαμψών, again with the *p* in the same type of phonetic environment.<sup>25</sup>

When speaking of abstract and sometimes hypostasized concepts such as death, sea, etc., I have attempted to apply some consistency in the matter of capitalization. I write “Death” with a capital D when I am referring to the name of the deity or divine figure (Mot or Māwet) and use “death” without a capitalized initial in other cases. There are naturally cases in which this line is difficult to draw.

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<sup>25</sup> The relationship between the forms with *p* and the ones with *m* (and the comparability of the Greek evidence) is also pointed out by Lipiński in *TDOT*, vol XV: 306 (s.v. *šemeš*).

In reproducing the Ugaritic passages, I have mainly used *CAT* (*KTU*<sup>2</sup>) as my textual basis, with any deviations pointed out as necessary. In longer quotations of specific Ugaritic textual passages, I have followed the *CAT*'s use of italic type to represent securely readable letters as opposed to roman type for uncertain signs. When discussing shorter phrases (or "idealized" passages) I have, however, used italic type throughout. The same difference is present in the matter of Ugaritic word-dividers (transliterated as a period): in longer quotations I have retained them, but not in short phrases. The translations of ancient texts are my own, unless otherwise noted; some of the biblical translations are inspired by the renderings of the Revised Standard Version or the New Revised Standard Version.

## 2. Ugaritic Focus

### 2.1 The Roles of the Ugaritic Solar Deity: a Preliminary Survey

When surveying the Ugaritic material that concerns Shapshu, it may be fruitful to make a primary assessment of the roles the divine figure plays in the different texts, or at least the roles she *seems* to play at first glance (or in the history of Ugaritological scholarship generally). These roles will, of course, constitute a very crude tool for conducting a detailed study of the texts themselves, but they have a definite use as categories and methodological implements, if only as a first step. It must be noted, however, that these “categorized roles” do not in any way replace the detailed case studies that will follow later—rather, they serve as adjuncts to and a necessary preliminary to them. Therefore, this quick survey does not provide full text references, as these will appear in the text studies themselves.

The roles chosen here to be these “crude tools” are derived from a number of different sources. One of them is the previous scholarly analyses that have been made of Shapshu’s appearances in the texts, and the “roles” derived from them therefore constitute a sort of testing material for the ideas, conclusions and assumptions that have been put forth concerning the Ugaritic sun goddess in the past. Others are derived from more spontaneous ideas arising in reading the texts. Possible roles can also be derived from what we know about solar theologies in the neighboring cultures.

A fourth source is even more subjective in nature: this is the complex of ideas that can form in considering the actual object of the sun itself. One should not ignore the fact that the solar disc is present in the life of every human being. This means that it is necessary to think also of the *possible and plausible* descriptions that might be applied to the sun and compare these with the material at hand. This does not mean that I in any way subscribe to any form of religio-historic universalism or think that there are “eternal qualities” characterizing the views of the sun “everywhere”—it is simply a matter of using a number of possible descriptions and metaphors and seeing which (if any) of these are actually used by the Ugaritic poets themselves. What I intend to do is thus to use the texts as a “sieve” to see which of these many possible descriptions are actually used in the texts—and quite as importantly, which are not.<sup>26</sup> It is of course possible to come up with an infinite number of descriptions

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<sup>26</sup> Of course, the selection of these roles will be subjective, which does create a number of methodological difficulties. It is impossible not to be influenced by one’s own ideas in choosing which “roles” to use, especially as pertains to such a conspicuous object as the sun, of which we all have our own private ideas, which have been built up through our acquaintance with it during our entire lives. The modern western society in which I live has of course given me a number of “set ideas” or prejudices about what the sun “is” and “does” that are probably reflected in my choices of methodological tools. But this is true of almost any study in the history of religions or exegetical scholarship and cannot be helped.

that could be applied to the sun in different contexts and for different purposes. By comparing a number of possible images to the material at hand it may, I propose, be possible to arrive at an (admittedly sketchy and probably imprecise) idea of the pictures of the sun and the solar deity that the Ugaritic texts paint for us. Thus, we will now consider some of these roles and make a preliminary (and sketchy) assessment of their occurrence in the Ugaritic texts.

### **2.1.1 The Sun as Giver of Light**

This is probably the simplest and most straightforwardly apparent role that strikes one when considering the sun as such. The act of giving light to the world would seem to be one of the most “natural” aspects of a solar deity, and one which might be expected to surface in the textual material. Indeed, it is an attribute very clearly applied to the sun in such Ancient Near Eastern texts as the Great Aton Hymn of Akhenaton and the Great Shamash Hymn. However, this aspect of the solar divinity is strangely absent from the descriptions of the Ugaritic goddess of the sun, except for its occurrence in her ubiquitous epithet *nrt ilm* (variously translated as “Lamp of the Gods,” “Luminary of the gods,” “Divine Lamp,” etc.) and comparable instances. Apart from these poetical descriptions, Shapshu does not “give light” very often in the Ugaritic texts.<sup>27</sup> Nowhere do we find any references to her “shining on the horizon” or anything similar. This fact might of course be due to the paucity of material—it is quite possible that pure chance has denied us access to descriptions such as these. Nevertheless, the absence of such phrases is quite striking.

### **2.1.2 The Sun as Giver of Drought**

Another natural and apparent function of the sun (especially in a region relatively close to the equator) is a rather less auspicious one than the “illumination” mentioned above. The fact that the sun can be thought of as producing terrible drought, and therefore impeding vegetable growth, can of course be thought of as one of its more unpleasant characteristics. The degree to which Shapshu displays this particular characteristic in the Ugaritic texts has become an intensely debated question—one which is directly tied to the extensive and overarching discussions concerning the possibility of “seasonal” interpretations of the Ugaritic texts, especially the Baal Cycle—and this question forms one of the central issues considered in the present study. In fact, there is one passage in which Shapshu is directly concerned that has a immediate and pivotal bearing on this whole complex of problems, viz. the recurring piece of text that I choose to call “The Refrain of the Burning Sun,” which is discussed *in extenso* later in this book (section 2.2.1). The classical interpretation of that text is one involving drought as a manifestation of the power of “Death” (that is, the god Mot) in the land.

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<sup>27</sup> A fact also alluded to by Korpel (1990: 586), who notes that “[c]uriously enough,” the verbal root <sup>3</sup>*wr* (“to shine upon”) is never associated with Shapshu.

### 2.1.3 The Sun as a Symbol of Kingship

In the cultures surrounding Ugarit, the sun is one of the most ubiquitous symbols of royal power. The famous solar imagery of Egyptian kingship is so well known that it has even entered modern popular culture. The Hittite great kings constantly refer to themselves as <sup>d</sup>UTU<sup>sti</sup> (“my sun”), and solar deities such as the Sun Goddess of Arinna are their protectors. We find the same idea in Mesopotamia, for example in the *Enuma Elish* (I 101-102), where the young Marduk (destined to be become king) is addressed as *Māri Utu, māri Utu / māri šamši, šamši ša ilāni* (“the son Utu, the son Utu / the son, the sun, sun of the gods”).<sup>28</sup> This role also has a partially juridical function, where the sun signifies justice and rightful governance. Again, the Great Shamash Hymn is a good example, as is the focus on Shamash in the prologue and epilogue of the Code of Hammurapi.

The image of the sun as a symbol of kingship is found all over the Ancient Near Eastern world, being an almost universal symbol. In Mesopotamia, the sun is connected with kingship in a very overt iconographical way in the form of the royal winged disk. The winged sun disk is one of the most persistent pieces of imagery in the Ancient Near Eastern world, appearing as it does in Egypt, Asia Minor, Mesopotamia and later in the Achaemenid Persian empire, and this fact must certainly have influenced thinking concerning solar imagery in many parts of the larger cultural area.

### 2.1.4 Shapshu as Divine Messenger

One of Shapshu’s most frequently mentioned characteristics is that she serves as a sort of messenger between the gods, specifically as the envoy of El. It is quite true that Shapshu is described as relaying messages and commands on a number of points in the Ugaritic texts: she tells the young god Athtar that he is unfit to rule, she says the same to Mot after he has battled with Baal, and she carries the pleas of the “mare” to different gods in the strange text *CAT* 1.114, dealing with snake bites. However, I think it ought to be noted that this messenger-function is in no way universal and unconditional. When messages are to be sent between Baal and Anat, the messenger employed is never Shapshu but rather Baal’s “lads” Gapnu and Ugar. In the same way, Athirat has her own messenger Qudshu-wa-Amrar who does her work for her. Thus, we should probably not be as inclusive as Caquot was, with his outright definition of Shapshu as “la messagère des dieux.”<sup>29</sup> Indeed, Shapshu sometimes carries messages, but this is certainly not her exclusive function, and neither is it one which she is alone in

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<sup>28</sup> Normalized from the text in Lambert 2013. This description is apparently meant as a quasi-etymologizing explanation of Marduk’s name as Sumerian *amar utu(k)* (“calf of the sun”), but its use of the specific expression *šamši* is undoubtedly connected to the royal symbolism of the sun in the Ancient Near East (note especially its similarity to the Hittite expression mentioned above).

<sup>29</sup> Caquot 1959: 93.

performing. I would propose that the messages delivered by Shapshu are special ones with certain special characteristics that match others of her functions. I will return to this question as we study individual passages in which Shapshu's "messenger function" is in evidence.

### **2.1.5 The Chthonic Sun**

This is the role of the solar deity as connected with the netherworld and the dead, often associated with the daily journey of the sun below the horizon. As pointed out in the Introduction, this role of the solar deity at Ugarit is of great importance to the present study, and it is well attested in Mesopotamia as well, where (as Healey points out) Shamash is called *bēl mītī* ("lord of the dead") and *šar eṭemmē* ("king of the ghosts"), and it is said that his burning light reaches to the underworld.<sup>30</sup> This aspect of solar deity is of the highest priority for the present investigation: indeed, as pointed out in the Introduction, its Ugaritic version and possible biblical retentions of the same are to a large extent what this book is all about.

### **2.1.6 A Short Note on the Translation of Shapshu's Epithet *nrt ilm***

As mentioned above, there have been a number of different translations of Shapshu's most common epithet, *nrt ilm*. Possibilities include "divine lamp/luminary," "lamp of the gods" or "lamp of El." Recently, the publication of the text RS 92.2016 (given the number 1.179 in the third edition of *KTU/CAT*), has caused opposition to the traditionally common translation "lamp of the gods" because of the fact that this text simply has *nrt il* (which would fit better with "lamp of El" or "divine lamp"; this reading is actually attested in the Baal Cycle as well, at 1.6 III 24, where it is normally emended to *nrt ilm*). Smith and Pitard (2009: 345-346) see the attestation in RS 92.2016 as a sign that the translation "lamp of the gods" is to be avoided, whereas Rahmouni (2008: 254-255) wants to keep it, due to the parallel Akkadian title *nūr ilī* ("light of the gods") used of Shamash. The new possible reading *nrm . ilm . špš* at *CAT* 1.3 V 17-18 in the third edition of *KTU/CAT* could, if correct, possibly tip the scale in the direction of "divine lamp," but the possibility of scribal errors makes the whole matter unclear (on this new reading, see further section 2.2.1.7; on *CAT* 1.179, see footnote 191). I myself remain agnostic on the question.

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<sup>30</sup> Healey 1980: 240.

## 2.2 The Baal Cycle

### 2.2.1 The Refrain of the Burning Sun

My discussion of the possible instances of the drought/death motif in Ugaritic literature will begin with one of the best known of all. Among all the attestations of Shapshu in the religious and mythological literature of Ugarit, there is one that stands out not only by virtue of its literary merits but also because of the enormous *Nachleben* it has had in the attempts of modern scholarship to understand the role that the sun goddess plays in the myth of Baal. This is a certain, small complex of Ugaritic words which has to a very large extent defined much of the modern views on Shapshu in the text, and which is quite central to the questions of how the Ugaritic solar deity relates to death, drought, and the underworld. I am referring to the short, recurring piece of text that I choose to call *The Refrain of the Burning Sun*, which forms one of the most central pieces of textual evidence for Shapshu in the Baal Cycle as a whole.<sup>31</sup> It is a brief refrain (only two or three stichoes long, depending on the analysis), which occurs three times with almost identical wording and in the commonplace and traditional interpretation describes the blasting heat produced by the sun—thus, an illustration of the natural phenomenon of drought. These lines play a central part in telling the story of the Cycle, especially that of the battle between Baal and Mot. They perhaps constitute the most apparent example of Shapshu's essence being pivotal in the narrative. The words are (with the more classic division of the lines; the other two attestations are virtually identical to this):

*nrt . ilm . špš . šhrrt*  
*la . šmm . b yd . bn ilm . mt*

(CAT 1.6 II 24-25)

These lines stand out among the other evidence found for the sun goddess in the Baal-cycle; they seem (by merit of their placement in the texts) to have an important bearing on its story, and thus a detailed analysis of these words is necessary in order to understand the overall role of Shapshu in the text. It is important to note that many of the important words used in this poetic unit are not used in connection with Shapshu in other contexts; thus they (and the Refrain as a whole) represent a specific message which makes sense in relation to the story as a whole. As noted above, they have traditionally been interpreted as a description of the sun's blasting heat, manifesting the defeat of Baal by the god of Death, Mot. This view has been called into question in recent years as part of the trend among certain scholars in the field of Ugaritology to give up and more or less fiercely attack any view of the Baal myth based on seasonal

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<sup>31</sup> Mettinger (2001: 60) refers to it as the "drought formula." Gulde (2007: 114) similarly calls it the "Dürreformel."

interpretations. I intend here to discuss these developments as pertains to the text in question.

The Refrain appears in three different places in the Baal Cycle, all of them pivotal to the story. The first of these is *CAT* 1.3 V 17-18, a poorly preserved attestation which is inserted into a discussion between the gods El and Anat concerning the building of a palace for Baal. Anat tries to secure a house for her brother, Baal, and the Refrain occurs during this dialogue.

The second instance is *CAT* 1.4 VIII 21-24, where the Refrain occurs at the very beginning of the story of Baal's conflict with Mot, the god of death. The context this time is a speech by Baal himself, instructing his two messengers on how to behave on their way to the underworld and to Mot. He warns them of the dangers of being swallowed by the god of death, after which the Refrain follows.

The third attestation is the one quoted above, *CAT* 1.6 II 24-25, the context of which is the confrontation between Anat and Mot after Baal's descent into the netherworld. Mot describes how he swallowed Baal, using wordings identical to those with which Baal warns his messengers, and then comes the Refrain.

Thus, the passage occurs at three important places in the Baal Cycle: when the protagonists are trying to procure a house for Baal, when Baal's conflict with the god of death is about to start and when Anat confronts Mot and (partially) defeats him. It appears to describe what happens if (or when) the life-giving storm deity Baal is absent or dead, when his power is not at its optimal operational level, so to speak.

This piece of text may be very short, but its contents are central to the questions of drought, death and the sun in the extant Ugaritic mythology. There has also been a great deal of controversy concerning it in the scholarly literature, down to the most minute issues of philology, with opinions differing wildly regarding both the morphology and the lexicography of the passage. Therefore, I will subject the Refrain to a rather extensive philological analysis, stating my ideas carefully and addressing various other suggestions that have been made. The purely Ugaritologically interested reader will find such an analysis necessary, and though readers with a more general background in exegesis or history of religions may find some linguistic details initially to be less than inspiring, I hope this section (and others like it) may serve to illustrate to some extent the great impact that a small difference in morphological and/or etymological analysis can have on the interpretation of an entire religious work. Given the very large part played by the Refrain of the Burning Sun in modern interpretations of the Baal Cycle, such an extensive discussion provides a fitting introduction to the fascinating yet methodologically difficult scholarly field that exists in the intersection between exegetical scholarship, history of religions, comparative linguistics and the philological analysis of broken texts written in an extinct language that has no surviving tradition of interpretation, is imperfectly understood and written in an almost vowel-less script.



The lines have been translated in a number of different ways. As a provisional translation from which to begin my discussion, I shall quote the rendering of Gibson (1978):

Shapash the luminary of the gods did glow hot,  
the heavens were wearied by the hand of divine Mot[.]<sup>32</sup>

In the attestation of the lines in *CAT* 1.4 VIII, in which Baal tells his messengers of the dangers of Mot and the netherworld, the traditional interpretation analyses the words as forming the end of a longer description of the risk of being swallowed by the god of death. I here provide this longer text, now with my own version of a traditional type of translation, partly following Gibson's rendering above (1.4 VIII 15-24):

*al tqrb . l bn ilm mt .*  
*al . y<sup>c</sup> dbkm k imr . b ph*  
*k lli . b tbrn qnh . thtan*  
*nrt . ilm . špš šhrrt .*  
*la šmm . b yd . mdd . ilm . mt .*

Do not draw near Divine Mot,  
may he not serve you up like a lamb in his mouth,  
(and) you both be crushed like a lamb in the chasm of his gullet.  
Shapshu, the divine lamp, glows hot,  
the heavens are wearied by the hand of Mot, beloved of El.<sup>33</sup>

### 2.2.1.1 The Poetic/Stichometric Structure and the Word *šhrrt*

If we are first to look at the literary construction of the Refrain in accordance with the traditional view represented by Gibson's rendering, we can see a remarkably elaborate poetic structure (considering that we are talking of only two poetic lines). We find in each of the two lines a description of a state, in the first line centered on Shapshu/the sun, and in the second on "the heavens" as a more general designation. The focus of both lines seems to be on the same phenomenon. If we study the wording used in the two lines, we find an interesting sort of chiasmic position of the two words *šhrrt* and *la* (above translated as "glows hot" and "are wearied," respectively): one of them ends a line, and the other begins the next. This gives them a parallel placement, which can aid in the interpretation of the Refrain as a whole, on which see further below. In the traditional interpretation, these two words are undoubtedly the main focal point of the stichoes.

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<sup>32</sup> Gibson 1978: 77. This type of translation can be found in many studies; one recent example is Gulde 2007: 92, 114.

<sup>33</sup> A similar translation is found in Smith and Pitard 2009: 703-704.

The first of these words (*šhrrt*) has long been recognized as meaning “to scorch, roast, to burn,” etc.<sup>34</sup> The word is also used in the text known as *The Birth of the Good and Gracious Gods* (CAT 1.23) in a way that hints that the connotation of the root in question has to do with “burning,” “roasting” or the like—the text speaks of a bird being “roasted” on coals.<sup>35</sup> In the present context this word appears to constitute a description of an undesired state: the root used of the sun is not for example *ʾwr* (“to shine”)<sup>36</sup> or the like, which would be more natural if the purpose of the Refrain were merely to describe the normal working of a celestial body. The use of a root having to do with roasting and burning immediately gives the audience a sense that something is not as it ought to be. The Refrain becomes a statement of a symptom, a way of showing that things are not right.

It is very important to note that the word *šhrr* is not otherwise associated with Shapshu anywhere in the whole of the Ugaritic corpus, and especially not in the Baal-cycle itself. It is, therefore, not in any way an ordinary word used for talking about the Sun—it occurs in this manner only in this specific context, which shows us that the meaning of this verb is of quite central importance for the meaning of the Refrain as such. The fact that Shapshu is “burning” seems to be the central message that these lines want to communicate.

Another interpretation of the verb is espoused by Juliane Kutter. In her view, the climatological problems described by the Refrain are very different. She, like Johannes de Moor before her,<sup>37</sup> is of the view that the word *šhrrt* is not to be translated “burns,” “scorches” or the like, but rather as a color adjective: “staubfarben.”<sup>38</sup> In her view, thus, Mot does not make the sun shine and burn, inducing drought, but rather the opposite: the sun is darkened, its light being obscured by the power of the god of death. This is counterindicated by a number of different factors.

The first of these is the word *šhrr(t)* itself. The use of *šhrrt* in CAT 1.23 to my mind makes it clear that its normal Ugaritic meaning has to do with roasting and burning, not color. To translate “they become dust-colored on the fire” is difficult in the context: the text even expressly talks about “coals.” Johannes de Moor finds his solution by talking of “frying [...] brown,” an expression which I find rather counter-intuitive.<sup>39</sup> One might possibly imagine a meaning of “grew dark red,” but this does not imply the darkish dusk that Kutter describes.

Another problem with the “dust-color” approach is the fact that this is only one of the colors that the root *šhr* can signify. The “dust-color” approach owes

<sup>34</sup> See *DUL*: 782-783 [s.v. *š-ḥ-r-r*], which mentions “to be burnt,” “to roast” and “is burning.”

<sup>35</sup> See CAT 1.23 41.

<sup>36</sup> As noted before, this verb is never associated with Shapshu.

<sup>37</sup> de Moor 1971: 114. The same view is represented by Dietrich and Loretz in *TUAT*, vol III/6: 1148, 1172, 1189.

<sup>38</sup> Kutter 2008: 147, 154 *et passim*.

<sup>39</sup> de Moor 1971: 114.

much to the meanings of the root *ṣhr* in Classical Arabic,<sup>40</sup> but Lane's Arabic dictionary gives a number of different possibilities if one wants to see a color word as one's chosen translation, among which are types of yellow or red, dust-color, a color "*inclining to a little whiteness*" and "*a colour in which there is whiteness and redness*," which makes it difficult to make a case for any specific hue.<sup>41</sup>

Also, as Emerton notes, color is not the only sphere of meaning associated with the eleventh theme of the root in Arabic (*ʿiṣhārra*): it can also be used of flowers drying up, a highly interesting parallel in the present context.<sup>42</sup> As has been noted in many places, the Arabic root also has the nominal derivative *ṣahrāʾ* ("shadeless desert").<sup>43</sup> "Burning" is definitely the semantic sphere being referenced here: not only is it a more plausible description of the sun, but it also seems to be closer to the original root meaning from which these different ideas are derived. Also, one should note that meanings connected with burning (even "branding" or "cauterizing") are found for this root in Modern South Arabian languages such as Mehri and Soqotri (especially interesting as these cognates entail active, verbal meanings and not nominal constructs or stative verbs, something which would fit better with the attestation in 1.23).<sup>44</sup> In the Ugaritic text CAT 1.12 (lines II 42-43) the verb *ṣhr* is paralleled by the expression *tr<sup>c</sup> tr<sup>n</sup>* (probably meaning something like "it is completely cracked"),<sup>45</sup> and two lines earlier, the verb *ḥrr* ("to grow hot") occurs, together pointing in the direction of parching and blasting heat.<sup>46</sup>

Also, the "dust-color" interpretation has some difficulties in terms of inherent semantic probability. The idea that Mot's power would be manifested through the sun becoming dust-colored or darkened is not quite consonant with the descriptions given in other parts of the Baal Cycle of the manifestations of

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<sup>40</sup> So, e.g., de Moor 1971: 114. Rahmouni (2008: 272, n. 4) points to the Arabic *ṣuḥratun* as the *only* argument for dust-color; she herself does not find it convincing. It should be pointed out, however, that de Moor also adduces Hebrew *\*ṣāḥōr*, which he translates as "brownish yellow" or "reddish." But the exact hue implied by the Hebrew word is highly uncertain (see HALOT [s.v. *\*ṣāḥōr*]).

<sup>41</sup> Lane 1863: 1654 (s.v. *ʿiṣhārra* and *ṣuḥratun*). As well pointed out by Rahmouni (2008: 272, n. 4), Lane's lexicon (p. 1653) quotes the relevant parallel *ṣaḥarathu ṣ-ṣamsu*, meaning that the burning sun pained a certain person with its hot glare (or, in the context, his brain). The expression apparently has a "sound-alike" equivalent in *ṣaḥarathu ṣ-ṣamsu* (Lane 1863: 1737, also mentioned in Rahmouni's note 4), translated by Lane as "*the sun affected him severely with its heat* [...]." All this points to a burning, destructive sun in Arabic as well.

<sup>42</sup> Emerton 1972: 65.

<sup>43</sup> Pointed out already by Gordon (1965: 474).

<sup>44</sup> Rendsburg 1987: 625.

<sup>45</sup> See, e.g., Driver 1956: 73 and Wyatt 2002: 166.

<sup>46</sup> Another etymological pointer to heat as the central sphere of reference of the root may perhaps be found in the Ge'ez word *ṣəḥərt*, meaning "caldron" or "kettle" (on this word, see CDG: 553 [s.v. *ṣəḥərt*]).

Death's reign. Especially important in this context is the passage *CAT* 1.6 IV 1-3, in which, during Baal's absence, the furrows of the field are surveyed and found to be "parched" (*pl 'nt šdm*), which definitely seem to describe the results of scorching heat.<sup>47</sup> To introduce such a situation through the expression that the sun is "dust-colored" would seem difficult (though not impossible, as a destructive sirocco could possibly be described this way).<sup>48</sup> A further fact that would suggest (in an oblique but narratologically meritorious way) a connection between the burning state of the sun and the parched furrows is the circumstance that the one ordered by El to survey the fields is none other than Shapshu herself, who thus sees the results of the power Mot has manifested through her. This becomes a fitting preamble to Baal's subsequent return and sets the stage for Shapshu's proclamation of him as king of the gods. In defense of the de "dust color" interpretation, however, one could imagine burning heat being conceptually implied in a description of a sirocco-stricken sun, as noted earlier.

Kutter objects to the "burning" translation by pointing out that the rays of the sun seem in the main to have been viewed as positive in the neighboring Mesopotamian cultures—thereby supposedly invalidating the possibility of a "drought sun" in this case. She points out that the destructive summer heat was usually associated there with gods of the underworld and with "evil" deities such as Erra, Nergal and the fire god Gibil.<sup>49</sup> However, the present passage fits much better than she wants to give it credit for: the one causing the burning is not Shapshu herself out of some evil inclination, but rather Mot, in whose power she is while Baal is away! And Mot is, of course, by definition the most "netherworldly" of deities. Also, Kutter has no objection to interpreting her translation "staubfarben" as a reference to the summer climate at Ugarit.<sup>50</sup> If Mot's power can cause the sun to become dusty and soiled (thereby creating a destructive summer climate), why would he not be able to influence the degree of her burning glow—especially when, as I will attempt to show in section 2.3.1 (especially 2.3.1.2), the shining powers of Shapshu seem to have had an intrinsic symbolic connection to the underworld in the funerary text *CAT* 1.161?

Mark S. Smith has offered a different segmentation of the Refrain in which, while concurring with the general observation that the words describe blasting

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<sup>47</sup> This expression is discussed in greater detail in section 2.2.5.1.

<sup>48</sup> This is the main interpretation of de Moor, appearing in many of his works; concerning the Refrain discussed here, see de Moor 1971: 115 (and more generally pp. 173-176). I personally do not rule out that a description of the sirocco may occur at points of the Baal Cycle, but the evidence is not clear. One would have liked clear-cut references to eastern winds or such phenomena in the text. In another passage (*CAT* 1.4 VII 32-33), in which Baal confronts and scares off certain enemies, de Moor (1971: 164) reconstructed *rh qd[m]*, which would mean "the wind(s) of the east" and would certainly be relevant, but the text is damaged and highly uncertain, and both *CAT* and *TUDB* give different readings.

<sup>49</sup> Kutter 2008: 148.

<sup>50</sup> Kutter 2008: 157.

heat, he sees this as being expressed in a somewhat different fashion. According to this view, the Refrain consists of three stichoes, not two.<sup>51</sup> This version of the Refrain is the following:

<i>nrt ilm špš</i>	The Divine Lamp, Shapsh,
<i>šhrrt la šmm</i>	Burns the orb of heaven
<i>b yd bn ilm mt</i>	By the power of Divine Mot. <sup>52</sup>

The phrase *la šmm* is seen here not as a state (“the heavens are wearied”), but as the object of the verb *šhrrt*. This would destroy the poetic parallelism of the lines, which makes the solution unattractive. Smith later appears to have distanced himself from this interpretation. Instead, he and Wayne T. Pitard chose to adopt one which in a way combines the “burning” translation with the idea of coloring: “to shine red.”<sup>53</sup> Pitard and Smith suggest that such a red shine could be a reference to the red afternoon sun and sunset, which is an interesting idea given the known connection between Shapshu’s travels below the horizon and the sphere of death and the underworld.

There is yet another textual passage in the Baal Cycle that may be of relevance in the present context, a passage which amply illustrates an important point: when interpreting Ugaritic data, it is always vitally important to know what parts of a text are actually in a sufficiently good state of preservation for any far-reaching conclusions to be drawn from them. The case I am referring to is a possible, highly tantalizing but also textually suspect reference to the “heat of Mot” at the end of the Baal Cycle, when the returning storm deity confronts his enemies in *CAT* 1.6 V 4. According to one reading of the signs (mentioned, for example, by *TUDB*), the text here mentions the *šhr mt*, translated by Yon as “la chaleur de Mot.”<sup>54</sup> Of course, this would be quite an interesting expression of the dangers fought by the heroic side in the Baal-Mot story, obviously related to the *šhrr* of the Refrain. However, the passage is heavily damaged and the letters unclear: the *CAT* reads the words quite differently (*šgym*, i.e. “the young ones”). If the “heat” reading is correct, this would be yet another signal that the hot drought that the text appears to be speaking of is directly connected to the rule of Mot.

### 2.2.1.2 Other Interpretations Opposed to a “Drought”-Reading

A very different interpretation of these lines has been offered by Wiggins (1996). We shall discuss his suggestions (as well as the ones proposed by Wyatt,

<sup>51</sup> A similar stichometric analysis (though differing in the view of the meaning of the words) can be found in Tsevat 1974: 75.

<sup>52</sup> Smith (*UNP*): 156

<sup>53</sup> Pitard and Smith 2009: 346. I myself independently arrived at a virtually identical translation in Wikander 2003: 55.

<sup>54</sup> Yon 1989: 464.

on which see further below) first from a contextual point of view and by evaluating the alleged meaning of the passage. Thereafter we shall make a more detailed analysis of the lexemes in question, to ascertain whether or not they can be made to mean what the dissenting views want them to mean.

In Wiggins' view, the traditional interpretation of the words as representing drought is fundamentally misconstrued and based on an allegedly erroneous seasonal interpretation of the Cycle as a whole. His solution to the problem is to see the lines as relating not to any abnormal "burning" state of the sun but to the well-attested notion of Shapshu going to the realm of death during the night. Wiggins also has a different analysis of the poetic structure as compared with the traditional rendering. He translates the lines *CAT* 1.4 VIII 20-24 in the following manner (I have added the Ugaritic original to underscore Wiggins' analysis of the stichometric structure of the lines, including the word *ṯtan*, which in the traditional interpretation is seen as the last word of the preceding sentence but in Wiggins' view is a part of the Refrain as such):

*ṯtan nrt . ilm . špš  
 šḥrrt . la . šmm .  
 b yd . mdd . ilm . mt .*

Attach to Shapsh, lamp of the gods,  
 Scorcher, strength of the heavens,  
 into the hands of Mot, beloved of El ...<sup>55</sup>

In Wiggins' interpretation the lines are thus a description of the road Baal's messengers must take in order to reach Mot in the underworld: they are to "hitch a ride" with the sun goddess who goes there every night. Wiggins thus puts an (admittedly understandable) emphasis on Shapshu's role as psychopomp.

Wiggins' view of the passage is somewhat understandable in the case of *CAT* 1.4 VIII 20-24, where Baal is indeed sending a message to Mot, a message which might well be conveyed by means of Shapshu. But does it fit well with the other passages?

As we have seen, the phrase also occurs in two other contexts. The first of these is *CAT* 1.3 V 17-18, where we find it inserted into a conversation between Anat and El on the building of Baal's palace. This is hardly the place for any talk of hitching a ride with Shapshu. Wiggins solves this problem by simply regarding this *testimonium* as nonexistent by virtue of its poor state of

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<sup>55</sup> Wiggins 1996: 331. The general interpretation was followed by Azize (2005: 138). The same analysis (and translation) is adhered to in Wiggins 2000: 592-593. Despite this, Wiggins concedes in the latter publication that "[h]aving suggested this translation, however, it must be considered that this passage may have something to do with extraordinary heat being produced by the sun in Baal's absence."

preservation,<sup>56</sup> but the fact is that quite enough of the passage is preserved to warrant a reconstruction on the basis of the other two instances of the Refrain: the combination of the words *nrt ilm špš* and *la šmm* is read both by *CAT* and by Smith in *UNP*,<sup>57</sup> and there is no other instance in which these words occur than precisely the lines which I refer to here as the “Refrain of the Burning Sun.” Thus, I do not consider Wiggins’ reasoning to be compelling in this instance—rather the contrary, in fact, as this is precisely the *testimonium* that does not fit his interpretation at all.

The third instance of the Refrain, *CAT* 1.6 II 24-25, is also quite difficult to align with Wiggins’ proposal. It occurs when Mot is being verbally attacked by Anat for killing Baal, at the end of Mot’s speech about how he came upon Baal and swallowed him. Wiggins sees this as a description of how Baal ended up in the underworld—he was carried there by Shapshu.<sup>58</sup>

A line of reasoning in certain respects similar to that of Wiggins is proposed by Nicolas Wyatt.<sup>59</sup> He has modified the idea, so that to his mind the lines become a description not of any preferable way into the underworld but rather of the danger inherent in contact with Mot. This is based on the intriguing fact that the two later instances of the Refrain occur right after the formulaic description of those dangers: being “put like a kid between his [Mot’s] maws,” etc. What Wyatt is proposing, then, is that the Refrain in these two instances is not an individual piece of text at all, but rather the conclusion to the fixed wording which describes Mot’s terrible jaws. This is a quite important and interesting point, which makes it inherently less probable that the Refrain is merely “an aside by the poet on the weather.”<sup>60</sup> Thus, in Wyatt’s view *CAT* 1.4 VIII 20-24 become (again with the Ugaritic added for comparison):

*thtan nrt . ilm . špš*  
*šhrrt . la . šmm .*  
*b yd . mdd . ilm . mt .*

Lest you be carried away by the Luminary of the gods, Shapsh,  
 the Burning One, strength of the heavens,  
 into the hand(s) of the beloved of El, Mot.<sup>61</sup>

The *testimonium* during the discussion between Mot and Anat becomes a (somewhat untrue) description by Mot of how he came to swallow Baal: it was

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<sup>56</sup> Wiggins 1996: 330: “At best we can say that Shapsh appears to be mentioned here, albeit, in a broken context.”

<sup>57</sup> And in Smith and Pitard 2009: 315, as well (even though some letters are uncertain: see pp. 319-320).

<sup>58</sup> Wiggins 1996: 333.

<sup>59</sup> Wyatt 2002: 85 and especially n. 65.

<sup>60</sup> Wyatt 2002: 85, n. 65.

<sup>61</sup> Wyatt 2002: 113.

Shapshu's fault, so to speak: she "carried him away," and thus he ended up "in Mot's hands." These two instances of the Refrain are quite possible to explain in the way intended by Wyatt. The third one is, however, much more of an obstacle. In *CAT* 1.3 V 17-18, there does not seem to be any reason to describe anyone being "carried off" by Shapshu into the hands of Mot. The context here is a discussion between El and Anat on the building of Baal's palace. Wyatt solves this by reconstructing the passage as an expression of fright on behalf of El: the idea is that El describes his fear in terms of being "carried away" by Shapshu into the hands of Mot. The "carrying away" (as well as the "attaching" in the case of Wiggins) is a translation of the difficult verb *ḥt'*, which occurs near the other two attestations of the Refrain and which in the traditional interpretation is taken to be a part of the preceding line, meaning something like "be crushed, disappear," and not a part of the Refrain as such.<sup>62</sup>

Wyatt's solution to the problem of *CAT* 1.3 V 17-18 may make his translation more probable, but it is in fact fraught with too many difficulties to be convincing. The first of these is the simple fact of the amount of conjectural restoration needed to make it work. No verb for "being afraid" is actually preserved, and neither is the form of *ḥt'*, which is so important for Wyatt's interpretation to be possible. One might contend that the second of these propositions is not so far-fetched by arguing that this verb is present in the other two instances of the Refrain and thus ought to be so in this one too, but this is actually not necessary: this idea presupposes as fact that the Refrain is an organic part of the description of Mot's dangers, but in the case of *CAT* 1.3 V 17-18 it would be difficult to fit this lengthy description into the lacuna prior to the Refrain. Thus we can in no way be certain that any form of the verb was ever present.

Another problem with Wyatt's version of *CAT* 1.3 V 17-18 lies in the very meaning he supposes the words to have. The idea that El would here express his fright is not inherently improbable (quite the contrary, in fact, considering the professed anxiety concerning Anat's violent nature that he displays both in the present context and in the similar narration in the *Epic of Aqhat*, *CAT* 1.18 I 11-19) but the mode of his stating this is not very believable. It does not seem probable that El would describe his fear of Anat in these terms: why would he be afraid of being carried away by Shapshu into the hands of Mot, to be brought to a god who is referred to as his own "beloved" (*mdd il* or *ydd il*)—by a goddess who often does his own work for him? It is not easy to believe that El, the king of the gods, would fear the god of death in the same way that the (at this point) subservient Baal could be expected to do. The very fact that Mot is El's "beloved" makes any such antagonism improbable. And why would El burst into such a strange declaration of fear when talking to Anat—would it not be more probable to expect a description of the dangerous nature of Anat herself?

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<sup>62</sup> See, for example, Gibson 1978: 77 and Smith (*UNP*): 139.



As we have seen, both Wiggins' and Wyatt's related interpretations of the Refrain build much of their arguments upon the translation of the forms of the verb *ḥt*<sup>63</sup>, which occur in at least two of the passages in question. This verb occurs in both of the two "later" instances of the Refrain, in two different conjugational forms. In *CAT* 1.4 VIII 20 the form is *ḥtan*, which is apparently a second person dual form addressed to Baal's envoys.<sup>63</sup> In *CAT* 1.6 II 23 the verb occurs in the form *ḥtu*, followed by the personal pronoun *hw*, referring to Baal, who is the one whom Mot has swallowed.

The forms in question are quite central to Wyatt's and Wiggins' reinterpretations of the Refrain. This is quite natural: these forms are, to my mind, the greatest single obstacle to the traditional view. One of the reasons for this is metrical. In the traditional interpretation, in which the Refrain is a separate piece of text not intrinsically connected with the description of the dangers of Death, the forms of the verb are construed as part of precisely that lengthy, preceeding evocation of Mot's terrible jaws. This is my version of the "traditional view" of the end of Mot's speech, and the beginning of what follows (i.e. the Refrain), *CAT* 1.6 II 21-24:

<i>ngš . ank . aliyn b'l</i>	It was I who came upon Mighty Baal.
<i>dbnn ank . &lt;k&gt; imr . b py</i>	It was I who served him up [like] a lamb in my mouth.
<i>k lli . b ṭbrn q&lt;n&gt;y . ḥtu<sup>64</sup> hw</i>	He was crushed like a kid in the chasm of my gullet.
<i>nrt . ilm . špš . šḥrrt</i>	Shapshu, the divine lamp, glows hot ... <sup>65</sup>

This classical interpretation makes good sense of the verb *ḥt*<sup>63</sup>, supposing it to mean "grind," "crush," "destroy" or the like, based on the proposed Akkadian cognate *ḥatû*, which matches the Ugaritic lexeme perfectly in terms of sound laws.<sup>66</sup>

However, the stichometry and the stylistics of the passage do become a bit strange when interpreted in this way. The line immediately preceding the beginning of the Refrain (*k lli* ... etc.) becomes unduly long, and the placing of the verb at the end of the sentence sits oddly in contrast with the line before. Even more problematic is the inability of the traditional interpretation to make

<sup>63</sup> On the form, and its use of enclitic *-n*, see Tropper 2000: 446.

<sup>64</sup> *CAT* reads this word as *<n>ḥtu*. This emendation to an N form is not securely motivated to my mind; *TUDB* keeps the reading of the tablet, *ḥtu*, without emendation, and I choose to do the same.

<sup>65</sup> Here the version quoted is *CAT* 1.6 II 21-24, because of its interesting use of the word *hw*, but as far as the metric discussion goes, *CAT* 1.4 VIII 20-24 is just as relevant in this context.

<sup>66</sup> See for example Tropper 2002: 512. It is also the view represented in *DUL*: 413 (s.v. *ḥ-t-?*).

any good use of the word *hw*, which would be little more than a rather arbitrarily placed subject marker (though creating a sort of chiasm with *ank*).

In the version proposed by Wyatt, both these problems disappear. The beginning of the Refrain becomes *htu hw nrt ilm špš*, a quite normal line of Ugaritic poetry without the “right-heaviness” created by the traditional interpretation of the line *k lli ...* etc. As we have seen, Wyatt translates his version of the line (beginning with *htu hw*) as “It was he who was carried away by the Luminary of the Gods, Shapsh.” In this interpretation, the *hw* of the text is a natural counterpart of the *ank* (“I”) which occurs in the lines before: “It was I ...”—“It was he ...” And this is precisely because these words are connected in Wyatt’s view: the Refrain is nothing more than a further description of what it is like being caught by the god of death after having been carried into his grasp by the solar deity.

The verb *ht*, which is at the center of these discussions, is not entirely etymologically clear. There are basically three different suggestions as to its meaning in the present text. The first of these is, as we have seen, to find its *comparandum* in the Akkadian verb *hatû*, the basic meaning of which is “to smite.”<sup>67</sup> In our passage, it is usually thought to mean something like “crush,” which would fit well with the interpretation of this verb as belonging to the passage prior to the Refrain itself.<sup>68</sup> The passive of the basic meaning “smite” has been broadened by scholars to mean “disappear”<sup>69</sup> and “be destroyed.”<sup>70</sup>

The second proposed translation of the verb in question is that favored by Margalit and Wiggins, who view it as a cognate of the second Akkadian verb *hatû*, which usually means something like “adorn” or “bond” (as in “bond a wall”).<sup>71</sup> From this meaning, the two authors extrapolate a more simple significance, “to attach, to become attached to.” There are a number of problems with this approach. The first is that of the meaning itself: quite a lot of creative imagination is necessary to get from an Akkadian verb referring to the application of ornaments or the construction of walls to the idea that messengers “hitch a ride” with a solar deity on her way to the underworld (the *CAD* gives the translation “to attach” only when the objects are “gold ornaments”). The second problem arises from one of the other attestations of the Refrain. In *CAT* 1.6 II 23-25, the form of the verb in question is *htu*. This is translated by Margalit as “picked him up,”<sup>72</sup> referring to the idea that Baal is transported into the hands of Mot by Shapshu during her daily trip below the horizon. However,

<sup>67</sup> See the *CAD*, vol. H: 151-152 (s.v. *hatû* A).

<sup>68</sup> See, for example, Smith (*UNP*): 139. This putative meaning of the verb (“be crushed”) is given by Albright (1941a: 48), who also connected it with the use of a possible Hebrew cognate in Hab 3:7. Cf. Margalit 1980: 84, n. 2, with criticism.

<sup>69</sup> Caquot, Sznycer and Herdner 1974: 220 (“... vous disparaîtrez”); unless this is perhaps based on the interpretation “to be carried away” (see below).

<sup>70</sup> Pardee (*COS*): 264.

<sup>71</sup> Margalit 1980: 84; Wiggins 1996 : 331, n. 10; cf. *CAD*, vol. H: 152 (s.v. *hatû* B).

<sup>72</sup> Margalit 1980: 156.

the morphology becomes very strange. The pronoun referring to Baal (*hw*) is nominative and not the oblique form *hwt* expected if Baal really were the object of the sentence. Margalit here proposes an emendation to *hwt*, which he refers to as “self-evident.”<sup>73</sup> I, however, find this emendation to be based on circular reasoning: it is asking quite a lot to propose a new translation which significantly alters the “received truth” about the meaning of the passage in question and then to change one of the central words so as to make this new translation possible.

Another morphological difficulty in Margalit’s rendering of *CAT* 1.6 II 23-25 concerns the form of the verb itself. For the form *htu* to function as a predication with Shapshu as its subject, it must be interpreted as a narrative infinitive. Such forms are indeed found immediately preceding in the text.<sup>74</sup> There, however, the subject is expressed directly after the infinitive (*ngš ank* and *‘dbnn ank*) and (which is even more interesting) in the case of *‘dbnn*, we find the object (“him”) expressed using an energetic suffix on the verb itself. In the case of *htu hw*, however, Margalit’s interpretation has to presuppose both (1) that the subject (Shapshu, in his view) is separated from the infinitive (which is unusual in the context), and (2) that the object is expressed not by a suffix as it was just earlier, but by a free-standing pronoun which even has to be emended in order to express an object at all.

The third view of *ht’* is the one proposed by Driver. He takes it as a cognate of Arabic *iẖtata’a* and translates *iẖtan* as “you both be carried away.”<sup>75</sup> This translation is in itself quite possible. However, its apparent adoption and use by Wyatt (“It was he who was carried away by the Luminary of the Gods, Shapsh” etc.) must be regarded as difficult. Wyatt here seems to see Shapshu as the agent of a passive sentence, but this agentive syntactic function is not shown in any way whatsoever. Moreover, in the instance of the Refrain in *CAT* 1.4, his view becomes even more fraught with difficulty. Here, as we saw above, the expression with the form *iẖtan* is, according to Wyatt, supposed to mean “Lest you be carried away by the Luminary of the gods, Shapsh ...” But if the Ugaritic verb here is to be regarded as a passive form, we have again the problem with the lack of overt marking of the agent (Shapshu)—and if it were assumed to be an active form (“lest she carry you away ...”) the lack of the objectual dual suffix *-km* would be hard to explain.

Rather conclusive evidence for *ht’* referring to some form of destruction comes from the letter from Evri-dharri to Pilsiya, *CAT* 2.10, in which the former complains of his and his friends’ misfortunes, using numerous forms of this root. Notably, the letter explicitly mentions the “hand of the gods” being “like Mot” as a metaphor for the troubles of the involved parties. This pairing of

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<sup>73</sup> Margalit 1980: 156.

<sup>74</sup> See Tropper 2000: 484, 503.

<sup>75</sup> Driver 1956: 103, 139; cf. also Margalit 1980: 84.

expressions is highly reminiscent of the dangers connected with Mot and being in his power that the text surrounding the Refrain talks of. The verb *ḥt* was apparently associated conceptually with the god of death.<sup>76</sup>

### 2.2.1.3 *The Location and Intent of the Refrain*

We can note that both the new and the old approaches to the Refrain carry inherent problems. The classic view (in its different forms) does not seem to make the text fit very well with what has come before, while the reappraisals run into purely philological difficulties. As we have seen, neither the newer proposals of Wiggins and Wyatt nor the traditional interpretation (at least as it is usually formulated) are able to fulfil all the criteria that ought to be necessary for the Refrain to make sense. However, the traditional version is quite clearly fraught with fewer philological problems than the more innovative approaches. What Wiggins and Wyatt have done is to highlight the need for contextual sequence in the narrative: Wyatt is quite right to question the assumption of some strange “aside on the weather” that does not seem to go together with what has come before in the text. It is indeed interesting to note that the Refrain occurs twice after exactly the same piece of identical text, the description of Mot’s maw. It is therefore necessary to try to formulate an answer to the problem which takes these points into consideration while still keeping with the more firm philological basis inherent in the traditional interpretation.

But before we do this, we must ask ourselves what this short piece of text is really about. We have seen scholars debate specific philological issues in it, and their different proposals have been reviewed. It is obvious that two sharply differing interpretations are present in the literature: one supposing that the Refrain in one way or another is a climatological description of heat and/or drought, and the other viewing it as a reference to Shapshu somehow “carrying” someone to the underworld, that is, a psychopompal understanding of the passage. Which of these two ideas seems the more likely?

In his 1996 article, Wiggins is quite open about his belief that any idea of a drought in this piece of text is a remnant of an unnecessary seasonal interpretation of the Baal Cycle.<sup>77</sup> There, he does not consider the passage to have to do with dryness, heat or drought (though see n. 55 above)—as we have seen, he regards the important word *ṣhr̥rt* as little more than a generic description of Shapshu, one that is not in any way meant as the central message.

In Wiggins’ view, the poet describes the solar deity as “scorcher” in much the same way that he habitually calls Baal “victorious” (*aliyn*) and Anat “progenitress of the peoples” (*ybmt limm*). Wyatt here follows suit. The view that *ṣhr̥rt* is to be regarded as an epic epithet of Shapshu (“scorcher”) is also

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<sup>76</sup> This connection was also noted by Smith and Pitard (2009: 348). Roberts (1971a: 247-248) also highlights this letter and its reference to the dangerous “hand” that is like Death.

<sup>77</sup> Wiggins 1996: 331.

held by Rahmouni.<sup>78</sup> But the problem with this approach is very obvious: *nowhere else* in the entire Ugaritic corpus is Shapshu referred to as a “scorcher.” We do not even find any form of the word *šhrr* applied to her anywhere else. The same goes for the words *la šmm*, regarded by Wiggins and Wyatt as yet another epithet.

Nowhere else are these words used in connection with Shapshu—they occur only in the Refrain itself. Thus, the natural conclusion is that these two expressions underline exactly what is special about the Refrain: they show what it is all about. The central message of the Refrain is that the Sun is “burning,” and this is expressed using a word nowhere else employed to describe her. It would therefore seem reasonable to assume that what the Refrain speaks of is not Shapshu’s normal and healthy state, but an aberration therefrom.<sup>79</sup> The use of special terminology serves to highlight how “unnatural” Shapshu’s burning, drought-inducing state actually is. I would argue that far from being just another stock epithet of Shapshu, describing her functions poetically, the word *šhrrt* is in fact exactly the opposite: a description of how things are when all is not well. This is the reason for the unusual wording—and also the reason for the connection with Mot, who is the immediate cause of Shapshu’s sorry state. She is “in Mot’s hands”—possibly not only as a turn of phrase, but actually as a description of a current position. She is the one who travels into his realm every night, and she has now fallen prey to his baleful influence. The idea of her being “in the hands of Death” might be meant almost literally: Shapshu has gone into Mot’s realm, and she has been “caught” by him. The phrase *b yd bn ilm mt* shows exactly what the problem is: Shapshu is under Mot’s control, so to speak.<sup>80</sup>

The phrase “in the hands of Death” may be important in yet another sense. Nils P. Heeßel points out that expressions of the type “the hand of God X”

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<sup>78</sup> Rahmouni 2008: 271-272. Rahmouni especially points out the fact that *šhrrt* and *la šmm* always occur together, but takes this not as an argument against the former being an epithet but for the three words together making up precisely such a standardized description of Shapshu. This still would not explain why such an expression would only occur when followed directly by the reference to being in the “hand” or “power” of Mot. One would have liked some other attestation. Even if one should agree that what we have here *is* an epithet (“the scorcher, the power of the sky”, as Rahmouni translates it), its association with Mot would only underscore how his power effectuates the “scorching.”

<sup>79</sup> Margalit (1980: 85) argues that the burning or hotness described here is Shapshu’s normal state, and cites as a support her appearance in CAT 1.161, the Ugaritic “funerary” text, in which the form *išhn* (probably from a root meaning “burn”) is used about her—but precisely the fact that it occurs in that context makes the argument weak: there we also have a connection with death and dying (a very outspoken one at that); thus any idea of this representing Shapshu’s normal, un-deathlike state (so to speak) becomes difficult to defend. In any case, not even in this instance do we find the word *šhrrt* or any similar expression clearly used as an *epithet* of Shapshu.

<sup>80</sup> This type of interpretation also appears in Gibson 2000: 91. The translation “under the control of” is also one of the possibilities given in Rahmouni 2008: 271.

(*qāt/ŠU DN*) are quite common in Akkadian medical texts as term for specific diagnoses in cases of illness. The beings whose “hands” can afflict the sick can be of many different sorts: major deities such as Marduk and Ishtar, but also various types of demons such as Lamashtu, etc. Especially notable are the expressions “hand of the Underworld” and “hand of a ghost” (*ŠU GIDIM* or *ŠU GIDIM.MA*), both of which link the expressions to the realm of the dead.<sup>81</sup> The use of the “hand” of a deity to signify illness in Akkadian and other texts was pointed out earlier by J.J.M. Roberts.<sup>82</sup> This means that the phrase *b yd ... mt* may refer to a greater complex of expressions connected with disease, a fact probably not coincidental, as the drought motif is sometimes connected with ideas of fever and illness, as we shall see in greater detail later in the study. Shapshu is sick, so to speak, and the world has to partake in her fever.<sup>83</sup>

This conception of a divine “hand” causing drought and feverish symptoms occurs in the Hebrew Bible as well. Ps 32:4 includes a reference to drought as a result of unconfessed sinfulness. Although this verse is a textual conundrum in various ways,<sup>84</sup> it is clear that it speaks of the affliction of the unrepentant sinner being compared to “the droughts of summer” (*ḥarbōnê qayis*). It also speaks of this in terms of YHWH’s “hand” being heavy upon him, apparently causing attacks of hotness (*kī yômām wālaylā tikbad ‘ālay yādekā*). It is difficult not to see here an allusion to expressions concerning illness and fever referring to the dangerous “hands” of deities. In his commentary to the Psalm, Weiser speaks of this passage in terms of the supplicant experiencing “hot flushes as if he were feverish.”<sup>85</sup> Here, the deity whose power creates the symptoms is not an autonomous “Death” but the Israelite God himself, a form of transferral of “drought power” that I shall have reason to return to on more than one occasion. In both the Refrain of the Burning Sun and in Psalm 32, the hand of a god sends terrible, destructive heat, but what was at Ugarit the power of the greatest adversary of them all (Mot) has been applied by the Psalmist to YHWH. As he has become the supreme lord, even the old manifestations of Death’s rule are said to be his to use as he pleases. The same phenomenon appears in Psalm 38,

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<sup>81</sup> Heeßel 2007, esp. pp. 120-123.

<sup>82</sup> Roberts 1971a.

<sup>83</sup> Smith and Pitard (2009: 348) explicitly refer to the “hand of Mot” that besets the central characters of the letter from Evri-dharri to Pilsiya (*CAT* 2.10), discussed above, as an “epidemic.”

<sup>84</sup> One especially difficult problem is the interpretation of the word given by the MT as *lēšaddî*. The apparent meaning “my butter cake” makes no sense whatsoever. One possibility is to emend it to *lēšōnî* (suggested as a possibility in *HALOT*: s.v. \**lāšād* and BHSApp). The latter option is attractive, as other “drought of the individual” texts studied in this volume use the metaphor of the dried-up tongue sticking to the palate (a good example is Ps 22:16). However, this would be a strange correction, given the principle of *lectio difficilior*.

<sup>85</sup> Weiser 1962: 284

in v. 3 of which the supplicant complains of YHWH's "hand" afflicting him, while v. 8 specifically speaks of his loins being burned.

#### 2.2.1.4 The Meaning of *la šmm*

The words *la šmm* have also been subjected to differing interpretations. The first of these is, as we have seen, a meaning along the lines of "the heavens are wearied" or "the heavens are powerless."<sup>86</sup> These translations suppose *la* to be a form of the verb *l'y*, meaning something like "be powerless," "be weak," "be tired," or similar. Wyatt and Wiggins see it as having precisely the opposite meaning—"strength."<sup>87</sup> A possible piece of support for the idea that Shapshu might be called "strength of the heavens" could perhaps be found in the blessing *an l an*, "strength upon strength," that Anat bestows upon her in CAT 1.6 IV 22-23, but the problem still remains that the exact phrase *la šmm* does not appear to be used in any other context. Even if the words really are to be interpreted as being an epithet of Shapshu, this does not in any way change the basic understanding of the passage: one might as well translate "burns the strength of the heavens."<sup>88</sup>

As seen above, Mark Smith proposed (but later retracted) a third possible translation of these words. He regards *la* not as a verb but as a nominal object: "The Divine Lamp Shapsh / Burns the orb of heaven..." Smith did not present the full philological rationale for this translation.<sup>89</sup> The whole phrase *šhrrt la šmm* thus becomes a description of how the "super-heatedness" of the sun damages the normal appearance and workings of the sky. Other (less common) suggestions for *la šmm* are "the sky was soiled" and "the heavens are shining."<sup>90</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Given the plural subject, it is perhaps most prudent to regard *la* as a narrative infinitive if this translation be preferred—see Tropper 2000: 483. However, Tropper 2000: 468 suggests suffix conjugation 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. masc. sing. despite the plural subject.

<sup>87</sup> The same translation of the word *la* is represented in the *DUL*: 486 (s.v. *la*), which has "power, strength, vigour."

<sup>88</sup> Indeed, a translation of exactly this sort is adopted by the *DUL* (p. 783).

<sup>89</sup> The translation of *la* as "orb" apparently has its origin in Pope 1981: 168.

<sup>90</sup> For the first suggestion, see de Moor 1971:114, citing an interesting parallel in the Akkadian phrase *mula'itum ša šamê* ("the one who soils the sky") as a description of a witch in the *Maqlû* series. de Moor and after him Kutter (2008: 149-164) see this expression as a corroboration of their interpretation of *šhrrt* as "dust-colored". For the possibility "shine" (or similar), see Aistleitner 1963: 165 and Segert 1984: 190, citing Arabic *la'la'a*. One should note that a translation on the lines of de Moor and Kutter ("the sky is soiled") does not at all rule out interpreting *šhrrt* as "is burning": one could very well imagine a sickening, burning glow of the solar orb, combined with dust storms and other drought phenomena, as a form of "soiling". However, as seen below, I find a derivation from *l'y* as (or more) likely. The passages from *Maqlû* adduced by Kutter talk of soiling both heaven and earth, a merism quite absent here, and that text lacks the other drought references so apparent in the Baal Cycle. Also, the context of the *Maqlû* text, warding off the powers of a witch, a very dissimilar from what we find in the Baal Cycle. The supposition that Mot acts "in der Rolle des ,bösen Hexers'" (Kutter 2008: 157) has

Most of these possibilities seem to be derived in part from the understanding of *šhrrt* as a description of drought—and this axiom has, as we have seen, been challenged. There is, however, another clear piece of textual support for the idea that the Refrain describes drought or heat, which is addressed by neither Wiggins nor Wyatt. This is found at the beginning of *CAT* 1.5 I, the famous passage in which Mot threatens Baal and speaks of his battle with the Leviathan (subjected to more detailed analysis in section 2.2.3 and 2.2.4). In this piece of text we find wordings that definitely seem to be connected with what is described in the Refrain.<sup>91</sup>

I am referring here to the words which Mot uses to threaten Baal and describe his power. The god of death talks about how he will pierce Baal and swallow his limbs, but before this, he says something else entirely: he uses the words *tkh ttrp šmm* (*CAT* 1.5 I 4). We find here two parallel verbs in the prefix form, both apparently with the sky (*šmm*) as their subject. The exact philological interpretation of these words is open to debate, but the usual stance is to take the first verb (*tkh*) as a reference to heat of some sort.<sup>92</sup> The second one (*ttrp*) is sometimes translated “be weak,” or the like, although some would translate that also as “shine,” “glisten,” etc., based on a parallel with Arabic *raffa*.<sup>93</sup> This passage will be more thoroughly discussed in section 2.2.3, but it must be noted that Mot’s words here seem to refer to some kind of climate-related trouble related to the sky, probably heat, which is put into the context of his threatening Baal.<sup>94</sup> I would say that Mot here threatens Baal with exactly what the Refrain itself tells about: his power over the sun and “the heavens” in general. We also find clear (those less similarly worded) references to drought in many other places in the Baal Cycle (note for example *CAT* 1.6 IV 12-14). Thus, the interpretation involving drought does seem to be both the most contextually and the most philologically defensible.

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no direct support in the text—on the contrary, his actions (threatening Baal, hunting and swallowing him, then fighting him outright) suggest something much more direct than the insidious goings on of an evil sorcerer.

<sup>91</sup> The parallel reference of these two passages was also pointed out by Emerton (1972: 65-66).

<sup>92</sup> Thus, for example, Smith (*UNP*): 141 and Wyatt 2002: 115. A comprehensive discussion of the meaning of this verb and its Hebrew cognate is found in section 2.2.4.

<sup>93</sup> For examples of the first alternative, see Driver 1956: 103 and Smith (*UNP*): 141. The translation “shine” is to be found, interestingly enough, in Wyatt 2002: 115, despite his oft-spoken misgivings about seasonal interpretations of the Baal-cycle.

<sup>94</sup> If the translation “wither from heat,” “be weak from heat” should turn out to be correct, this would provide an interesting parallel to the possible translation of the words of the Refrain itself: “the heavens are powerless”. Although the actual words used in the two instances are different, this might possibly be regarded as a sign that the translation “the heavens are powerless” is to be preferred in the translation of the Refrain. However, the translation of both words is unsure, and thus the argument might be considered somewhat circular. And, as we have seen, the translation “shine” has sometimes been adduced for *la* as well.



If we accept the fact that the Refrain is describing drought, an interesting possibility arises concerning the translation of *la šmm*. The classic translation “the heavens are wearied” is often taken to be an expression of the skies’ inability to produce rain.<sup>95</sup> This possible usage could be further illuminated by looking at the use of the verb *l’y* in the text about the Mare, Shapshu and the snake’s venom, *CAT* 1.100. In lines 68-69 of this text, we find a poetic description of how the venom dissipates and dries up, like in a wadi.<sup>96</sup> The words used to evoke this image are *tlu h<m>t km nhl / tplg km plg*—“The poison peters out/dries up like a wadi / it dissipates like a stream.”<sup>97</sup> The verb used to describe the drying of the poisonous liquid is none other than *l’y*, in exactly the same “inverted” sense that seems to be used in the Refrain. The very fact that what is described here is liquid being dried up constitutes a startling parallel to the wording of the Refrain. Thus, I would suggest that *la šmm* here means something like “the heavens are powerless, in the sense that they are dried up.”

It is probably no coincidence that another text dealing with snake-bites, *CAT* 1.107, also features Shapshu in quite a prominent role, especially that of

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<sup>95</sup> See, for example, Pardee (*COS*): 254, n. 107.

<sup>96</sup> Parker (*UNP*): 223, n. 8.

<sup>97</sup> This parallel was also noted by Smith and Pitard (2009: 347). The translation of the root *l’y* (both here and in the text of the Refrain) as “be weak,” “be weary,” “be poweless” or the like has come under attack by Aicha Rahmouni (2008: 273, esp. n. 11). She is of the view that the alleged “double meaning” of the root (both signifying strength and its opposite, weakness) is impossible for Ugaritic. The reason for this, according to her, is that no one Semitic language includes both (in Hebrew, the root always has to do with lack of power or capability, while in Akkadian, it always refers to strength). This argument, though seemingly powerful, is not necessarily convincing. The fact is that both the “strong” and “weak/incapable” meanings of the root are attested in Semitic, which makes it quite possible that the Proto-Semitic root was “double” in its Semantics, with various languages inheriting different “poles” of the root meaning. The phenomenon of roots with opposite meanings is by no means unknown in Semitic languages generally: see Gordis 1936, Barr 1968: 173-177 (with skepticism) and Pinker 2009: 167, n. 1. Ugaritic may well have been the only language that has inherited *both* senses of the root. Rahmouni contends that only the meaning involving strength is demonstrable in Ugaritic, and she points to such well-known examples as Baal’s own title *aliyn*, which means “mighty/powerful/victorious.” This, however, forces her to translate the above-mentioned text on snake’s venom as “the venom is effective (i.e. of concentrated strength or potency) as (within) a stream; dispersed (within) a canal.” I find this interpretation difficult to sustain: it does not create any parallelism between the lines and also forces one artificially to insert the preposition “within,” which has no clear expression in the Ugaritic original. Keeping with the view that *l’y* can have two, opposed meanings makes much more sense to me, and is also supported, e.g., by the editors of the *DUL* (s.v. *l-2-y/w*, pp. 488-489). Rahmouni also runs into problems with what looks like an accusative where one would expect a nominative, if *la* in the Refrain is to be viewed as a nominal epithet of Shapshu. She finds her solution (pp. 273-274, n. 13) in analyzing the word as a dual, an idea which appears far-fetched to me.

drying up the poison. In lines 32-33, 34-35 and 37-38 of that text the following words occur (in various states of preservation—here I present an idealized version):

*isp špš l hrm ġrpl*  
*‘l arš lan isp ħmt*

Gather, O Shapshu, the fog from the mountains,  
 from the earth gather the power of the venom!

Here, Shapshu’s burning heat seems to dry out the poison, the strength of which is described using the very root *l’y*. I propose that the Refrain of the Burning Sun includes a deliberate use of the same root as the one used to relate Shapshu’s drying up of the poison, but here in its inverted sense of “being weak,” in order to underscore the unnaturalness of the situation. The Ugaritic listener probably knew that Shapshu was often thought of as drying up dangerous substances and their “strength,” but in the Refrain, Mot’s power makes her dry up the heavens instead, rendering them “un-strengthened.”<sup>98</sup> As Shapshu can dry up a dangerous fog or cloud (*ġrpl*) in her normal mode of operation, Mot can also make her dry up the entire sky when she is in his hand.

### 2.2.1.5 Narrative Sequence and Temporal Syntax

Yet the problems of narrative sequence still remain. The fact that the Refrain in its two clearest attestations occurs directly after and in the context of the description of Mot’s jaws needs to be explained. A quite simple (if tentative) solution to the problems of the traditional, drought-based interpretation can be found through an analysis of the syntactic use of what might probably be called the most central element of the Refrain as such, namely the word *šhrrt* itself. As we have seen, the traditional interpretation views this word as either a stative use of the suffix-conjugation or (possibly) as some sort of stative adjective (“burns,” “is hot/glowing” etc.). But there are other possibilities. What if one were to see this word as a more modalized instance of the suffix conjugation, referring to a future event or a possibility? Such uses of the suffix-conjugation are certainly not unheard of: it occurs in constative/perfective futural clauses and in apodotes of subordinate clauses. Another possibility would be to regard the word as an adjective (“burning”), which could also have a futural sense.<sup>99</sup> It

<sup>98</sup> The “positive” sense of *la* as “to be strong” was given an interesting interpretation by Hvidberg (1962: 34, esp. n. 3), who translated “the heavens are severe,” i.e. burning. Although I am more inclined, as can be seen above, to find a reference here to the “negative” meaning (“the heavens are powerless/dried up”), the double meaning of the verb may very well have created a punning echo of this sort in the minds of the listeners.

<sup>99</sup> On futural uses of the suffix conjugation, see Tropper 2000: 716-717. Such a futural grammatical understanding was, in fact, independently arrived at by Kutter (2008: 159), but in her interpretation the sense becomes quite different, as she does not see a reference to drought in the Refrain at all, but to dust-coloring: “Die Leuchte der Götter, Šapšu, wird staubfarben sein [...]” A grammatical difficulty inherent in a futural interpretation of the suffix conjugation in the case of *šhrrt* is posed by the lack of a

would thus be possible to interpret two cases of the Refrain as a sort of consecutive end to the description of the dangers of Mot, and one might then arrive at a translation of following sort:

... May he not serve you up like a lamb in his mouth,  
and you be crushed/carried away in the chasm of his gullet—  
(for) Shapshu, the divine lamp,  
will (then) glow hot,  
the heavens will be powerless/dried up  
in the hands of Mot, the beloved of El!

If this sort of translation is adopted, one needs to interpret the verb differently in the final instance of the Refrain. When Mot explains himself to Anat, the word must mean “is glowing” or “came to be glowing.”

This possible (if tentative) translation would thus create a new sense of tension in the text: if Mot were to swallow Baal’s messengers, they would be his “fuel,” so to speak, they would be the food that would make him powerful, and his power would manifest itself in the natural phenomenon of the burning sun. No longer would the Refrain be reduced to an interesting (if slightly out of place) comment on the climate, but rather it would stand out as the final example of Mot’s powers, *which is exactly what two of the attestations were just telling us about*. The fact that the sun is glowing or burning is the visible evidence of Mot’s power over the world, and if this interpretation is correct, it adds a sense of tragic irony to the whole Baal-Mot conflict: Baal knows that travelling into Mot’s realm is dangerous, that being captured by him may throw all nature into disarray, as expressed through the fears about the sun. He warns his messengers about this, but what then happens is that *Baal himself* falls victim to exactly the danger that he warned them about. Mot swallows him, and *therefore* Shapshu is burning. She is virtually the banner of Mot’s victory.

Another (grammatically less innovative) approach giving similar results is to keep the present indicative sense of *šhrrt* but simply take the Refrain as such as being a description of Mot’s current power. He is as dangerous as he is, and we know this *because* Shapshu is burning. This would also yield a satisfactory discursive continuity, and could also fit in with the narrative analysis above.<sup>100</sup>

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particle before the word (which normally appears in futural cases of this form, see Tropper 2000: 716—also pointed out in Eskhult 2012: 220). One should not disregard the possibility of seeing the word as an adjectival form, which would involve no such problem.

<sup>100</sup> If one accepts Margalit’s explanation of the word *hṯ*, yet another possibility presents itself. One might then translate the phrase in which Baal admonishes his servants in the following way: “Do not attach yourself to the Divine Lamp Shapshu, for she is glowing hot ...,” or with the reading of *šhrrt* offered above: “Do not ... for she will then glow hot ...” These two interpretations rest, however, on a translation of *hṯ* that I do not find satisfactory.

The words of the Refrain itself can be read as an artful case of staircase parallelism, the words *špš/šmm* and *šhrrt/la* forming a chiasmic nucleus of the phrase, and the adverbial definition *b yd bn ilm mt* doing double duty and describing both. This analysis can be visually presented in the following way:

*nrt ilm špš šhrrt*  
*la šmm b yd bn ilm mt*

This textual layout shows how the standard epithet (*nrt ilm*) simply starts the phrase from something the audience was well aware of, making the chiasmus (*špš/šmm* and *šhrrt/la*) the conceptual center of the expression (again underscoring that this is the main gist of what the lines are telling us about). Finally, the words about Mot's hands round the Refrain out and state the reason for the calamity. All in all, a remarkable piece of poetic technique, encoding the narrative function of the lines into the words themselves.<sup>101</sup>

### *2.2.1.6 Conclusion: The Refrain as a Narratological Marker*

What, then, has been the general result of this assessment of the Refrain? Does it talk of drought, as the classical interpretation would have us believe? I think it quite safe to answer “yes” to this question, but also that one needs to go further: the Refrain of the Burning Sun is certainly no trifling, offhand remark on the climate or the weather in the story of the Baal Cycle—it is rather an indicator of the pattern of death and drought being one of the most central literary and perhaps theological motif complexes in the Baal-Mot story. The recurrence of the words on three different occasions serves to reinforce the imagery and make sure that the story of the conflict between the two gods is consistently described in these narratological terms. The Refrain ties the Baal-Mot episode together, but it also ties that story to the underlying drought metaphor. It is too much to state that the story is at its heart “about” the conflict between drought and precipitation (other themes such as kingship, generational conflict and general cosmological divisions are also very prominent), but the Refrain does underscore the fact that the main motif used to illustrate the rule of Death in the text is, in fact, drought, and it also highlights the role of Shapshu, the Sun, as mediator between the imageries of heat and the dark netherworld that Mot inhabits.

I think it has been clearly demonstrated that the basic gist of the Refrain is describing the awful burning heat of the Sun when she is under the sway of the god of Death. It is, as we have seen, possible to see the idea of Mot swallowing his victims as a sort of prerequisite of this, and thus to regard the victim's descent into his jaws as the very thing which makes his drought possible. When

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<sup>101</sup> I would like to thank Martti Nissinen (p.c.) for helpful suggestions and discussions concerning the poetic structure of the Refrain, and for suggesting the above “double duty” poetic analysis.

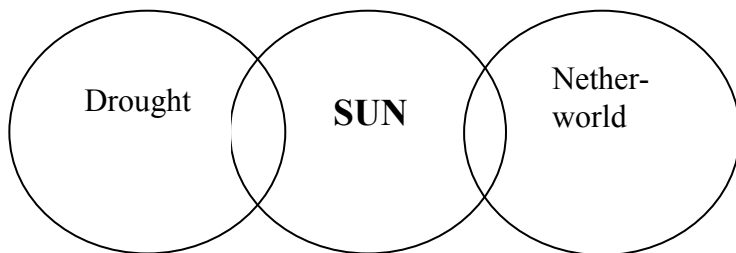
Mot gets his food (to sate his enormous appetite) his power manifests itself, and most especially when he devours Baal, the king of the gods himself. One might also see Shapshu's "burning" as a sign of the power of Death, and thus as a further reason to be on one's guard. In any case, the gist of the passage is the perverted state of the sun's function when influenced by Mot. She has been "caught" by his power, and the whole of nature suffers as a result.

As we have seen, all commentators of the Refrain agree on one thing: that it describes Shapshu as being in some way connected with death or the land of the dead. Margalit, Wiggins and Wyatt emphasize more clearly the chthonic associations (her daily journey below the horizon), and the traditionalist interpretations see her "heat" as being somehow connected with Mot's rule on earth. But do these two "ideas" of Shapshu have to be exclusive?

I think not. As my interpretation above indicates, it is quite possible to arrive at an understanding of the Refrain that is based on the idea of drought, but still incorporates parts of the chthonic references overtly inherent in the preceding description of the descent to the netherworld and into the maws of Death himself. The Sun's inherent connection with the chthonic world brings her into contact with Mot every day, and thus it is eminently natural that his power should manifest itself through her.

What we find here is a marvellously intricate welding together of two solar images: the netherworld as the place into which the sun travels at night and the blasting heat which it produces, both of them connected through the figure of Mot as the lord of both death and drought (death of the agricultural land). Shapshu is the visible and physical link which in the mind of the poet connects the two phenomena of drought and the underworld, which at the surface would seem to have little in common. Two of the sun's visible characteristics (not exactly metaphors, but something very close to it) are combined into an ordered whole and create something new, which is implied in neither of them separately. Adding "the sun that travels below the horizon" and "the sun that burns" to each other does not merely build a more intricate imagery—it creates an entirely new understanding, a new and specific conception central to Ugaritic mythology: "the sun of death." This conception is a defining and pivotal one for the whole story of the Baal Cycle. By selectively using two descriptive "essences" of the physical sun, the poet creates a symbolical universe in which the deities Sun and Death become interconnected and directly interrelated.

The concept of the Sun combines the semantic fields of "drought" and "death" in an artful manner, which may crudely be illustrated using the following graphic representation:



We must also consider the important question of the placement of the Refrain within the context of the Baal Cycle as a whole. We (probably) find it the first time during the aforementioned debate between Anat and El concerning the building of Baal's palace. If this attestation is indeed real, the mentioning of Shapshu's Death-induced drought probably becomes a part of the argument for the necessity of building that palace (and thus manifesting the power of Baal and his life-giving rains, which manifest as a lightning storm as soon as the palace is built). Shapshu is burning (or might in the future be burning)—and this is exactly why it is pressingly necessary to give Baal the house (and the power) that he needs. Wyatt's interpretation—that the Refrain is to be taken as an expression of fear—finds little support in the text.

The second and third attestations are directly related to the Baal-Mot conflict as such. They serve to underscore Mot's power and the danger inherent in coming close to him. It is also highly interesting to note that they occur (1) as a prelude to Baal's cowering defeat and descent into the netherworld, and (2) as a description of the same. The Refrain thus becomes a narratological marker that something "is not as it ought to be." It shows the necessity of Baal's rule, both when Baal is on his way toward kingship and when he is temporarily defeated. It consequently does not occur in the passages in which Baal's rule is at its height, so to speak (for example during the passages about the actual building of his house and those describing his return to the land of the living and his confrontation with Mot).

It is probably no coincidence that the Refrain occurs at three defining moments in the narrative arc of the Baal-Mot episode. It first appears to underscore the necessity for Baal's rule and the sending of his rains (illustrated by the building of his palace). It is then repeated by Baal as an illustration of the danger of Mot's power and of descending into the netherworld—which the sun does every day and Baal is soon himself forced to do. And finally, it occurs when Mot describes his victory over Baal, just before Anat exacts revenge on the god of death, apparently leading to Baal's return to the land of the living. The Refrain of the Burning Sun thus illustrates (1) the need for a ruling storm god in his palace, (2) the danger inherent in the land of the dead and its ruler,

Mot, who will soon manifest that power by forcing Baal to descend into that land and (3) the state of the world which Mot's power produces. As a narrative marker, it foreshadows, illustrates and finally ends Mot's rule.

Through the dual use of the images of the sun travelling to the netherworld and the sun bringing the blasting heat, the poet of the Baal Cycle uses the Refrain of the Burning Sun as a literary device using which to underscore the decisive character of the conflict he describes. The sun becomes a marker of current state of affairs, almost a form of all-too-visible scorecard as to which power—Baal or Mot—currently holds sway over the universe. The goddess of the sun, who (as we have seen in another chapter) is also a ministrant and symbol of royal power, becomes in the Refrain subservient to the god of Death, and thus she shows that the wrong “king” rules. The Refrain of the Burning Sun thus becomes a pivotal marker in the whole structure of the Baal Cycle.

### 2.2.1.7 Addendum: The Refrain in the Third Edition of *CAT/KTU*

As mentioned in the Introduction, this text of this book was written before the arrival of the third edition of *CAT/KTU*. At a time close to my submitting the book to the publisher, however, the new version of *CAT* was published, and I was able to check the readings of the three instances of the Refrain of the Burning Sun as they appear in the just-published third edition; even though it was too late in the production process to use the new edition as the general basis for my quotations of Ugaritic texts, I am glad to have been able to check the readings of these very important lines. Again, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Andrew Knapp for his help with this.

The only substantial difference between the readings of the Refrain of the Burning Sun given in the third edition and those discussed above occurs in the badly preserved instance of the Refrain at *CAT* 1.3 V 17-18, in which the first part of Shapshu's title *nrt ilm špš* (“the divine lamp, Shapshu” or “Shapshu, the lamp of the gods”) appears in the new edition as *nrm . ilm . špš*. The strange *nrm* instead of normal *nrt* could well be a misspelling on the part of the scribe (as the title is otherwise always *nrt*). Smith and Pitard (2009) did read a *t*. In any case, this difference has little bearing on the arguments put forth above. The third edition of *CAT/KTU* otherwise still reconstructs the passage in the same way, that is, the editors keep with the view that the damaged passage is to be regarded as a parallel to the two other instances of the Refrain. The characters immediately preceding the attestation of the Refrain at 1.3 V 17-18 are still regarded as illegible.

### 2.2.2 Special Study: The Root (š)ḥr as a Term for Burning Heat, Desert and Sickness in a Wider Comparative Perspective

Use of the root *šhr* to describe the effects that burning heat has upon nature is in no way unique to the Ugaritic corpus. Rather, this root has a vast and far-reaching conceptual history, its occurrence in the Refrain of the Burning Sun being but one instance.<sup>102</sup> The most famous example of this is, of course, the appearance of this root in the Arabic word *ṣaḥrā* (“desert”), which later entered European languages in the form of the toponym “Sahara,” which has become the very epitome of scorching drought in the modern world.

The root also occurs in such contexts in a more distantly related part of the Afro-Asiatic phylum, specifically in the form of the Egyptian word *dšr.t*, meaning “desert”<sup>103</sup>—literally the “red land,” as opposed to the arable “black land” (*km.t*) of Egypt. In Egyptian, the root word *dšr* simply means “red” (just as *šāḥōr* appears simply to be a color-word in Hebrew), but its use in describing the hot desert could possibly constitute a remnant of old Afro-Asiatic diction.

If one expands the semantic sphere of the root to the allied forms of heat discussed in this study, such as feverish hotness as a symptom of sickness, the Akkadian verb *šarāḥu* (meaning “to heat, to scorch” and in the stative form “to be hot, feverish”) stands out as a possible, though highly uncertain, cognate.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> This section uses the methodology of comparative linguistic poetics as developed in the study of the Indo-European family of languages, a methodology searching for possibly inherited poetic and narrative themes and motifs transmitted through the medium of etymological cognates (for a prime, if somewhat audacious, example of this technique, see Watkins 1995). Although an approach of this sort has rarely been used in Old Testament or Ugaritic studies, I believe, as mentioned already in the Introduction, that a foray into this field may yield rather interesting results.

<sup>103</sup> See Schneider 1997: 208 and Peust 1999: 116 regarding the etymological connection and discussion of the phonological processes involved. The connection seems less far-fetched when one considers the fact that the Egyptian phoneme /d/ was probably realized as a glottalized ejective, thus corresponding to the older pronunciation of the Semitic emphatics (preserved as such in South Semitic). The Egyptian /š/ historically represents a palatalized back fricative, in this case corresponding to Semitic /ḥ/.

<sup>104</sup> See CAD, vol. Š: 98 (s.v. *šarāḥu* A). A relationship with this verb would require a somewhat anomalous historical development, involving in the first instance a metathesis of the two final radicals and, more importantly, a nonstandard correspondence between the West Semitic /ḥ/ and the Akkadian /ḫ/ (according to the usual sound-laws, the Akkadian form would drop this consonant, yielding a contracted vowel). This second discrepancy can be explained by the possibility of a loan from West Semitic, or possibly of its being an ancient, non-standard phonetic retention (regarding the latter suggestion in cases such as this, see Lipiński 1997: 144-145). These problems make the etymology less reliable, yet still possible. The existence of Akkadian words containing /ḫ/ in such a context is, at least, in no sense unknown (see e.g. Huehnergard 2003, who proposes a new Proto-Semitic consonant in order to account for such correspondences; cf. also Kogan [2011: 110-111], who accepts the existence of the correspondence but is rather sceptical of many supposed examples). The existence of another verb *šarāḥu* D with the meaning



If this etymological connection is accepted, the metaphorical/semantic link between burning sickness and drought that has been noted many times in this study may possibly be rooted in linguistic history.

Regarding the early historical development of the root in question, it is interesting to note that *šhr* has a number of other, highly similar root formations next to it having meanings highly reminiscent of “burn,” “scorch” etc. First, there is the complex of roots which appear to be built from the simple biliteral *hr*, such as the Hebrew verbs *hārā* and *hārar*, the Arabic *ḥarra*, the Ugaritic *hrr*, and the Akkadian *erēru* (all of which mean “be hot” or “scorch”). There is also the root represented by the Hebrew *šāḥōr* (“burned black,” “scorched”) and the accompanying verb *šāḥar* (one may possibly also consider the Ugaritic-Hebrew *šhr* and the Akkadian *šēru*, both meaning “dawn,” in this context).<sup>105</sup> It seems probable that all these formations (including *šhr*) are *Nebenformen* based on an original biliteral *hr*.<sup>106</sup> This verb (in the *hārar* version) occurs fittingly enough in

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“to flare up, to display a sudden luminosity, to twinkle (said of stars)” is interesting, but any relationship between this and the former verb (connecting it, for example, with the “burning” of Shapshu) must, despite its being an intriguing possibility, be regarded as speculative, since the two verbs differ in their stem vowel patterns, and were thus probably regarded by the speakers of Akkadian as being different entities. A distant root relationship cannot be ruled out, however, and if such were indeed to exist, it could provide a possible comparative root background for the behavior of Shapshu in the Refrain of the Burning Sun.

<sup>105</sup> The word *šahar* is explained by Labuschagne (1971: 56) as an original Š causative of the root *hrr*. He opts for the root as signifying in this case the “glowing” which appears due to “the advance of the sun in the East.” Labuschagne points out that the Hebrew word more specifically means “the reddish light preceding sunrise”—a fact underscored already by Köhler (1926, esp. p. 59). This imagery of course fits very well with the use of the (possibly distantly related) *šhrr* in the Refrain of the Burning Sun. The connection between *šhr(r)* and *hrr* had also been suggested earlier in passing by de Boer (1951: 181).

<sup>106</sup> The importance of acknowledging original (and later augmented) biconsonantal roots present in Semitic has been pointed out by Lipiński (1997: 201-202). A fine example of this methodology (as applied to the various roots created from the biconsonantal skeleton *šb*) can be found in Thompson 1972. The connection between *hrr* and *šhr* (interpreting the latter as an Š causative of the former), had (as seen in the previous footnote) been made by de Boer (1951: 181), discussed further with some skepticism by Wächter 1971: 384. Note, however, that the existence of the root variant which is preserved in Ugaritic as *šhr* must date back to Proto-Afro-Asiatic times, as shown by the Egyptian cognate *dšr* discussed above, the initial /d/ of which can only stem from an emphatic. On variant forms such as these occurring in Semitic, see, for example, Rosén 1978: 444. The fact that Egyptian shows /d/ proves that *šhr* is not simply a variant of *šhr* affected by emphasis spread (as de Boer thought), as the initial emphatic was certainly not pronounced with pharyngealization in Egyptian but rather (probably) with glottalization, which normally does not cause this phenomenon (quite the contrary in fact—glottalization often causes dissimilation, because of the difficulty in pronouncing two ejectives in a row). Still broader relations to other roots are proposed by Dijkstra

verse 4 of Psalm 102, describing how the bones of the supplicant burn as a furnace, an image discussed more fully in section 2.2.4. Another salient example is Job 30:30, where *šāḥar* and *ḥārar* occur together in one and the same verse for added poetic effect, showing the connectedness of the two concepts:

<p>‘<i>ôri šāḥar mē’ālāy</i>  <i>wē’asmi-ḥārâ minni-ḥōreb</i></p>	<p>My skin turns black from me,          and my bones burn with heat.<sup>107</sup></p>
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The Akkadian instance of the *mediae geminatae* version of the root, *erēru*, is of interest from yet another point of view. This root has been proposed by J. J. M. Roberts to be the etymological origin of the divine name *Erra*. In his mind, this etymology would point to the role of that nefarious deity as a bringer of famine and war (in particular in the form of the “scorched earth” which is often the direct result of violent conflict), as opposed to the plague with which he is often associated.<sup>108</sup> However, given what has been seen of the history of the verbal root in question, plague—and fever in particular—lies very much within its semantic sphere, which means that there need be no contradiction between the different results of *Erra*’s “burning.”<sup>109</sup> Again, this would be a case of the semantic areas of “feverish sickness” and “drought-like heat” being connected. Such a “feverish” use of the root can also be found in Deut 28:22, for example (using the derivation *ḥarḥur*).<sup>110</sup>

Howsoever that may be, a connection between the name of *Erra* and drought/scorching would furnish an interesting counterpoint or comment to the argument made by Kutter, that *Shapshu* ought not to “burn,” since that is the realm of gods like *Erra*.<sup>111</sup> In my interpretation, not only would she burn (forced to this through the agency of the *Erra*-like figure *Mot*), but the burning would actually be expressed by a root distantly related to the name of *Erra* himself! As will be shown later on in the book, *Erra*’s closest Northwest Semitic analogue, *Resheph*, is also important in the context of destructive, solar drought.

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(1974: 66, esp. n. 43), who associates *šhr* with the Semitic roots *šhy/šhh* and its *mediae geminatae* variant *šhh*, both of which are related to semantic spheres connected to dryness, parching, whiteness, etc. Although such relationships are possible, they are rendered somewhat less convincing both by the existence of the Egyptian *dšr*, which would imply that the *r* is very old indeed, and by the apparent relation to *hrr*, which also points to that letter being original and the initial sibilant, if anything, being extraneous, not the *r*.

<sup>107</sup> See section 3.3.3.6 for further discussion of this verse.

<sup>108</sup> Roberts 1971b (esp. p. 14).

<sup>109</sup> It is also important that *Erra* is described as having “Fire” (*Išum*) as his “goer in front” (*ālik mahrišu*), reinforcing the imagery of burning (see Roberts 1971b: 13).

<sup>110</sup> This word also appears in the Hebrew text of Ben Sira (40:9, MS B [Beentjes 2006: 69]) in a context that overtly associates it with various death-like grievances.

<sup>111</sup> Kutter 2008: 148.

Within the confines of Hebrew Bible itself, one can perhaps also find a reminiscence of the use of the *ḥr* “proto-root” as a characteristic of the burning powers of the sun in verse 1:6 of the Song of Songs, in which the female character complains of being *šēḥarḥôret* (“black-burned”) by the powers of the sun.

### 2.2.3 The Threats of Death (CAT 1.5 I 1-8) and a Parallel in Job 18:12-17

The beginning lines of CAT 1.5 I (and their badly preserved parallels in 1.5 I 27-35) constitute what is probably one of the most oft-quoted Ugaritic passages in existence, a fact which is surely due to the extremely close parallels between it and Isa 27:1, including the verbatim correspondence of the expressions *br(y)h* and *‘qlt(w)n*, which both describe the terrible serpent monster (“the fleeing serpent” and the “the twisting serpent,” respectively, both describing the great Leviathan/Litan/Lotan). The passage contains Mot’s prophetic threats directed at Baal: the god of death tells his enemy that he will swallow him whole and informs him of the terrible effects this will have in nature, effects that appear to involve drought. I give the text with a translation that should be regarded as provisional, as the text contains many points that are philologically difficult:

<i>k tmḥṣ . ltn . bṭn . brḥ</i>	As/because you smote Lotan, the fleeing serpent,
<i>tkly . bṭn . ‘qltn .</i>	killed off the the writhing serpent,
<i>šlyt . d. šb’t . rašm</i>	the ruler with seven heads,
<i>ttkḥ . ttrp . šmm .</i>	the heavens will burn hot and shine/be weakened.
<i>krs ipdk . ank.</i>	I, even I, will tear you to pieces—
<i>ispi . uṭm ḏrqm . amtm .</i>	I will swallow elbows, blood, and forearms.
<i>lyrt b npš . bn ilm . mt .</i>	You will surely descend into the throat of divine Mot,
<i>b mhmrt . b ydd . il . ḡzr</i>	into the gullet of El’s beloved, the hero. <sup>112</sup>

(CAT 1.5 I 1-8)

There are very few parts of this passage that have not been subject to lengthy discussion and to highly differing interpretations. In my view, the above translation seems the most plausible, although there are of course points of uncertainty. The main problems concern the interpretations of the two verbs *ttkḥ* and *ttrp*. Both of these, which I interpret as 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural forms having the “skies” (*šmm*) as their subject, require thorough analysis—especially the first one, the Hebrew cognate of which may be of central importance in understanding certain biblical passages. For this reason, I shall soon digress momentarily to discuss the use of this word and its etymological and semantic implications at some length: regarding this matter, see the longer special study of *ttkḥ* in section 2.2.4.

The second of the two central verbs in Mot’s threats has two plausible derivations. The first of these connects it with the Arabic verb *raffa* (“to shine,” “to glisten”). This is the solution opted for by Wyatt, based on an original

<sup>112</sup> This rendering is inspired in particular by the work of van Selms (1975), Emerton (1976), Wyatt (2002: 115-116) and Barker (2006).

suggestion by Emerton.<sup>113</sup> This would create a fitting parallelism with *ṭḵḵ*, if that verb is interpreted as above and in the special study below (“burn hot”). The other possibility is however no less attractive, namely that of regarding *ttrp* as being a form of the root *rpy* (“to grow weak”). Given the apparent semantic sphere of the verb *ṭḵḵ* (“to be so hot as to be exhausted” or similar), a verb signifying “weakness” would very much fit the context. As noted in the chapter on the Refrain of the Burning Sun, it would also create a striking correspondence with the expression *la šmm* (probably “the heavens are weak [as if dried up]”). Both passages would then describe the terrible threat of the heavens drying up and growing “weak” (i.e. rainless), once as a threat and once in actuality. The references to Mot tearing or swallowing Baal (*ispi* and *ipdk*) also match perfectly the warnings Baal gives to his messengers in the lines before reciting the Refrain in *CAT* 1.4 VIII 14-20.<sup>114</sup>

The question remains of why Mot brings Baal’s battle with the sea monsters into the discussion, and even makes this the very basis of his threats, stating that he will devour Baal and stop the rain “because” or “like” the storm god defeated Lotan/Litan. At the outset, such a reference does not make much narrative sense. The specific answer given to this question does, of course, to a large extent depend upon the translation of the particle *k* one decides to adopt, as a comparative (“as”), a temporal (“when”) or even a concessive (“even though”) element. I believe, however, that whichever translation one decides to endorse, the reference to Lotan/Leviathan is highly significant.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Wyatt 2002: 115-116, n. 7. The original suggestion occurs in Emerton 1976: 64-65.

<sup>114</sup> If one, on the other hand, accepts Emerton’s and Wyatt’s derivation of *ttrp* (that the verb means “to shine” or “to glisten”), there is the possibility of an intriguing piece of poetically inherited religious history being inherent in the use of the verb. The root *rpp* (the Arabic *raffa*) has been suggested as being a distant (biradical) relation of the root underlying the name of the god Resheph (as well as of the root *šrp/šrp*, “to burn”): see Fulco 1976: 65. Admittedly, this is quite a speculative proposal, but if it is accepted, the “glowing” of the skies would here be recounted using etymological material connected with the burning power of the destroying Resheph, whose connection to the drought motif is noted in many places in the present study. This would then be yet another instance of the shared poetic inheritances discussed in the introduction. A relationship between Resheph’s East Semitic analogue, Nergal, and formulae of the type here discussed may also be in evidence in Job 28:4 (see further section 3.3.3.4). One should note, however, that this root relationship is highly uncertain, and may well be erroneous.

<sup>115</sup> Barker (2006: 42-46) in general agrees with the “drought” interpretation of the passage and states specifically (p. 45) that “[...] without the cosmic presence, order, rains and life of Ba’al, what is normally a good function of Shapash (i.e. heating the skies) becomes a destructive function.” However, Barker translates the words *ṭḵḵ ttrp šmm* as “you burned him up, and thus you brightened the heavens,” thus making the monster the object of the “burning,” which is allegedly performed by Baal as part of his cosmological victory. Barker sees Litan/Lotan/Leviathan as an ally of Mot who helps the god of death in disturbing the cosmic order (pp. 45-46) and is then defeated by Baal. But why would

The imminent drying up of the heavens (of which there has probably already been a foretaste, see section 2.2.1.5) is juxtaposed to this reference to the aquatic powers of chaos in such a way as to imply that the powers of drought are superior or more dangerous than those of Yamm and his cohorts. Mot appears to be saying that Baal's victory against the powers of the Sea was not enough—there being something else that outranks it. This conception appears to point ahead towards an idea occurring in the Hebrew Bible that I discuss later in the book, namely that of the power of drought being used as a weapon against the powers of the Sea (as discussed in particular in section 4.3.3). Thus, I do not believe (as Barker seems to do<sup>116</sup>) that the two powers of chaos (drought/Death and Sea/Leviathan) are each other's allies, but rather that Baal, Mot and Yamm form three vertices of a single triangle of power. Mot boasts that his power, that of the destroying drought, is greater than both that of Baal and the sea monsters.

What this passage in effect does is to associate the motif of drought with that of the netherworld and of death, clearly and outspokenly. In essence, it constitutes the realization of the predictions of the earlier attestations of the Refrain of the Burning Sun and serves as one of the necessary counterparts to it. The heavens burning hot and shining (or “being weakened”), together with Baal having to descend into Mot's gullet, portrays an inversion of reality: instead of receiving Baal's rains, the heavens are subjected to heat and weakness. Through the unmentioned agency of Shapshu, who normally (as the concluding sun hymn at the end of *CAT* 1.6 VI puts it) “rules the ancestral spirits (*rāpi'ūma*),” the powers of the netherworld are brought up into the world of the living at the same time that Baal, the ruler of the universe, is forced to go down. The solar deity, with her ambiguous role, is the unstated facilitator of this mythological process: Shapshu is the only one who can make this narrative construct work. The fact that the present passage does not mention her by name does not lessen her role or the necessity of remembering this role if one is to understand the passage correctly. For further discussions that may be relevant in this context, see the Appendix.

The associative relationship between Death, swallowing and the terrible drought consuming the land is given a most clear-cut definition in this passage, and one should note that this is a relationship which survives (albeit in a transformed shape) in the texts of the Hebrew Bible. I would like to draw attention especially to the discussion in section 3.3.3.3 of Job 18:12-17, where these same motifs return in close contact with one another. That passage in Job speaks of a person metaphorically drying up and being burned when swallowed

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Baal's victory over Lotan be described as a “burning,” and how would Baal's alleged “brightening” of the heavens relate to the Refrain of the Burning Sun, which attributes the glow of Shapshu to Mot exclusively? And would not the syntax of the passage (as interpreted by Barker) be a bit strange, with an unstated 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular object of the first verb and then an equally unstated switch of object to “the heavens”?

<sup>116</sup> Barker 2006: 45.

by “firstborn Death” (*běkôr māwet*), also portrayed as the *melek ballāhôt*, “the king of terrors.”

When these two passages, *CAT* 1.5 I 1-8 and Job 18:12-17, are read and analyzed together, they appear almost as intertextual entities, providing a good example of the “mythological/poetic inheritance” that I refer to in the Introduction. Both speak of someone being eaten by personified Death, and both portray drought as the direct result of this. In both cases, the “eating” is described in a highly illustrative manner (“elbows, blood, and forearms” and “he eats his skin with sickness—Death, the firstborn, eats with both his hands”). However, it must be acknowledged that the two texts use their common background for quite different purposes: the Ugaritic text talks of the state of the entire universe, of the relationship between the three powers Storm, Death and Sea, whereas the Job text uses these ancient motifs to illustrate the demise of an unlucky and sinful human being. Inheritance is certainly not the same as copying.

### 2.2.4 Special Study: The Meaning of the Verb *tkh* and its Importance for Ps 102:5 and 137:5, etc.

The enigmatic verb *tkh* is of central importance to the passage containing Mot's threats directed at Baal in CAT 1.5 I 1-8. In the present context, the word appears with the sky as its (probable) subject in the line *tkh ttrp šmm*. The most common interpretation is to regard the first two words of this line as verbs in the prefix form with the preformative of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural, the subject being the sky. Thus, the basic structure of the passage seems to be "Though you smote the Leviathan ... the heavens [will?] *A* and *B*," where *A* and *B* stand in for the two verbs, both of which are uncertain as to their meaning. I shall here discuss the first of these two verbs in detail, since its meaning not only has a strong bearing on a number of Ugaritic passages and on possible ideas of death and drought, but also because it may be of direct relevance to the interpretation of a number of important and much-discussed biblical passages, which may be of great importance to the present study.

The verb *tkh* is often taken to be a description of the scorching heat of the heavens, with which Mot is threatening Baal, but there have been a large number of other suggestions as well. It has been interpreted in a number of sharply differing ways, that very clearly define what the lines in question are actually thought to be about. As such, this instance of the verb *tkh* forms a sort of parallel in the *Forschungsgeschichte* to the questions concerning the meaning of the verb *šhrr* in the Refrain of the Burning Sun. In the case of *tkh*, the lexical meaning of the word is even more unclear and has been discussed by a number of scholars without much consensus being reached. I shall therefore discuss the meaning of this verb in some detail. Most of the work has already been done by other scholars, but I hope to arrive at a synthesis in this matter, perhaps strengthening a few arguments.

It is important to note that the verb occurs in two (rather fragmentary) contexts outside the Baal Cycle. The first of these is the text about the marriage of the lunar deities, CAT 1.24, in which the verb has the moon god Yarikh as its subject and describes his action or state prior to embracing (root *h̄bq*) the goddess Nikkal, who will bear him a child (CAT 1.24 4-5). The other place of attestation is CAT 1.11 1-2, in which the verb occurs twice in a description of Anat and Baal in the throes of passion: both of them "*tkh*" whereupon they grasp the other's "belly" (*qrb*) and "testicles" (*ušk*) respectively. In both texts, therefore, the verb occurs in what is the first step of a sexual contact.

The suggestions as to the meaning of the verb *tkh* have been many and diversified. Attempts have been made to link the verb to proposed cognates in other Semitic languages. One of these cases entails a reinterpretation of certain passages in the Psalms of the Hebrew Bible. I will here review various suggestions and evaluate them.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> A digest of various suggestions, with ample references, can be found in Dietrich and Loretz 2000: 169-170.



One of the most common suggestions regarding the meaning of the word is that it signifies some state of weakness. Translations of this sort are favored for example by Dahood in his “pan-Ugaritic” commentary to the Psalms, in which he regards the Hebrew verb *škh* (for example in Ps 102:5) not as being the usual verb “forget,” but as being a cognate of the Ugaritic root *tkh*, to which he assigns the meaning “wither,” “wilt,” “be wasted” or the like, a suggestion that has found a number of followers.<sup>118</sup> His interpretation, that a cognate of the Ugaritic verb may be present in the Hebrew *škh* (which is a quite possible connection as far as sound-laws are concerned) is interesting in itself and is certainly on the right track, but his attempted explanation of the meaning of the word, though not wrong, appears rather too limited, as I will argue below.

Dahood’s line of reasoning concerning the Hebrew *škh* is also discussed (though not endorsed) by Marttila, who even suggests that the Ugaritic root *tkh* always and without doubt carries this meaning of “withering.”<sup>119</sup> This is a simplification, however, as the meaning of the verb is far from clearcut from a philological standpoint (as pointed out by Brown<sup>120</sup>). As a matter of fact, I would say that a basic and exclusive meaning “to be weak” or “to wither” is actually quite improbable for *tkh*, given the contexts in which it appears.

The one context in which one could imagine “wither” to be the correct translation of *tkh* would be the passage at the beginning of *CAT* 1.5, in which the terrible threats of Mot are enumerated. One could very well imagine a “withering heaven” as representing a sign of the power of Mot over Baal (especially as compared with the expression *la šmm* in the Refrain of the Burning Sun), and this is apparently the passage from which Dahood and his followers extrapolated the meaning “wither” for the Hebrew *škh*. Yet, if one looks beyond this single passage, the problems with this approach start heaping up. Both in *CAT* 1.11 and 1.24, the context of the verb is that of sexual arousal, as mentioned earlier. To imagine that Baal and Anat would begin their sexual escapades by “withering” is difficult to swallow, just as it would be very strange for the moon god Yarikh to “wither” before embracing his female counterpart, Nikkal, so that she may bear him a son.

One solution which is apparently meant to get around this problem, while still retaining the proposed connection with Hebrew *škh*, is to see the basic meaning of the verbal roots in question as being something along the lines of “reach/bend down” or (by extension) “droop.”<sup>121</sup> Using such an interpretation, one can account for such famous examples as the “forgetting right hand” apparently referred to in Ps 137:5, as well as for the terrible state of the heavens

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<sup>118</sup> See, for example, Dahood 1970: 11. As an example, a translation of Ps 102:5 which follows a similar line of reasoning (“I am too wasted to eat my bread”) is found in Lindström 1994: 218. In Dahood 1970: 271, a number of other biblical verses are tied in with the interpretation “wither”: Ps 31:13, 59:12, 77:10 (in addition to 102:5 and 137:5).

<sup>119</sup> Marttila 2006: 122.

<sup>120</sup> Brown 1995: 339 n. 57.

<sup>121</sup> So, for example, Roberts 1975: 800-801, n. 13.

recounted at the beginning of *CAT* 1.5. Both hands and heavens can well be imagined to “droop” and become weak. The proponents of this view also believe that this solution could be applied to *CAT* 1.11, in the sense of Baal and Anat “reaching down” to grasp each other’s private parts, a perhaps somewhat difficult but not impossible solution.

But what of *CAT* 1.24? Is one to translate “when the sun wanes, Yarikh reaches down to embrace her who is to become pregnant and bear a son”? There is no physical “groping” imagery here that would account for his “reaching down.” One would need to assume that this expression had become standard terminology for describing sexual contact, which, while of course not impossible, would be a rather strange semantic drift, especially if the verb by extension also meant “to be weak” or “droop,” hardly a trait generally associated with sexual prowess.

Dietrich and Loretz favor an interpretation based on the Akkadian verb *šegû* (“wild sein, rasen”).<sup>122</sup> This would of course work well within a framework of sexual intercourse, but much less so in connection with climatological problems involving the sky, and there is another problem: Akkadian *šegû* does not match Ugaritic *ṭkh* very well in terms of regular sound correspondences. One would rather expect the Akkadian word to be *\*šekû* (a voiceless velar plosive would remain unchanged all the way down from Proto-Semitic into the two languages: a voicing to *g* in Akkadian would be strange, and there is also no clear reason for devoicing an original voiced *g* in Ugaritic).<sup>123</sup> Similar problems of historical phonology challenge attempts to connect the Ugaritic verb with the Aramaic *šēkah* (“to find, encounter”):<sup>124</sup> the expected Aramaic form would be *tēkah*.<sup>125</sup>

In a brief article from 1964, Johannes de Moor favors a translation along the lines of “to strip, be uncovered,” for which he adduces some circumstantial evidence from Epigraphic South Arabian and an Arabic word *kaṭaḥa* (with an assumed metathesis of two of the radicals). He therefore supposes that Baal, Anat and Yarikh “strip” before engaging in sexual activities. This is, of course, a possible solution, but to make it fit with the passage considered here (the one including Mot’s threats directed at Baal), one must adopt the translation “robe”

<sup>122</sup> Dietrich and Loretz 1980: 406 and 2000: 169; *AHW*: 1208 (s.v. *šegû*).

<sup>123</sup> For an overview of the *Lautverschiebungen* of the Semitic consonants, see for example Kienast 2001: 27-29 or Lipiński 1997: 150. Lipiński points out (1997: 138) that there is a dephonicization of *k-g* in Neo-Assyrian (with the voiced version appearing in intervocalic position), but *šegû* is attested in both Old and Standard Babylonian, which makes this exception unlikely as an explanation (cf. *CAD*, vol. Š II: 260 [s.v. *šegû*]).

<sup>124</sup> Such an interpretation is found, for example, in the commentary on the Yarikh-Nikkal text by Hermann (1968: 4-5).

<sup>125</sup> I would, however, consider it quite probable that the more common Hebrew verb *škh* (meaning “forget”) actually *is* related to Aramaic *šēkah*. This would be a case of an “inverted” meaning of the verb, the basic meaning “find” being used for its opposite, “to lose, forget.” Such an etymological connection appears to be favored by Klein (1987: 656, s.v. *šākāh* I and II); see also Clifford 1987: 61.

for the word *ipdk*.<sup>126</sup> The parallelistically well-motivated translation of *ipdk* as a verb signifying Mot's "tearing" of Baal, in parallel with *ispi* ("I will eat"), does not allow for a translation "strip."<sup>127</sup>

Løkkegaard suggests a translation along the lines of "to couple (sexually)," interpreting the word as an Š form of the well-attested Arabic verb *nkḥ*. This translation is problematical, because of the simple fact of the initial consonant not being an Š but a Ṭ.<sup>128</sup> However, isolated instances are known in which the causative preformative does change its appearance in this way (probably due to an increasing confusion of the sibilant and quasi-sibilant phonemes of Ugaritic), but this normally only occurs in verbs having ṭ as their first radical.<sup>129</sup> Also, it would be rather difficult to align a translation of this sort with the attestation in the Baal-Mot episode (where having the heavens as the subject of a verb meaning "to couple" would make no sense whatsoever).

The most fruitful line of reasoning concerning the Ugaritic verb would appear to be the one adduced by such scholars as Caquot/Sznycer/Herdner and Pope, all of whom suggest that the word in question means something like "become hot, become warm."<sup>130</sup> This same trajectory of thought is also represented by Gordon, who suggested the translations "to *shine* (of heavenly bodies)" and "to be *passionate*,"<sup>131</sup> by which translation the attempt is made to combine the contextual meanings in some sort of logical way. A similar view is held by van Selms, who interpreted the verb as used in Mot's threats as a 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular transitive D form and translated "you set alight" or "made burn."<sup>132</sup> I agree that "heat" or "warmth" does seem to be the concept that most closely fits the very different contexts in which *ṭkh* is used in the Ugaritic texts. It is very plausible that the parties of a sexual encounter would be described as growing "hot" (a turn of phrase which is of course very much alive in this particular context in modern Western languages),<sup>133</sup> and "hotness" also is quite a strong candidate as a description of what would happen to the skies if Baal were not present to send down his precipitation (a state described very clearly later on in the story, when the "furrows of the fields are parched" etc.). In fact, it is hard

<sup>126</sup> de Moor 1964: 371-372. The view that the verb has to do with stripping of clothes (or similar) is echoed in the *DUL* (s.v. *ṭ-k-h*, pp. 902-903).

<sup>127</sup> See, e.g., Smith in UNP: 141 for a translation of this type. Also, de Moor's proposed typological parallel between the South Arabian *mṭkh* (a word denoting a flat stone bearing a votive inscription, supposedly from our root *ṭkh*) and the Hebrew *gillāyôn* (having a similar meaning) presupposes a type of semantic inheritance that is difficult to prove conclusively.

<sup>128</sup> Løkkegaard 1956: 55, n. 3; the view is restated in Løkkegaard 1982: 133.

<sup>129</sup> Note the Š form *ṭtb* from the root *ṭwb* ("to return"). See Tropper 2000: 142.

<sup>130</sup> Caquot, Sznycer and Herdner 1974: 391 ("s'enflammera"); Pope 1966: 240.

<sup>131</sup> Gordon 1965: 502.

<sup>132</sup> van Selms 1975: 481.

<sup>133</sup> For comparable biblical instances of "hotness" used as metaphors for sexual passion, see Eidevall 1996: 112.

to think of any other meaning that could fit these different attestations better than a root-meaning “to be warm, hot.” The clearest statement of this interpretation was made by Emerton, who noted: “[...] it would make good sense in CTA 5. i. 4 for Mot to predict that the skies will become hot and dry when he kills Baal. The idea of being hot would also suit the contexts in which the verb has a sexual sense.”<sup>134</sup>

These scholars, however, often interpreted Ugaritic *tkh* by extrapolating its supposed sense from the context, which of course creates the problem of there being no clear Semitic *comparandum* that could support such a translation. The proponents of the other suggested translations endeavored (albeit not very successfully) to connect the verb with various roots in other languages so as to strengthen their positions, but the “heat”-translation has often been suggested without reference to comparative evidence. A believable cognate would clearly strengthen the points made. I believe it to be quite possible to make such a connection, also in the case of this translation.

The comparison I propose was also suggested (rather obliquely) by Marvin H. Pope, who in his 1966 review of the second edition of Gray’s *The Legacy of Canaan* pointed out that a (contextually based) translation of *tkh* as “grow hot” and by extension “parched” could help explain the use of Hebrew *škḥ* in Ps 102:5 (the very attestation that Dahood connected with *tkh* giving a proposed meaning “to be wasted”). Pope translates Ps 102:5 as: “Smitten like grass and dry is my heart, / I am too parched to eat my food.”<sup>135</sup>

As Pope here implies without clearly stating it, the context of a heart that is “smitten like grass” (*hukkā kā’ēšeb*) and has “dried” (*wayyībaš*) fits extremely well with a meaning involving heat (an excess of it, in this case).<sup>136</sup> But this connection becomes stronger yet if one looks at the verse before. In verse 4, the psalmist complains that his “days disappear like smoke” (*kālū bē’āšān yāmāy*, more literally even “in smoke”) and that his “bones are burning like a furnace” (*wē’āšmōtay kēmōqēd*<sup>137</sup> *niḥārū*). A clearer example of feverish “excess of heat” could hardly be asked for.

Further support for the interpretation “be too excessively hot” can perhaps be found in verse 10 of the same Psalm, which openly describes the food of the psalmist as “ashes” (*ēper*), a very visual manifestation of the scorching heat that makes eating difficult in verse 5.

<sup>134</sup> Emerton 1972: 62-66. Emerton’s reasoning is followed for example by Wyatt (2002: 115-116, esp. n. 7). One finds a cautious acceptance of this view in *HALOT* (s.v. *škḥ* II), which says that “to be hot, burn, be burned” is a possible meaning for the Ugaritic instances.

<sup>135</sup> Pope 1966: 240.

<sup>136</sup> Dahood (1970: 11) also notes the interesting parallel use of the root *nkh* connected with the burning sun in Ps 121:6. The verse (and v. 5) speaks of walking in the shade granted by YHWH, this creating a shield from the power of the sun (and of the moon).

<sup>137</sup> The reading *kēmō-qēd* (represented by BHS) is an idiosyncrasy of the Codex Leningradensis. Other manuscripts (as well as BHK) have *kēmōqēd*.

The traditional translation of the phrase containing *škḥ* as “I forget to eat my bread” seems downright weird in this context. A weakness resulting from heat or parching definitely seems to be what the phrase is referring to. Further on in Psalm 102 (in verse 12), one finds the “parched grass” once again described outright (*wā’ānī kā’ēšeb ’ībaš*, “and I grow parched like grass”), thus even further reinforcing the imagery.

Whereas Marvin H. Pope regarded this use of *škḥ* as an example of how Ugaritic can be used to shed light on Hebrew, I would propose that it is quite possible to argue the other way around: that the evidence of Ps 102:5 in itself points to a connection with burning, heat or parching. The classical “I forget” version just does not make sense, and the context is very clearly one in which heat is the central problem. Thus, Ps 102:5 can be said to shed as much light on the Ugaritic version of the verb as the Ugaritic evidence does on the biblical attestation. If one puts together the data concerning the use of the verb—a sky without precipitation, beginnings of sexual confrontation, problems connected with “burning like a furnace,” “passing away like smoke” and drying up “like grass”—scorching heat appears to be the only plausible interpretation. Therefore, I concur with the view that the verbal root *tkḥ* originally meant something like “be exceedingly hot” and then (by extension) “be parched, wilting, dried out.” Yet, one should note that the “Dahoodian” meaning of “wither” or “falter”<sup>138</sup> is at most a secondary development and that the root appears to connote the results of excessive, drying heat *even in the Old Testament*. The verb does certainly *not* mean “wither, wilt” in the Ugaritic sources.

With these insights in mind, it may be fruitful to consider another attestation of *škḥ* that has often been considered to be derived not from the usual verb meaning “to forget” but from a cognate of Ugaritic *tkḥ*. This is Ps 137:5, in which appears the famous phrase *’im ’eskāḥēk yērūšālāyim tiškah yēmīnī*. In this sentence, the first instance of *škḥ* definitely means “forget” (“Jerusalem, if I forget you ...”), but the second one is problematical (it has no object, and the conception of the right hand forgetting something seems strange in itself). Because of this, a meaning based on the Ugaritic word (supposedly meaning “wither”) became popular, yielding translations of the type “Jerusalem, if I forget you, may my right hand wither/lose its strength.”<sup>139</sup>

<sup>138</sup> Dahood 1968: 66, 72.

<sup>139</sup> The suggestion originated with Albright (1941b: 15, n. 3) and was also supported by Dahood (1970: 268). A translation based on this idea is found in the *Revised Standard Version*, for example, which shows its impact. One may note with some interest that translations of the type “may my right hand become lame” existed long before any of the etymological considerations discussed here. An example of this can be found in the commentary of Delitzsch (1876: 733, 735), who regarded *tiškah* as a form of the normal verb meaning “to forget,” yet still translated the phrase as “[e]rlahme meine Rechte!” Delitzsch compared this proposed usage of a verb meaning “forget” with figures of speech such as talking of one’s legs falling asleep, etc.

These suggestions do seem to fit a description of a non-functional right hand, but as has been shown above, the Ugaritic lexeme on which they were based did not exclusively mean “wither” or “become weak.” If one applies the data that has above been gleaned about *tkh/škh* to this biblical passage, a very interesting piece of information comes to light. Just as was seen in the case of Ps 102:5, the context itself provides clues as to the interpretation. In the verse immediately following it (Ps 137:6), the description of the dire results of forgetting Jerusalem are further expounded upon in a manner clearly aimed at achieving a poetical parallelism with the verse before. The words in question are *tidbaq lēšōnī lēhikkī ʾim lō ʾezkērēkī* (“Let my tongue stick to my palate if I do not remember you [...]).”

The image of the tongue getting stuck at the palate, I would suggest, is more than just a description of weakness and the inability to speak. The idea that the tongue would “stick to the palate” in this way implies dryness, lack of moisture, and thus (by implication) heat. I would argue that both this expression and the strange use of *škh* imply a malfunctioning of the limbs connected with *dryness* or *hotness*.

Interestingly, Ibn Ezra says in his 12<sup>th</sup> century commentary that the word *tiškah* in Ps 137:5 was understood by some people (of his day?) as meaning *tībaš* (“may it dry up”).<sup>140</sup> This could mean that there actually was a tradition that preserved the meaning connected with dryness and heat well into the Middle Ages, thus arriving at the same conclusion without reference to any comparative evidence!<sup>141</sup>

The archaic verb *tkh/škh*, meaning something like “to be dried out and weak because of excessive heat” is here used in word-play together with the much more synchronically “living” verb *škh* (“forget”), thus creating a direct phonetic link between the concepts of forgetting Jerusalem and being so parched and

<sup>140</sup> Ibn Ezra’s words (available as part of the *Miqrā’ ōt gēdōlōt* to Ps 137:5) are: *wēyēš ʾōmērīm šēppērūšō tībaš bēlī hābēr*, “and there are those who say that its meaning is ‘may it dry out’—[a meaning of this word] that has no parallel.”

<sup>141</sup> Ibn Ezra’s remark was pointed out in Eitan 1928: 194-195. Eitan could, of course, not make the connection with Ugaritic *tkh* because his article was published in 1928. He instead argues for a metathesized derivation from the root *kšh*, having the supposed meaning “to be paralysed, lame.” He connects this root with Arabic *ksh*, which does mean “to be crippled” or “lame.” This explanation, followed for example by Rendsburg and Rendsburg (1993: 391-392), seems less attractive to me because of the combined evidence for “dryness.” Possibly, the use of the verb *škh* could have been meant to suggest a connection with the cognate of the Arabic *ksh* (in the interest of word-play)—but still, Ugaritic *tkh* seems to me a much more plausible cognate. A similar verb *khš* meaning (according to *HALOT* [s.v. *khš*]) “to grow lean” does occur in Ps 109:24. A view trying in a way to reconcile the meaning “dry out” with the one involving “lean-ness” can be found in Bar Ilan 2001: n. 120. Bar Ilan quotes Ibn Ezra’s discussion of Ps 137:5, yet states that *tiškah* is to be understood in this context as *tikšah*, adding that even though there is a difference between a hand that has been dried out and one that is lame, “the matters/words are close” (*qērōbīm haddēbārīm*).

dried up that both hand and tongue are unusable.<sup>142</sup> The translation “wither” is thus correct in and of itself, but I would argue for something stronger—“to be burned by hotness,” perhaps.<sup>143</sup> Thus one could translate the phrase from Ps 137:5 as something like “may my right hand be burnt and parched.”

A clear parallel to the present passage and its reference to tongues drying up can be found in Ps 22:16, where a very similar expression is found—*ûlēšōnī mudbāq malqôḥāy*, “and my tongue sticks to my gums”—in a context that clearly associates this ailment with the semantic sphere of death, as shown by the line that follows, *wēla‘āpar-māwet tišpētēnī* (“you put me in the dust of death”).<sup>144</sup> Thus, the oft-occurring semantic conflation between dryness and death is here explicitly stated in relation to this *topos* as well, and can therefore well be thought to be present in Psalm 137 also. One may further note that the two parts of the Psalmist’s body that Psalm 137 says will be hot and burned if Jerusalem is forgotten are the mouth and the hand—precisely those two parts of Mot’s body that are shown in the Ugaritic texts to bring on drought (his mouth because of his swallowing Baal). Although this may be a coincidence, it perhaps shows an internalization of these forces of Death into the body of the Psalmist.

Another illustration of this use of the verb *tkh/škḥ* as a marker of the burning drought of death can perhaps be found in Ps 31:13.<sup>145</sup> The relevant phrase here is *niškaḥtī kēmēt millēb*, which Dahood translates as “I have shriveled up / as a dead man, senseless,” rather than seeing the verb as a reference to being

<sup>142</sup> If the above (n. 125) etymological connection between Hebrew *škḥ* (“forget”) and Aramaic *šēkaḥ* is correct, and this verb therefore contrasts with the Hebrew reflex of *tkh*, this can be an interesting case of word-play made possible only through the sound-laws of Hebrew, which caused the phonemes *š* and *t* to coalesce, thus obscuring the very different origins of the two verbs. This would of course also create a definite *terminus ante quem* for the completion of this phonological development.

<sup>143</sup> Using a verb meaning “be too hot, be dried up” for designating lameness of the limbs is not without parallels; see for example 1 Kings 13:4, where the limb in question is a hand, and Zech 11:17, where it is an arm. A similar expression occurs in the Deir Alla inscription, in fragment d of Combination X, which has *ydh tšmqn* (“may his/her hand dry up”). For all these examples, see Hoftijzer and van der Kooij 1976: 264 (although there no mention is made of Ps 137:5). The parallel with 1 Kings 13:4 is also mentioned by Bar Ilan (2001).

<sup>144</sup> Cf. also the longer passage Lam 4:4-9, which includes the tongue sticking to the palate, death and being dried up.

<sup>145</sup> The view that this verse contains the root in question can be found in Dahood 1965: 190 and 1970: 271. For a contrary stance, note the severe criticism in Roberts 1975. Roberts compares the expression *niškaḥtī ... millēb* to a use of the same roots in Deut 4:9, which he thinks invalidates any claim of Ps 31:13 not speaking of “forgetting.” However, he thereby (wrongly, to my mind) discounts the possibility of wordplay, and, as seen in the main text, I find the outspoken reference to death difficult not to take note of in this context. Also, one may note with some interest that Ps 59:12, another verse for which Dahood (1968: 72; 1970: 271) adduced the verb here under discussion, includes a reference to death as well. This *testimonium* is, however, of much less certain relevance.

forgotten.<sup>146</sup> Given the comparison with a dead body, it is highly tempting to see in this phrase an inheritance from the ancient language used of drought-inducing Mot at Ugarit. The psalmist is, so to speak, “scorched like a dead man,” a motif recalling the rule of Mot very vividly. One should note that Dahood appears not to have taken the association with death into account when he made his proposal, nor did he apparently see the whole picture of the meaning of the meaning of the verb as connected with heat.

Another passage that may be relevant to the question of *tkh/škh* (“be exceedingly hot, parched”) is Ps 18:45-46a:

<i>lēšāmēa' ʾōzen yiššāmē' ū-lī</i>	When they hear of me they obey me,
<i>bēnē-nēkār yēkahšū lī</i>	foreigners ... before me
<i>bēnē-nēkār yibbōlū</i>	foreigners dry up/wilt.

In 45*b*, the MT has a pi<sup>ʿ</sup>el form of the root *khš* (mentioned in note 141 as a possible, though less convincing, explanation for *tīškah* in Ps 137:5, presupposing a metathesis of the root consonants). The form in Ps 18:45*b* is rendered by HALOT as “to feign obedience” or “to fawn” (while the root in qal means “to grow lean”).<sup>147</sup> I have left the word untranslated above, as the reference to drying up or wilting (root *nbl*) in the next line suggests the possibility that the archaic verb *tkh/škh* may originally have been involved here as well (either subjected to metathesis in the other direction because of the rarity of the verb meaning “be hot/dry up” or as a piece of wordplay with *khš*). The foreigners would then metaphorically be “burned up” in 45*b*.

I believe that these Psalm passages contain reminiscences of an archaic use of the verb *škh* to describe parching, drying or excessive heat. If one looks at how this word is used in the Baal Cycle, in which Mot uses this very word to threaten Baal with the results of his imminent demise, it is not difficult to imagine that this connotation of drought and death might in some way remain in the biblical passages in question. Ps 102:5-6, in particular, one finds an elaborate description of distress involving overt use of drought-imagery, not only in the word *škh* but also in the clear mention of parched grass.<sup>148</sup> I believe that one can see here a Hebrew “reception” of the ancient motif of death manifesting itself as drought, heat and demise of vegetation. The fact that an unusual and archaic verb is used here only strengthens the assumption of an ancient and inherited mytho-literary *topos*. In Ps 137:5-6, this old retention has been somewhat reformed through inner-Hebrew word-play and a connection with Israelite longing for home, yet it is still possible to perceive a remnant of the old

<sup>146</sup> Dahood 1965: 186.

<sup>147</sup> HALOT (s.v. *khš*). Dahood 1965: 103 has “cringe before me.”

<sup>148</sup> The imagery of dried up grass has metaphors of a death-like state has illustrative parallels in Ps 90:3-6 and of course Isa 40:7-8 (see section 3.2.1.3).



mythological construct, as evidenced by the parallelism between “may my hand *škl*” and “may my tongue stick to my palate.” The metaphorical identification between death/distress and heat seems almost alive in the words themselves.

### 2.2.5 The “Parched Furrows” and the Searching Sun: CAT 1.6 IV

The Refrain of the Burning Sun is not the only place in the Baal-Mot epic in which the sun/Shapshu seems to be expressly mentioned in connection with descriptions of drought and vegetational problems. Another place in which this occurs is at the beginning of column IV of CAT 1.6, when El sends a message to Shapshu (by way of Anat) after having seen a vision of the skies raining oil and of the wadis flowing with honey, indicating to him that Baal is alive. He orders Anat to tell Shapshu to make a sort of survey of the countryside, and the words he uses seem clearly to imply a description of the devastating effects of Baal’s absence. Note that this passage is an example of the direct opposite to the classic idea that Shapshu is a “*messagère des dieux*”.<sup>149</sup> Anat is to bring a message to Shapshu, not the other way around! At the very beginning of his speech, El uses the same words twice in his instructions to Anat (with a slight variation at the end of the second line), and these words (which almost create a little “refrain” in themselves) recur when she relays them to Shapshu. The words are:

*pl . ʿnt . šdm . y špš*  
*pl . ʿnt . šdm [.] il .*

(CAT 1.6 IV 1-3)

These lines are usually translated in ways reminiscent of the following:<sup>150</sup>

Parched are the furrows of the fields, o Shapshu,  
 parched are the furrows of the fields of El [or: the great fields].

El then continues:

*yštk . bʿl . ʿnt . mḥrtt*  
*iy . aliyn . bʿl*  
*iy . zbl . bʿl . arš*

(CAT 1.6 IV 3-5)

This can be provisionally translated as:

Baal must take care of [or: has forsaken] the furrows of the plowland:  
 where is Victorious Baal,  
 where is Prince Baal of the earth?

<sup>149</sup> Thus Caquot 1959: 93.

<sup>150</sup> Examples of translations of this type are Hvidberg 1962: 36, de Moor 1971: 220-221 and Gibson 1978: 155.

2.2.5.1 The Verbal Forms *pl* and *yšk*

The main problem in elucidating the meaning of these passages and their later recurring parallels in lines 12-16 lies in the identity of the word *pl*. The common interpretation, given above, as “parched, cracked,” is based on a parallel with the Arabic root *ʃll*, meaning “break, crack.”<sup>151</sup> Lane’s Arabic dictionary defines the nominal derivation *fallun* as “break, or notch,” but includes among his definitions the meanings “[l]and affected with drought or barrenness; [...] such as it is rained upon but does not produce plants or herbage” and gives the additional description of land “such as the rain has failed to fall upon during several years: or such as is not rained upon between two lands that have been rained upon.”<sup>152</sup>

The other proposed interpretation of *pl* in this passage is to connect it to a verb *plh/fly*, attested in Mishnaic Hebrew and Arabic, meaning “to search,”<sup>153</sup> which would produce a quite different sense, one in which the lines are used to call upon Shapshu to search the fields. This interpretation would fit the general context very well, as “search” is exactly what she takes it upon herself to do: in line 20 she expressly says *w abqt aliyn b’l* (“and I will search for victorious Baal”).

However, there are two factors which would militate against such an approach. The first has to do with literary unity and poetics. The line immediately following the ones with *pl* would hang rather oddly by itself if the translation “search” were to be adopted. “Search the fields ... search the fields ... Baal must take care of/has forsaken the plowland” seems like a rather strange tricolon in the light of normal Ugaritic poetics: the third line has little or nothing to do with what has come before. On the other hand, if we translate “the furrows are parched,” we get a beautiful parallelism with an explanatory remark in the third line of the fact already stated in the first two. Against this, one might argue that Baal’s being “away” or necessary in the third line is a sort of climax to the exhortations to search for him, but this, too, makes scant sense, as there seems to be no reason at all to search for him at the “furrows,” especially as El has been informed by his servants earlier on in the story that he died in the “wilderness” (*dbr*), whereupon he was buried by Anat and Shapshu on Mount Sapan.<sup>154</sup>

<sup>151</sup> Thus, for example, de Moor 1971: 220-221, with ample references.

<sup>152</sup> Lane 1863: 2434 (s.v. *fallun*).

<sup>153</sup> So, for example, Dussaud 1934: 204, Margalit 1980: 170 and Wyatt 2002: 137, n. 91.

<sup>154</sup> Even less likely would be for Shapshu to search for him at “the wells,” the translation opted for by Wyatt (2002:138). Nowhere in the Baal Cycle is he put at such a location, nor would there be any reason for El to suppose him to be found there. Also, as Wyatt himself notes (2002:138, n. 92), the word *nt* definitely means “furrows” in the line immediately following, and such a coincidence seems highly unlikely, unless, of course, some sort of wordplay is involved. But even then a search for Baal at the wells has no support elsewhere in the text.

The other reason to opt for the translation “parched, cracked” is the existence of a passage containing the word *pl* in the quite obscure text *CAT* 1.83. This text, which seems to deal with the destruction and binding of Yamm (in that text identified with the sea monster Tunnan) at the hands of an unknown protagonist, uses the word *pl* in the description of the destruction of the sea monster, in a way that would fit better with the meaning “to dry out” than it would with “to search.”<sup>155</sup> Line 11 of that text runs *pl . tbtñ . y ymm*, and seems to mean something like “dried up, you shall be scattered, O Yamm!”<sup>156</sup> In this case it would hardly make any sense to translate “search, be scattered, O Yamm.” Rather than to assume two different verbs, it seems much more parsimonious to translate “dry out” in both of these cases, as that translation makes good sense in both cases. There are thus no secure grounds on which to argue for the interpretation “search,” and I believe that the verbal form *pl* should be read as a 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural perfect of the G stem (“they are parched”), or possibly as a narrative infinitive.

The last verb of the passages here discussed, *yštk*, has Baal as its subject, and its object is without a doubt the “plowland,” *mḥrtt*. The identity of the verb is not certain; proposals have ranged from deriving it from the root *škn*<sup>157</sup> or *kwn* to *yšt*<sup>158</sup> or even *škw*<sup>159</sup> (among others). Many translations arrive at a wish for Baal to take care of the furrows or restore them to their previous state.<sup>160</sup> Some have opted for a translation on the lines of “Baal neglects/has forsaken the furrows of the plowland.”<sup>161</sup> The latter version seems rather less believable, as one might have expected the suffix tense for such a description of an ongoing state or result. Regardless of the identity of the verb, the switch from suffix tense (*pl*) to prefix tense *yštk* probably indicates a fientic resolution to a problem expressed as a stative.

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<sup>155</sup> Pitard 1998: 277.

<sup>156</sup> Reading follows Pitard 1998: 263, 277. Pitard gives another possible rendering, also connecting the root *pl* to dryness: “towards the desert you shall be scattered, o Yamm!” Of course, being “dried up” would be an especially potent way of describing the vanquishing of an aquatic being such as Yamm.

<sup>157</sup> Driver 1956: 113, interpreting the verb as “provide for (?)”.

<sup>158</sup> de Moor 1971: 220-221, interpreting the *-k* as a dative pronominal suffix.

<sup>159</sup> “Lament”; thus Hvidberg (1962: 36, esp. n. 7), who interprets the line not as a statement of what Baal has done or must do, but of nature’s response to his absence: “The furrows of the plowland lament over Baal.”

<sup>160</sup> Smith (*UNP*): 158 (“restore [?]”).

<sup>161</sup> Thus Gaster 1961: 223 (“is neglecting”), Ginsberg (*ANET*): 141, Avishur 1972: 2 and Wyatt 2002: 138 (“has forsaken”). However, none of these scholars provide any clear etymon as grounds for this type of translation, which thus appears to be completely conjectural. This substantially weakens the case for this translation. See Wyatt’s n. 94 for further references for the various suggestions.

2.2.5.2 *The Sun as “Scorcher and Searcher”*

If the translation adopted here is correct, the present passage takes on a kind of dramatic irony. El complains of the parched furrows in a message to Shapshu, who in the Refrain of the Burning Sun is the very means of manifesting this drought. He complains of Baal’s absence to the one who has been forced to manifest that very problem. But irony is not the only element in this passage: El is not really chastising the solar goddess for her blasting effects, he is trying to use her, or rather her special characteristics. As the divine entity most closely connected to the realm of Death (both through the drought she has brought on by his power and through her nightly journey through the underworld), she seems to be the perfect candidate to “search for Victorious Baal,” as she herself puts it. I would here like to point out the obvious parallels to what is described in text *CAT* 1.161, the Ugaritic “funerary text,” in which Shapshu (and her heat) seems to be one of the main connections between the lands of the living and the dead. As the Baal-Mot episode constitutes a direct confrontation between the powers of Life and Death, the strangely liminal character of the Sun is ideally suited to connect the two, in this case in order to search for the fertility-bringer himself.

The fact that El makes reference to the parched furrows is thus probably not only a description of the terrible state of affairs but also an appeal to the essence of Shapshu as transcendress of the ultimate boundary between Life and Death. Shapshu, the bringer of the drought, is the perfect searcher.<sup>162</sup> Unfortunately, knowledge of the result of this search is denied to us because of what is probably the most irritating lacuna in the whole of Ugaritic literature, where it appears that Baal must have been returned to the land of the living (inasmuch as he is alive and well after the break in the text, just about to retake his rule and sit on his throne). Nonetheless, it does seem that the solar deity finds Baal (especially as the lacuna is only about 38 lines long, which indicates that Baal’s return might very well be a direct consequence of Shapshu’s quest), and the hymnic praising of her at the end of the Baal Cycle (see sections 2.2.6.3 and 2.2.6.4) shows her importance for Baal’s regaining his power.

There is a distinct possibility that *CAT* 1.6 IV shows us a mythological version of the same theological ideas present in the funerary text. In both contexts, Shapshu brings both heat (metaphorically, death) and the salvation therefrom: she lets the performers of the funerary ritual come into contact with the deified kings, and she (seemingly) brings Baal back from the dead.<sup>163</sup> She is

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<sup>162</sup> See also section 4.2.2, where I discuss a possible parallel from Ovid’s account of the myth of Phaeton as an illustrative parallel to this idea.

<sup>163</sup> As a point of interest, an admittedly quite tenuous parallel concerning the role of the solar deity as connecting agent between life and death in Northwest Semitic religion may perhaps be found in the Etrusco-Phoenician gold tablet inscriptions from Pyrgi in central Italy (ca 500 BC). In these texts, which apparently concern the dedication of a shrine and/or temple to a goddess, known in the Etruscan version as Uni and in the

thus again shown to be a somewhat “bipolar” figure, acting both as an agent of Death and as a saviour from its power. Later on in this study, we will see a remanifestation of this duality in the discussion of a biblical passage, Mal 3:19-21, where these two roles of the sun are split into the “sun of righteousness” and a burning sun that reduces the enemies of YHWH to stubble through its terrible power.

### *2.2.5.3 Possible Ritual and Apotropaic Connections*

Part of Shapshu’s answer to El’s message could possibly be interpreted as implying some form of ritual activity. The lines *šd yn . ‘n . b qbt / tbl . lyt . ‘l . umtk* (18-20) seem to mean that Shapshu instructs El (or Anat) to “pour sparkling wine into a goblet” as she searches for the absent Baal; the second half of the bicolon possibly means “let your kinsfolk wear wreaths.” Do these lines mean that the other gods are to perform some sort of ritual reminiscent of the necromantic and/or funerary rituals known to have been carried out at Ugarit? We cannot know, as “pouring wine into goblets” is not an action that appears in *CAT* 1.161. Johannes de Moor connected the lines to his seasonal pattern and to the “festival of the new wine.”<sup>164</sup> That the act of drinking (presumably of wine, though it is never clearly stated) could play a decisive part in Ugaritic ritual life is shown, for example, by such texts as *CAT* 1.108, which includes repeated calls of *yšt/tšt* (“may s/he drink!”) with various gods as subjects.<sup>165</sup> That text

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Phoenician one as ‘Aštart, there may be a reference to this idea. In the Semitic version of the text, two dates appear, giving a) the time when the shrine was dedicated and b) the day when the goddess asked this of the donator, Thefarie Velianas. The first of these is given as *yrh zbh šmš*, “the month of the sacrifice to the Sun” and the second one as *ym qbr ‘lm*, “the day of the burying of the god”. As Bonnet (1988: 287-288), Mettinger (2001: 105) and others have argued, the second of these is probably a reference to the death and burial of the Tyrian god Melqart. But what if the first of them was no coincidence either, if the correspondence between the goddess asking for a temple on the day when the god was thought to be buried and Thefarie Velianas then making good on his promise on the day when the solar deity was especially celebrated was meticulously and symbolically chosen? One would then have a situation in which the two main events of the “story” (the divine request and the human response to that request) were framed, so to speak, by religious functions relating to the transcending of the border between life and death, if the sun is viewed here in the same perspective: as the ideal psychopomp and also the ideal agent for bringing the dead god back to life, paralleling Shapshu’s role as helper in searching for the dead Baal and bringing his corpse up for a proper burial. For my views on the role of sacral legitimation and the uses of dating in this text, see Wikander 2008.

<sup>164</sup> de Moor 1971: 225.

<sup>165</sup> See *RCU*: 192-195. One could also associate this notion of drinking in relation to rituals intended to fend off drought to Amos 4, in which there is first a mocking reference to drinking (at the end of v. 1), followed by an account of untrue and unacceptable ritual practices, the result of which is YHWH withholding the vivifying rains, thus causing drought (vv. 7-8).

expressly mentions Shapshu in line 26, albeit together with El and the moon god Yarikh.

Given the reference to wine and wreaths (presumably made from branches or vines), I am inclined to see a connection with the first half of *CAT* 1.23, which presents the reign of Mot as a central problem, one which is to be countered by “vine-pruners” and “vine-binders” and which includes Shapshu and her rays as part of the battle against infertility. What the present text amounts to is, after all, nothing less than Shapshu being told of the devastating effects of Mot’s rule, whereafter she searches for the ruler of fertility, Baal (and presumably finds him, given the continuation of the story). The references to wine and wreaths could imply a connection with ritual actions performed at Ugarit for the sake of combating Death’s rule, although one must be aware that this sort of thematic connections between mythological literature and rituals may easily become speculative and overblown.<sup>166</sup>

When Shapshu departs to search for Baal, it seems that Anat gives her a blessing, asking for Shapshu to be granted “strength” (*an*) and protection from El. Given that one of the main problems described in the Refrain of the Burning Sun appears to be the “powerlessness” of the heavens, this can viewed as yet another attempt to invert the effects of the destroying drought.

#### 2.2.5.4 Conclusions

When the solar deity has searched through the fields that her rays have (inadvertently) “parched,” she can once again find Baal, thus bringing fertility and rain back to the world of the story. Her actions thus serve to counter the very effects of Death that she helped carry out. Shapshu’s connections to drought, her all-seeing character and her affinity with the land of the dead together make her the ideal character to carry out the search. She brought the drought when she was under Mot’s power, leading to the heavens being “powerless”—and now she searches for (and, it appears, finds) the one who can negate that drought and once again give the heavens strength (probably the very “strength,” *an*, that Anat wishes for her). Shapshu is the ideal searcher through the fields that she herself has “parched,” and she searches for a god who is “dead” because of the personified Death that she herself has been made to serve. Shapshu is the bringer of drought and the one who can traverse the boundary between life and death, and this makes her the ideal candidate for finding and restoring Baal.

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<sup>166</sup> Another ritual text which could be mentioned in this connection is *CAT* 1.41/1.87, which calls for an offering to Shapshu in connection with the fever god Rashpu in the month “of the first wine”. See section 2.3.3 for a discussion of this text and its relationship to *CAT* 1.23, as well as of the possibility of their both describing the actions of the solar deity when the powers of Death are defeated.

### 2.2.6 The Final Battle of the Baal Cycle and the Concluding Hymn to the Sun

The conclusion of the Baal-Cycle, as it is preserved to us, does not directly involve drought, and as such it is not immediately obvious that its contents are relevant to the present study. It does, however, include some of the most salient and clear examples of the Sun-Death connection in the whole of the Ugaritic corpus, which makes it inherently central to the questions concerning the relations between the (drought-giving) solar deity and the chthonic or “deathly” characteristics we have already seen in the discussion of the Refrain of the Burning Sun. At the very end of the story of Baal’s struggle with Mot for the kingship of the gods, it is none other than the Sun goddess herself who makes the final difference as to who the winner is going to be, and as we shall see, she turns out to be a pivotal character at what is without a doubt one of the structural high-points of the story as such. We shall analyze these texts from the point of view of Shapshu’s character, asking ourselves what they say about her and the god of death and—most importantly—how the poet uses the figure of the solar deity to bring his story to a close.

The text first describes the final battle of Baal and Mot as a sort of cosmic wrestling-bout,<sup>167</sup> in which the two gods fight each other ferociously in hand-to-hand combat, each of them being likened by the poet to different species of animals:

<i>yt<sup>c</sup> n . k gmr</i>	They stare at each other like hippopotamuses. <sup>168</sup>
<i>mt . ‘z . b<sup>c</sup>l . ‘z .</i>	Mot is strong, Baal is strong.
<i>ynghn k rumm .</i>	They gore at each other like buffaloes.
<i>mt . ‘z . b<sup>c</sup>l ‘z</i>	Mot is strong, Baal is strong.
<i>yn<sup>u</sup>kn . k b<sup>u</sup>nm</i>	They bite each other like snakes.
<i>mt . ‘z . b<sup>c</sup>l ‘z .</i>	Mot is strong, Baal is strong.
<i>ymshn k lsmm .</i>	They fight like runners.
<i>mt . ql b<sup>c</sup>l . ql .</i>	Mot falls, Baal falls.

(CAT 1.6 VI 16-22)

What we see in these short and almost filmic lines of action is a situation in which the two combatants are more or less evenly matched. Both of them perform the exact same moves and they show the same kind of martial prowess, something that is expressly underscored by the poet through use of the recurring

<sup>167</sup> This “athletic” interpretation has even been made into a case for Baal being a “sportsman,” comparing the passage to the Greek *pankration* (thus Good 1994, esp. p. 152).

<sup>168</sup> The word *gmr* is taken here to be a cognate of the Ethiopian word *gomāri*, which has this meaning; see Smith (UNP): 175 n. 198 and CDG: 195 (s.v. *gomāri*). The possibility is also mentioned by Caquot, Sznycer and Herdner (1974: 268, n. b), who count it to the translations that are “moins probables.”



words *mt ʿz bʿl ʿz*—“Mot is strong, Baal is strong.” This “state of the fight” is repeatedly given in the suffix tense, while the acts of battle themselves (staring, goring, biting, fighting) are given in the prefix form, succinctly showing the dialectic between the stative use of the suffix tense and the active prefix form in Ugaritic poetry. But finally something else is substituted for the “Mot is strong, Baal is strong”—refrain, again in the suffix form, as the hero and villain of the story collapse. Their equality as fighters is so complete that neither of the two actually succeeds in defeating the other: they both “fall” without any verdict having been reached.

Enter Shapshu. While Baal and Mot are both lying defeated, as it were, it is the Sun Goddess that steps in to decide the case:

<i>ʿln . špš tšh . l mt .</i>	From above, Shapshu cries to Mot:
<i>šmʿ . mʿ l bn . ilm . mt .</i>	“Hear, O Divine Mot!
<i>ik . tmthš . ʿm . aliyn . bʿl</i>	How can you fight with Victorious Baal?
<i>ik . al . yšmʿk . tr il . abk .</i>	How would Bull El, your father, hear you?
<i>l . ysʿ . alt tbt̄k .</i>	Surely he will remove the support of your seat,
<i>l yhp̄k . ksa . mlkk</i>	surely he will overturn the throne of your kingship,
<i>l . ytbr . ḥt . mpt̄k</i>	surely he will break the scepter of your rule!”
<i>yru . bn ilm &lt;m&gt;t .</i>	The Divine Mot is stricken with fear,
<i>ttʿ . ydd . il . gẓr</i>	shaken is the beloved of El, the hero.

(CAT 1.6 VI 22-31)

### 2.2.6.1 The Curious Role of the Solar Deity in the Fight between Baal and Mot

As seen in the text above, the one who finally gives Baal the victory is Shapshu. Her words from the sky seem to be quite enough to make Mot give up and quit—he even verbally gives Baal precedence as king. Shapshu in no way commits any violence toward Mot; it is her speech alone that forces Death himself to take flight.

Why is this? What is it that makes Mot take such heed of the goddess of the sun? It is actually a bit surprising *a priori* that the character that finally guarantees the protagonist’s victory over one of his greatest enemies, Death himself, is neither the protagonist himself nor any of his more close associates (Anat specifically comes to mind). The fact that such a relatively minor character as Shapshu is the one who makes Mot give up his struggle is actually a bit strange. It is quite different, for example, from the description of Baal’s conflict with Yamm: there it is Baal himself who defeats his enemy with the weapons supplied by the divine craftsman, Kothar. In the story of Aqhat the central protagonist obviously cannot himself defeat the enemy due to his being dead, but it is his sister Pughat—again quite a central character in the story—who carries out the revenge. The fact that the ending of CAT 1.6 describes the

hero (Baal) as a rather weak figure who has to be “helped” by Shapshu is definitely an interesting phenomenon, and one which is hardly just a matter of chance. It can be assumed that this strange narrative feature has some specific things to tell us about the character of Shapshu. Why, then, is she the one to proclaim Baal the winner and Mot the loser in the battle, and why does the god of death heed her words?

The first and simplest answer is to be found in the contents of the speech itself. Shapshu does, after all, tell Mot that El, the father of the gods, will not support his dominion, that Mot is not favored by the powers that be. She here functions, as she is sometimes portrayed in modern literature, as a sort of messenger and envoy of El, telling Mot his will and orders. Inasmuch as Mot is called *ydd il* (“the beloved of El”), this deprivation of grace can probably be viewed as especially hurting.

It is also notable that Shapshu serves here as a kind of referee or judge of battle. The conflict between Baal and Mot has in the previous lines been shown to be impossible to resolve—even hand-to-hand combat does not yield any tangible result as to who might be the winner. Shapshu’s decree can therefore be viewed almost as a juridical judgment in a difficult case. The Sun decides through her mere words what violence could not.

This is one of the few instances in which we can find traces of the juridical function of the Mesopotamian Shamash being paralleled in Ugaritic myth. Shapshu here clearly takes on the role of divine judge, as dispenser of divine justice, which even the two strongest gods must heed. Although we can easily surmise that she gives her verdict on behalf of El and the power for which he stands, it is she herself who is the “judging agent,” not the divine father. The Sun is here the symbol of justice and rulership, and it is not impossible that the special remark of her speech coming from “above” (*ln*) is another reference to her all-seeing nature, exceptionally well-suited for giving just verdicts. Shapshu “judges” Mot not to have the right to defeat Baal, and this indeed gives him reason to fear.

In this context, it might be fruitful to recall the role and imagery of the sun as a royal symbol in the cultures of the Ancient Near East. In this context, it is highly interesting to note that it is the solar deity who casts the final judgment as to which one of the “younger” generation of gods is to rule as king. One could view Shapshu in this context as a sort of personification of the idea of kingship itself—and being rejected by the goddess who serves as the visible symbol of kingship is of course quite a blow when the matter at stake is nothing less than the rulership of the universe. Korpel and Kutter are quite right in describing Shapshu’s role in this passage as that of a “kingmaker.”<sup>169</sup> The “royal” and “juridical” roles of the sun appear here to be intertwined.

We find the same combined use of the royal and juridical symbolisms inherent in the figure of Shapshu in the parallel passage concerning the god

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<sup>169</sup> Korpel 1998: 107; Kutter 2008: 176.

Athtar and his pretensions to the divine throne in *CAT* 1.2 III 15-18. Here, Athtar is the one rebuked by Shapshu in an almost identical wording to the one she uses towards Mot at the end of his battle with Baal. This shows that Shapshu's role as dispenser of royal power is a *topos* in the Ugaritic literature. It has often been noted that Shapshu acts as a messenger between the gods,<sup>170</sup> but these two instances show that her messages can be closely tied in with her other characteristics: those of "judging" between quarrelling parties (Baal and Mot) and symbolizing royal power. Just as the winged sun is the symbol of royalty, Shapshu's good will (or the lack of it) is the symbol that gives or takes away royal power.

### 2.2.6.2 *Shapshu's Relationship with Mot as a Key to this Passage*

But there is, I think, a further aspect of Shapshu that may help to explain her being the one who effectively ends the conflict between Baal and Mot, an explanation which ties in closely to the connections that we have seen earlier in the study. I would propose that the fact of her dealing the verdict is due not only to her being a dispenser of divine justice, a symbol of kingship and a messenger from El, but also to the basic fact of her intimate relation with the one she addresses, Mot, and his dominion. As we have seen earlier, Shapshu is closely related to the god of death not only in terms of her contact with the shades of the dead but also in being the means or instrument of creating the most concrete sign of his power—the drought. It is Shapshu who has made Mot's dominion over the land of living possible, it is Shapshu that frequents his netherworldly home. She is, therefore, the only one of the major "protagonist" gods who has a real relation with Mot as anything other than an enemy. She is Death's intimate, she is the means of his rule. Thus Shapshu, and none other, is the one who has the power to command him (removing her support). In this interpretation, Mot's being "afraid" is quite natural: he is informed that not only El, the father of the gods, is against him but also the very one of the gods with whom he has some sort of intimate relationship, the one of the gods who has manifested his power in the most concrete way. It might be surmised that after Shapshu's declaration, the chances of the Sun burning "in the hands/power" of Mot are in fact quite slim. Of course, this explanation in no way invalidates the other suggestions (Shapshu's royal and juridical functions). Rather, I believe that these different perspectives reinforce each other, helping to create a multifaceted meaning.

What we find in this final confrontation is the curious fact that Shapshu, who is usually considered to be one of the less significant figures in the Ugaritic epics, suddenly moves onto the center stage and becomes the final line of defence for the just rule of Baal. If it were not for her, the poet seems to tell us, the victory of Baal over Death would not be possible. Therefore, Shapshu is just as important as Anat to the story of Baal's reclaiming of the kingship over the gods and the world.

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<sup>170</sup> Caquot 1959: 93.

In my view, this clear demonstration of Shapshu's importance at the very height of the conflict must be viewed as an extremely important specimen of ideological data as regards the mythological role she is thought to have. In this very conspicuous piece of text we have the opportunity to see exactly which elements the Ugaritic poet wanted to connect with her—precisely as was the case in the “Refrain of the Burning Sun,” we here see Shapshu in one of her most prominent roles. These pieces of textual evidence show Shapshu as the central character, and it is logical to assume that the poet in these instances uses her character by highlighting exactly those aspects of her being that seemed most central to him—Shapshu is portrayed as doing those things which “nobody else could do”—and she does them precisely because she is Shapshu, because she has been the carrier of the drought. Therefore, these specific places in the text constitute vital pieces of evidence of her character. The solar deity in the Baal Cycle goes through a number of distinct steps in her relationship with Mot: she is the medium of drought (the “Refrain”), she is made to behold and realize the result of it (*CAT* 1.6 IV 12-14), and finally she takes a stand and is instrumental in bringing him down, thus helping to end the drought and allowing Baal to restore fertility to the land.

Thus we see that the connection between drought, the Sun and Mot/Death is here carried right into the middle of the mythological narrative. In herself, Shapshu here seems to unite and use a number of different and paradoxical traits, namely:

- (a) her role as the messenger of El,
- (b) her royal connotations,
- (c) her role as dispenser of justice and
- (d) her connection with Death and the underworld (and, consequently, with drought).

#### *2.2.6.3 The Concluding Lines of the Baal-Mot Episode*

This leads us further to the next pericope, the very last segment of the Baal-Mot story. This is the strange and somewhat intriguing hymnal passage at the end of *CAT* 1.6 VI, in which Shapshu seems to be praised in a manner almost liturgical in its structure. The solar deity is here specifically referred to in connection with the *Rāpi'ūma*, the shades of the dead. The exact relation of this piece to what comes before is obscure to say the least, owing to the irritating lacuna in lines 35-42, and as it stands it reads almost as a sort of disjointed subscript to the story, which is difficult to connect with the scene of the battle and the intervention of Shapshu. Very few clues are given as to the role in the story (if any) of these lines. One is found in line 39, where there are traces of the words *d pid*, which must represent the second half of El's epithet *ltpn il dpid*, “Merciful El, the Benevolent.” Thus, one possibility is that the lacuna contained a *verbum dicendi* with El as its subject, and that the hymnal passage would thus be spoken by the divine father, but this is, of course, extremely conjectural.

In the next line (40) we find the word *qbat*. This is surely a form of the verb *qb*’ (“to summon”) cognate with the common Akkadian word *qabû* (“to speak”), an uncommon verb in preserved Ugaritic. The lexeme discussed here seems to be a form of the suffix conjugation, and the ending indicates a third person feminine form. More uncertain is the question of which stem form is involved—it could be either a G active or a G passive (Gp).

While it is not possible to ascertain the truth of this matter from the text as we have it, I would like to point out a possible parallel to this passage in *CAT* 1.161, the Ugaritic “necromantic” text, which might possibly shed light on the reading of this word.<sup>171</sup> *CAT* 1.161 (analyzed in section 2.3.1) is a text in which Shapshu and the *Rāpi’ūma* feature prominently in a hymno-ritualistic setting quite reminiscent of the present text, and here we find this verb repeated twice, in the one case at the very beginning. The verb here occurs in the form *qbitm*, which is apparently the second person plural of the Gp conjugation, to be vocalized /*qubi’tumu*/, “you have been summoned/you are summoned.”<sup>172</sup> The ones “summoned” are the *qbš ddn*, the “assembly of Didanu,” or the deified heroes and kings. This shows that the verb occurred in the specific context of the Ugaritic ancestral cult and its textual evidence, and it is very possible that its presence in the text here at hand is to be viewed in this perspective, as the hymnal fragment following it is in many ways reminiscent of this very *Gattung*, as we shall see. It is therefore quite probable, I think, that the word *qbat* should here be vocalized /*qubi’at*/, “she was summoned,” and that the one summoned is none other than Shapshu herself, who is called to a ritual-hymnal setting using a word quite typical of this particular context, the cult of the chthonic deities.

The preserved body of the text is as follows (I have added a provisional translation):

<i>l tšql [šī]r . try .</i>	Indeed draw close to the fresh [meat]
<i>ap . l tlḥm lḥm . trmmt .</i>	so that you may eat the sacrificial food,
<i>l tšt yn . tğzyt .</i>	so that you may drink the offered wine.
<i>špš rpim . tḥtk</i>	Shapshu, you rule <sup>173</sup> the <i>Rāpi’ūma</i> !

<sup>171</sup> This possible connection has also been noted by Dijkstra (1985: 149) who does not, however, subject it to detailed analysis.

<sup>172</sup> Tropper 2000: 467, 516. A similar translation is endorsed by Pardee (*LTR*: 818).

<sup>173</sup> Following de Moor 1971: 240-241, Wyatt 2002: 144, and others. Another possibility is to regard *tḥtk* as a preposition with a suffix (i.e., “the *Rāpi’ūma* are under you”). Such a translation is favored e.g. by Virolleaud (1934: 238) and Gibson (1978:81), but, as pointed out by Husser (1997: 228) and Wyatt (2002: 144, n. 120), this would not fit with the oblique case of the word *rpim*, which could hardly express a grammatical subject. To be rejected, however, is Husser’s (1997: 236) suggestion that the verb in question is from the root *nḥt* (“to go down”), a verb especially well known from Aramaic. According to Husser, the verb should be interpreted as a transitive one, and the line is in his view to be translated “Shapash place sous toi / fait descendre vers toi les Rephaïm, etc.” But I agree with Mettinger’s (2001: 75) criticism, that such an

<i>špš . thtk . ilynm</i>	Shapshu, you rule the divinities!
<i>‘dk . ilm .</i>	The gods are your company,
<i>hn . mtm ‘dk .</i>	see, the dead are your company.
<i>ktrm . ḥbrk</i>	Kothar is your companion
<i>w ḥss . d’tk</i>	and Khasis is your intimate.
<i>b .ym . arš . w tnn</i>	In the sea are [?] Arish and the Dragon:
<i>ktr . w ḥss . yd</i>	May Kothar-wa-Hasis drive them away,
<i>ytr . ktr . w ḥss</i>	May Kothar-wa-Hasis banish them!

(CAT 1.6 VI 42-53)

This highly enigmatic piece of text has been interpreted in a number of different ways. A common interpretation is that the passage represents some form of hymnal invocation and praise of Shapshu and the chthonic deities of the ancestors.<sup>174</sup> Slightly differing views are held by Smith, who sees the passage as a ritual one relating to the cult of the ancestors, but does not accept Shapshu as the addressee.<sup>175</sup> A widely diverging interpretation is that given by Margalit,<sup>176</sup>

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understanding would probably require the verb to appear in the D stem (or, theoretically, Š, but that is of course quite impossible in this case). In a *primae nūn* verb, the *n* would assimilate to the second radical in the G stem, but not the D stem (see further Tropper 2000: 629). As the verb *thtk* shows no initial *n*, this invalidates the attempt to explain the form as being a transitive use of the root *nht*. Margalit (1980: 198-199) suggests a verb *tht*, allegedly related to an uncertain Akkadian verb *taḥu* (meaning “juxtapose” or “bring into contact”).

<sup>174</sup> Various versions of this interpretation are found, for example, in Caquot, Szymer and Herdner 1974: 269-271, Gibson 1978: 19, Lewis 1989: 35-36, Wiggins 1996: 337 and Azize 2005: 140-141.

<sup>175</sup> Smith (*UNP*): 163-164 and 175, n. 202. Smith is of the opinion that the invoked one in this passage is not Shapshu but rather the Ugaritic king. His view that Shapshu is the third (and not second) person subject of the verb *thtk* does not seem compelling to me: this would make the two sentences involving Shapshu stand out in quite an inexplicable way, as she is not mentioned further in the passage. Furthermore, the mention of Shapshu ruling the shades of the dead comes immediately before the information that those dead are “your” company, which would fit very well with Shapshu being “you,” rather than the king of Ugarit. One might also add that Smith’s contention that one could not summon the Sun goddess to partake in a ritual feast is unconvincing, as Shapshu is frequently mentioned in sacrificial texts as the recipient of offerings. We also find opposition to the idea of Shapshu as the addressee in Dijkstra (1985: 147), who bases this on the fact that the vocative particle *y* is not present before Shapshu’s name. This is hardly conclusive, however, as calls to deities are frequently found without this particle even in the Baal-cycle itself—see for example CAT 1.2 IV 8-9, where Kothar addresses Baal without any particle being present at all. We find this usage in ritual contexts, too, for example in the invocation of the king, queen and ritual officiants in CAT 1.23, l. 7.

<sup>176</sup> Margalit 1980: 193-201.

who instead sees the passage as a meal of reconciliation, a feast to end the strife between the characters of the drama.

If we first try to answer the central question of the *genre* of this passage, I find it difficult not to see hymnal and ritual references as being apparent in the text. The verbs in the second person and the repetition of the name *špš* seem to represent invocations of some sort, which would fit very well into a hymnal context. If we add to this the mention of *lhm trmmt*, which seems to mean something like “food offering,” “sacrificial meal” or the like, it is difficult not to view the text as a description of some sort of religious ritual involving an invoking of the solar deity. It should also be noted that there are a number of interesting parallels between the passage and the “necromantic” text CAT 1.161 (discussed elsewhere): in both cases Shapshu and the *Rāpi’ūma* are mentioned together and intimately connected with each other, and if we look earlier in the text discussed here, in the beginning of Shapshu’s rebuking of Mot, we find the phrase *‘ln špš tšh* (“Shapshu cries out above”) which occurs verbatim in line 19 of the “funerary/necromantic” text. Thus, we find a plausible comparandum in a text which is without any doubt ritual and invocatory in character and, though not specifically addressed to Shapshu as such, still includes her as a very important part of the ritual procedures.

#### 2.2.6.4 Why a Hymn to Shapshu as the Ending of the Baal Cycle?

If one, then, accepts it as probable that these final lines of the Baal Cycle entail a ritualistic and hymnal invocation of Shapshu, the very intriguing question remains of *why* such a passage would appear here at all. On simply reading through the text of the Cycle, it might be thought that Shapshu is a rather unremarkable figure, whose role in the drama is only that of a helper or a subordinate of the main characters. If this is so, then why should the very climax of Baal’s battle with Death end in a hymn to such an undistinguished figure? Would one not rather expect a hymn to Baal himself?

The answer is probably self-evident. As seen in the passage preserved immediately before the irritating lacuna, Shapshu is not really a secondary character at all. She is the mediating deity between the powers of life/fertility (Baal) and death/drought (Mot). Through her participation in the narrative, the reader can follow the struggle between these two principles in the story. The connection with death is here at the forefront. This is made especially clear by the mentioning of the *Rāpi’ūma* and the “dead” (*mtm*). In my view, the reason for this hymnal passage is exactly this: Shapshu has exercised her role as semi-chthonic deity and has thus “saved the day”: she is the hero in this final part of the text, and thus it is to her that the hymn is addressed.

The hymn to Shapshu thus becomes a celebration not only of her passage through the underworld, but of her integral role as the representative of death in the world of the living. And this can quite possibly be the reason for the many chthonic references in the present text: the dead, the *Rāpi’ūma*, the “divinities” (*ilynm*), and possibly also the mention of the sea (*ym*), which is the place into

which Shapshu descends on her way to the netherworld. On an interesting side-note, one could surmise from the references to the sea and the sea monsters (Arish and the Dragon) in this context that we have here one of the clearest connections between the Yamm- and Mot-episodes of the Baal Cycle: on her way to one of the chaotic powers (the land of Death), Shapshu has to travel through the domain of the other one, Sea. This is, however, speculative.

#### *2.2.6.5 Conclusions*

In our analysis of the concluding two passages of the Baal Cycle, we have found not only that Shapshu is present and acting in a very concentrated and conspicuous way, but also that the ways in which she acts draw heavily on some of her most special characteristics: her connection with Mot through the drought, her chthonic nature as a traveller below the horizon and her role as giver of divine judgments and messages of the high god El. Shapshu's most salient characteristics are thus given a very succinct and narratologically convincing presentation or summing up at the very height of the action. Through her special and somewhat ambiguous nature, she brings the convoluted story to a close. Thus we find here that the seemingly formulaic and repetitive use of certain refrains (such as the "rebuken" given by Shapshu to both Athtar and Mot) in no way needs to imply that the Ugaritic literary tradition is "at fault" and that its works are "relatively uninteresting," as G.S. Kirk puts it,<sup>177</sup> but that they are used by the poet in a highly intricate fashion, contrasting the characters with one another and highlighting their various qualities in a sophisticated way.

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<sup>177</sup> Kirk 1970: 221.



### 2.2.7 Drought, Death and the Sun in the Baal Cycle: General Conclusions

At this point, it may be time to provide a condensed account of what has been found in the preceding sections concerning the interaction between Death/Mot/the netherworld, Shapshu and the motif of drought in the Baal Cycle. Some main points may be enumerated:

- Although it is too much to say that the Baal Cycle is in essence “about” the conflict between drought and precipitation, this is certainly one of the key elements of the story (especially the Baal-Mot part of it). Drought may not be the theme of the tale, but it is definitely one of its most prominent motifs.
- This drought is used as an expression of the rule of personified Death in the world, a state directly connected to the demise of Baal, who does, after all, appear to be subjected to exactly this fate, death. The drought is therefore not a simple, mechanistic result of an “absent weather deity” but a religious and literary expression of the power of Mot over the world.
- Shapshu plays a crucial role as a transcender of the boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead, and it is therefore only natural that she manifests the drought caused by Mot. This role is shown in the Refrain of the Burning Sun as well as in the passages in which she searches the furrows that she herself has helped dry up in the hope of finding Baal alive.
- Shapshu’s two different connections with death and the netherworld—the fact of her sending the killing drought and her physical motion below the horizon and association with the *Rāpi’ūma*—appear consciously to be conflated by the poet and made to illustrate each other.
- This interaction between drought, Mot and Shapshu creates a backdrop against which Shapshu’s role as a “referee” in the final battle between Baal and Mot becomes completely logical. It also explains the concluding hymn to her as ruler of the shades of the dead. She is the one who manifests Death’s rule in the land through her drought (when she was “in his hand”), she is the one who helps Anat bury Baal, she is the one who searches the dried-up fields in his absence: Shapshu has worked on both sides of the Life-Death conflict (just as she passes above and below the horizon on a daily basis, traversing the boundary between the land and the living and the land of the dead). She is therefore the ideal character to pronounce the winner in the battle between Baal (giver of life) and Mot (Death himself). All this makes her a fitting recipient of a concluding hymn, which explicitly invokes her chthonic characteristics and connection with the shades of the dead, thereby underscoring the narrative role she has played in the story. Drought, Death and the Sun are inextricably linked in the Baal Cycle.

## 2.3 Other Ugaritic texts

### 2.3.1 *The Hot Sun in the Ugaritic Funerary Cult: CAT 1.161 and its Relationship to the Baal-Mot Episode*

The one Ugaritic text that deals most clearly and overtly with the interaction between the realms of the living and the dead is CAT 1.161.<sup>178</sup> As might almost be expected given the previous findings of this and other studies, the solar deity plays a minor, but seemingly pivotal, part in this composition. The genre of the work has been the matter of some contention: a number of scholars regard it as a text describing some kind of necromantic cult, some view it as a part of the ceremonies connected to the accession of a new king,<sup>179</sup> while others see it more simply as a funerary ritual for a recently deceased ruler (specifically, the king of Ugarit most often called Niqmaddu III but in later years often renumbered as Niqmaddu IV).<sup>180</sup> In any case, it appears to constitute some form of ritual which includes coming into contact with the deceased kings of Ugarit, those who have passed into the realm of the *Rāpi'ūma*, the deified ancestral heroes referred to on a number of occasions in the Ugaritic myths and legends themselves. Especially important for this study, one possible interpretation of the sun's activity in this ritual setting has to do with her heat. In this section, I shall attempt to analyze the role of the (heat of) the sun in this text and to ascertain what it has to tell about the relationship between it and the realm of death.

The text is in many ways a concentrate of the manifold interlocking images of death, heat and the sun in Ugaritic religion. The royal theme is directly evident in the fact of the deified kings being summoned as part of the ritual action. As will be seen in the following analysis, the ideas of heat, royal rule and the contact between the worlds of the living and the dead are formalized here in a religious rite which seems to be tied to the highest echelons of Ugaritic society. The exact nature of the text (coronation ceremony, necromantic ritual or funerary composition) will not be the central object of my study. Rather, my focus will be the role of the heat/sun-motif within the larger structure.

The solar deity (and with her, possibly, her heat) is mentioned in the middle of the text. It begins with a much-discussed rubric, probably reading *spr dbh ḫlm* (perhaps meaning something like “text concerning the sacrificial liturgy of the Shades,” or possibly—and tantalizingly for the purposes of the present study—“text concerning the sacrificial liturgy of the winged sun”).<sup>181</sup> There then follow

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<sup>178</sup> Important studies and translations of this text are, for example, Pitard 1978, Bordreuil and Pardee 1982, Levine and de Tarragon 1984, Taylor 1988, Lewis 1989: 5-46, Schmidt 1994: 100-120, Pardee (*LTR*): 816-825 (with ample references), Pardee (*RCU*): 85-88 and Kutter 2008: 76-87.

<sup>179</sup> Thus Levine and de Tarragon 1984: 654 and Schmidt 1994: 103.

<sup>180</sup> So, for example, Pardee (*LTR*): 824, Pardee (*RCU*): 85-87 and Kutter 2008: 76.

<sup>181</sup> Reviews of various suggestions concerning the meaning of this phrase can be found in Lewis 1989: 10-12 and in Schmidt 1994: 109-112. Lewis himself opts for a translation as a text on “nocturnal sacrifices” or “sacrifices of darkness.” The proposed

a number of invocations to various divinities and kings using what appears to be passive suffix forms of the verb *qr'* ("to call")<sup>182</sup> and, in two instances, *qb'* (probably with a similar meaning).<sup>183</sup>

### 2.3.1.1 The Verbal Form *išhn*

One of the central questions in interpreting the role of the sun in this text concerns the identification of the verb *išhn*, which occurs twice in line 18, seemingly with the solar deity as its subject. This word is apparently an imperative, commanding Shapshu to perform some form of action as part of the ritual proceedings, an action which (it might be presumed) will aid the contact with the departed dead kings. Two major lines of interpretation of this verbal form exist. One is to view *išhn* as a form of the related verbs *šwh* ("to sink") or *šhh* ("to bow down"), which would be a reference to the nightly journey of the sun into the underworld and her psychopompal role, concepts which would doubtless fit well in the context of a necromantic ritual. The idea is that the celebrants call on Shapshu to "go down" and thus establish a link with the netherworld.<sup>184</sup>

While this solution might at the outset seem an attractive one, I would argue that there are problems connected with it. One of these relates to the very choice

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meaning along the lines of "sacrificial text of the Shades (of the dead)" can be found, for example, in Bordreuil and Pardee 1982: 122, 126. Pitard (1978: 68) suggested "the Protectors," although with a great deal of apprehension. Klaas Spronk (1991: 236) points out that there appears to be at least one case of using the Akkadian *šillu* ("shade, shadow") as a reference to the dead—the example he finds is discussed by Jean Bottéro (1980: 28; 45, n. 28)—which he adduces as counter-evidence towards the view of Lewis (1989: 10; itself based on Pitard 1978: 68) that the "shadow"-word refers only to ordinary shadows and not to shades of the dead, and is therefore not relevant here. Schmidt (1994: 110) remains sceptical towards this single Akkadian example. He instead prefers to see in *zlm* a reference to a god *Šalmu/Zalmu*, a designation of the solar deity Shamash in his aspect as winged sun. This interpretation is based on the study of this divine designation by Stephanie Dalley (1986). As pointed out by Schmidt, such a reference would fit well with the prominent role of Shapshu in the text (which he, however, interprets in a vastly different way than I do). The interpretation of *zlm* as referring to a winged sun disk was followed by Wyatt (2002: 431, and esp. n. 7). I myself find it best to remain agnostic on the issue.

<sup>182</sup> This use of the verb *qr'* for calling participants to a ritual reminds one of the word *qērū'im*, which is used in 1 Sam 9:22 to describe those taking part in a sacrificial meal.

<sup>183</sup> The latter verb is used here only in reference to the "Assembly of Didanu," a group apparently representing deified ancestors of the royal dynasty. As noted in another section (2.2.6.3), a parallel use of the verb *qb'* in a setting also connected to the spirits of the dead can be found at the conclusion of the Baal-Mot episode of the Baal Cycle, probably with Shapshu as the one being "summoned."

<sup>184</sup> The view that the verb is from *šwh* or *šhh* was suggested by Frank Moore Cross and published in Lewis 1989: 8, 23. The idea was also discussed earlier as a possibility by Pitard (1978: 71). Wyatt (2002: 437) follows suit.

of verb. In parallel texts concerning descents into the land of the dead, the normal verb showing this action is *yrd* (the ordinary verb meaning “descend,” “go down”). This is the verb used of Baal when he is told to descend into the gullet of Mot, and even of Shapshu herself in the passage in the Baal Cycle where she helps Anat recover the body of Baal. In *CAT* 1.161, the verb *yrd* expressly occurs when describing the descent necessary to contact the world of the dead. The verb almost seems like a *terminus technicus* for this religious concept, a fact which could lead one to expect to find it applied to Shapshu as well. In other contexts, where the sunset is described in more neutral terms, the verb is *ʿrb*. To sum up, therefore, a use of the verb *šwh* to describe the sun sinking below the horizon would not have any parallels in the Ugaritic literature, despite the fact that this concept (sometimes in an outspokenly “chthonic” or “psychopompal” context) occurs in other places in the texts. The verb expected would not be *šwh* but *yrd*.

Another fact which seems to militate against taking the verb to mean “go down” is that in the line immediately following (line 19), it is said that Shapshu “cries out on high” (*ʿln špš tšh*), a collocation which would not make much sense if the sun at this point had already descended into the underworld.<sup>185</sup>

The other possibility is to view the imperative as being formed from a cognate to the Arabic verb *saḥuna*, meaning “be warm” or “to be feverish,” meaning that ritualist tells Shapshu to “be hot.”<sup>186</sup> This is, of course, also a

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<sup>185</sup> Quite a different interpretation of this phrase is represented by Schmidt (1994: 117) and Wyatt (2002: 437)—going back to Caquot 1976: 429 (*non vidi*). According to them, the word *tšh* is not from *šh* (“to cry”) but from *šhh* (“to gleam, be dazzling” in Schmidt’s rendering) or *nšh* (proposed by Schmidt himself based on a Syriac root meaning “to shine”). Schmidt’s interpretation is that king Ammurapi asks Shapshu “to offer her invigorating power to one stricken with grief.” This interpretation is quite interesting, given that Schmidt on the same page rejects the common interpretation of *išhn* as having to do with light or heat: he thus “moves” the shining to a different verb and also interprets the shining in quite a different manner than I do further below. However, there are arguments that can be adduced against the proposal. The most important of these is the fact that the phrase *ʿln špš tšh* occurs verbatim in the Baal Cycle, in *CAT* 1.6 VI 22-23, where it definitely means “Shapshu cries out on high”—note that the context there is directly connected to the motif of death, as the one called to is Mot. It thus appears to be a poetic formula. The idea of Shapshu calling from above is apparently a staple of Ugaritic poetics: a similar phrase (*tqru b šmm*) occurs, probably with Shapshu as its subject, in the snake bite text *CAT* 1.107, lines 9 and 15. Another argument against Schmidt’s analysis is the lack of evidence for Shapshu’s shining providing “invigorating power” to grief-stricken characters in other Ugaritic texts. Another possibility adduced by Schmidt is the idea of her light symbolizing acceptance of Ammurapi’s claims to the throne of Ugarit. To be sure, Shapshu does act as a “kingmaker” in other Ugaritic texts, but her “shining” does not feature in those cases.

<sup>186</sup> Such a translation is represented by Bordreuil and Pardee 1982: 123 (“Sois brûlante ô! Shapash, sois brûlante!”). An almost identical rendering can be found in Pardee (*LTR*): 818. Taylor 1988: 153 has “Burn, O Shapshu, and burn.” The heat-based

verbal predication one might very well associate with the sun. A description of the sun's warmth or heat would form a parallel to the description in the Refrain of the Burning Sun in the Baal Cycle. The significance of this connection will be addressed further below.

The cognates of this term in other Semitic languages are highly suggestive of drought/heat-imagery. In Arabic, the above-mentioned verb *saḥuna* means "to be hot," and it is explicitly used in reference to the sun.<sup>187</sup> In Talmudic Aramaic, the root even expressly acquires the connotations of being "parched," "dried out," etc. Another important piece of circumstantial evidence in the case is the fact that the verb *šḥn* does seem to occur in CAT 1.12 II 37-38 in a context highly suggestive of hotness (it is paralleled by the verb *ḥrr*, meaning "to burn" or "to be hot").<sup>188</sup>

I do not think that there is enough available textual data to decide conclusively which of the two possible translations of *išḥn* is the correct one. However, I do believe that the one involving heat is the most philologically probable. Because of the central piece of evidence this would constitute to the questions underlying this study, I shall here endeavor to investigate the results of this possibility as pertains to my objects of inquiry.

### 2.3.1.2 Hotness and the Underworld

The question remains of why "hotness" should be an issue in a text dealing with contacts with the netherworld. If one accepts the translation "descend," "go down," there is no such problem: the act of passing the horizon automatically serves as a conceptual connection between the worlds of the living and the dead. But if the translation "be hot" is correct (as I believe it is), another explanation

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interpretation is also followed by Kutter (2008: 81, 87), and additionally one can find it represented in the *DUL*: 813 (s.v. *š-h-n*), which has "to have a fever, be hot" and "to warm (oneself)". The present form would be an example of an imperative with a prothetic vowel, a phenomenon attested at least twice in other contexts (see the overview and discussion in Tropper 2000: 426-427, giving two possibilities in the present case: a prothetic G imperative form */iṣḥanī/* or an N imperative form */iṣṣaḥinī/*, without substantial difference in meaning between the two). Another interpretation is proposed by Pitard (1978: 66, 71), who holds that the verb should be regarded as a first person form, rendered by Pitard as "Let me be warm (?)" The Akkadian cognate of the verb under discussion, *šaḥānu*, is used, for example, in reference to wood for heating in the El Amarna-letter EA 147, line 66 (text in Knudtzon 1907). The root is also the etymological basis of the Hebrew word *šēḥin*, "boil" ("something inflamed, burning"). Note again the correlation between verbs for Shapshu's hotness and terms for feverish illness!

<sup>187</sup> Lane 1863: 1326 (s.v. *saḥuna*).

<sup>188</sup> The text is *anpnm yḥr[r] ... / b mtnm yšḥn ...*, probably meaning something like "his nostrils burn ... in his loins he is feverish" (thus Ceresko 1980: 97-98, but with "face" for nostrils; similarly Wyatt 2002: 165). Ceresko also fittingly notes that both the roots *šḥn* and *ḥrr* are used to describe the sickness of Job (in the first case in the guise of *šēḥin*, "boil," in 2:7 and in the second the verb itself in 30:30—see also section 3.3.3.6). CAT 1.12 is discussed in depth in a later chapter.

must be found. The answer is probably (at least partly) that the existing association between drought and death made this a sort of conceptual gateway in the minds of the religious celebrants. The “hotness” could therefore have served as something reminiscent of the macro/microcosmical correspondences so often occurring in later western esotericism and magical systems, creating associations between different spheres of reality for those who participated. Also, the strangely ambivalent nature of the sun in Ugaritic religion (giving both warmth/fertility/life and heat/death) makes it ideally suited for performing this liminal action. Just as the drought produced through the medium of the sun in the Baal Cycle is the concrete manifestation of death in the land of the living, so the warmth and light of the sun was probably imagined to create a manifestation of life in the cold and dark land of the departed.<sup>189</sup> Of course, the psychopompal role of the solar deity here plays a part, but once again, I believe it is the very combination of this and the heat terminology that shows the transcending power of solarinity in Ugaritic religion. One is reminded of the seemingly self-contradictory idea found in Hurro-Hittite texts such as the *Epic of Liberation* of meeting a solar goddess (the Sun Goddess of Earth, *taknās* <sup>d</sup>UTU-us) in the dark netherworld (the descent of the Storm God into her realm is described using the words *kattanta tankuwai takni*, “down into the dark earth”).<sup>190</sup> Thus, whether or not the imperative verb in the text is to be interpreted as “go down” or “be warm,” the sun (whose basic characteristics are, after all, light and heat) forms a gateway between the ordinarily separate realms of life and death.<sup>191</sup> In the world of the living, the light of the sun is in a sense the manifestation of life, while its

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<sup>189</sup> The meaning of the Arabic *sahuna* and the other Semitic cognates all point in the direction of heat being the central connotation involved, and not, for example, simply light, which seems to be the interpretation of Levine and de Tarragon (1984: 649), who state that the narrator asks Shapshu “to shine brightly and locate the departed kings during her nocturnal circuit beneath the earth.” This may very well be part of what is intended, but clearly not all: if clear and bright light were all the author of the ritual was trying to convey one would simply expect a form of the verb *nwr*, “to shine.” Note that Levine and de Tarragon themselves later state that the warming heat of the sun is what the cognate Akkadian verb often alludes to (1984: 653).

<sup>190</sup> KBo XXXII 13, l. 10 (p. 221 in Neu’s [1996] edition). Incidentally, motifs found in the Hurrian/Hittite bilingual epic appear to have influenced texts from the Hebrew Bible: see Hoffner 2004: 189 and Wikander 2013a.

<sup>191</sup> A parallel to the idea of Shapshu burning hot in her connection with the underworld can perhaps be found in RS 92.2016 (numbered 1.179 in the 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. of *KTU/CAT*), published in Caquot and Dalix (2001) and subjected to a further study by de Moor (2008, publ. 2009). This fragmentary text mentions Shapshu (with a variant of her standard epithet, here in the version *nrt il*, “the Lamp of El”) just after a few lines that, in de Moor’s interpretation, appear to concern providing adequate clothing for Attā’ēnu, the teacher of the scribe Ilimilku, when he is in the netherworld. de Moor argues (2008: 184, n. 48 and 51) that the netherworld was thought of as characterized by chilling darkness when Shapshu was not there and by heat when she was, and that Shapshu’s mission in the text is to bring warmth to the denizens of the otherwise freezing world of the dead.

burning heat is associated with death. In the netherworld, the realm of Mot, the heat-giving characteristics are more “at home” (because of their devastating effects), whereas the light is foreign, the underworld being, by definition, dark. Thus the solar deity transcends the normal boundaries that constrain the deities, a fact that will prove important in considering the Israelite (proto-)monotheist reception and transformation of the solar imagery.

### 2.3.1.3 Intertextual Relationships and the Problems Addressed by the Text

I would propose that we have here an intertextual reference point for the “Refrain of the Burning Sun,” and that the two textual entities in question are expressions of the same basic theological ideas. In *CAT* 1.161, we get a description of an idealized ritual procedure involving the dead and deified kings residing in the underworld, a ritual in which Shapshu is very prominent. She is probably called upon to “be hot” (root *šhn*), as the shades of the dead are invoked. In the “Refrain,” Shapshu is connected with the god of death (even being “in his hands” or “in his power”), a circumstance which makes her “glow/burn/roast/scorch” (*šhrr*). This is a striking correspondence, both in terms of expression and of context: in one case Shapshu is described as burning when she is in the hands of Mot (or possibly traveling into his hands), and in the other she is apparently called upon to “be hot” when the deified dead are worshipped.

These two pieces of text are, of course, slightly different. The most prominent factor distinguishing between the two is the question of setting: in the Refrain in the Baal Cycle, Mot is the powerful one, who is in control not only of Shapshu but soon of Baal as well. It is he who causes the “burning”—Shapshu burns when she is under death’s sway. In *CAT* 1.161 the “balance of power” seems to be radically different. Here, the context is one of an (apparently officially sanctioned) ritual in which the powers of “royal stability” are invoked in their clearest expressions—the kings themselves. Therefore, this instance of the “hot sun” seems to be more in accordance with the ideal circumstances which the Ugaritic religion prescribes.

I would like to suggest that what we have in the reference to of the “hot sun” in *CAT* 1.161 is nothing less than an example of the very type of intertextual backdrop against which the “Refrain of the Burning Sun” is meant to be read. In 1.161, we get to see Shapshu and her “heat” connected with the underworld in their “natural” setting. Shapshu is called upon to be hot as part of an elaborate ritual structure, and it is the human celebrants that exhort her. In the “Refrain,” we find her instead “burning” because of the power Mot has acquired over her. If 1.161 shows how Shapshu’s heat is connected with death in its normal setting, the “Refrain” shows how this connection has gone awry, how Death has actually managed to gain control over his intimate, the Sun, because of Baal’s powerlessness, thereby creating drought, the visual manifestation of Death’s rule.

Both texts therefore show the same basic relationship (sun-heat-death), but in radically different settings. In 1.161, Shapshu is a “tool” of the officially

sanctioned religious system, providing through her heat a way in which the deified kings can be contacted. In the “Refrain of the burning sun,” she and her heat are the tools of Mot in his destruction of the agricultural land. In both cases, Shapshu’s heat is a link between the worlds of the living and the dead. This is exactly the power which the celebrants of 1.161 call upon and the power which Mot “hijacks.”

Thus, I suggest that Shapshu’s actions and appearance in 1.161 shows the very *theologoumena* which are under scrutiny in the Baal-Mot epic. The highly ambiguous nature of the solar deity is illustrated by these two *testimonia* of her connection with death and the underworld in two very different contexts. Again, it is apparent how the workings of Shapshu and her chthonic associations constitute a clear marker of the state of the cosmos and of the balance of power. In the “funerary” text, she is under the sway of the Ugaritic royalty, doing their bidding and in effect helping to defeat the absolute barrier between life and death by contacting the deified royal ancestors. She works for the system, so to speak. In the Baal Cycle, her role is overturned and brought into the sphere of the antagonist. Therefore, Shapshu is a fundamentally ambivalent character, heralding at the same time drought/death and its very defeat, which is the continued propagation of royal rule in the land and its connection with the deified ancestors who presumably grant its legitimacy.

In 1.161, we see again an intertwining of the same roles of Shapshu that we find in the Baal Cycle. Shapshu is connected with death, she is “burning” or “hot” (the concrete, heat-giving role), but she also guarantees royal power. Her dynastic functions here come to the forefront once more. She connects the present representatives of royal power with the defunct ones: she connects living royalty with dead, and she does this (at least partly) through “being hot.” A clearer example of Shapshu’s different roles co-functioning could hardly be wished for.

Thus, we find a remarkable combination of her netherworldly, royal and meteorological functions, precisely as we did in the Baal Cycle. Shapshu is called upon to intervene as part of her connection with death, but this happens in an explicitly “royal” setting. Again, one sees here an elaborate intertextual interplay between 1.161 and the Baal-Mot episode. In the Cycle, Shapshu’s relationship with the god of death is a large part of the great “who is to be king”-question. Her drought helps Mot rule, her chthonic abilities help in finding and burying Baal, and her proclamation against Mot finally secures Baal’s victorious place as divine ruler. In 1.161, her “burning” and netherworldly qualities are instrumental in securing the link between royal authority past and present (dead and alive).

If one illustrates these correspondences in tabular form, one obtains a picture of binary oppositions almost structuralist in appearance:



	<u>Baal Cycle</u>	<u>CAT 1.161</u>
<i>Shapshu's heat</i>	killing the land	contacting the dead
<i>Shapshu's royal function</i>	Helping Mot rule, then Baal	serving Ugaritic royalty
<i>Shapshu's chthonic aspect</i>	Serving Mot, finding the dead Baal	uniting living and dead

When these correspondences are seen, it is no longer difficult to understand the constant mention of Shapshu and her “meterological” states: these states are the very thing that shows where in the cycle of life and death the world is currently situated. Thus, as was the case in the Refrain of the Burning Sun, the concept of death is alluded to through the metaphorical combination of the (in themselves quite disparate) ideas of drought and the “underworldly journey,” both perfectly expressed and synthesized using the figure of the sun as their vehicle. Just as the sun can bestow both life-giving warmth and killing heat, she can be both above and below the horizon, belonging to the spheres both of life and of death. The ambiguous liminality is expressed using language describing in different ways the most salient and apparent “action” of the sun: the fact that it is warm. But is it just warm and shining, or does it “burn/glow/scorch”? That is the question looming behind both the Refrain of the Burning Sun and the necromantic or funerary ritual discussed here.

An interpretation similar to this, yet differing in one very crucial detail, is espoused by Juliane Kutter. She also regards the appellation to Shapshu CAT 1.161, with its hope that she might be “warm/shining,” as a “Gegenstück” to the Refrain of the Burning Sun in the Baal Cycle, but because she interprets the verb *šhrr* in the Refrain to mean “to be dust-colored” (showing a “defiling” or weakness of Shapshu’s shining power rather than an increase thereof), the connection in Kutter’s mind is a different one than that which I propose here.<sup>192</sup> According to Kutter, what we see in the Baal Cycle is the *opposite* of Shapshu’s “being hot” in 1.161 and not (as I would argue) an “over-extension” of it. I find this interpretation unconvincing, not only because of the problems connected with the “dust-colored” translation that have already been noted (see above, section 2.2.1.1) but also because it makes less sense of the sun-death connection than the interpretation offered here. If the Baal Cycle does not describe Shapshu’s heat in connection with death, its appearance in 1.161 is much less easy to explain. If, however, we accept that “heat” is one of the characteristics of the sun that link it with the underworld in the Ugaritic mind, the invocation calling for Shapshu to shine or to be hot becomes eminently understandable.

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<sup>192</sup> Kutter 2008: 93.

*2.3.1.4 Conclusions*

*CAT* 1.161 appears to address some of the same issues that are on the main stage in the later parts of the Baal Cycle: the relationship between the worlds of the living and the dead, the sphere of kingship, and—possibly—the role of the solar deity as the being that transcends the borders between living and dead. It is possible that the text discusses the drought/death motif from the aspect of Shapshu in her “normal” function, as the deity who uses her “heat” to open the gates to the netherworld when that is called for. I have argued for an intertextual relationship between Shapshu’s role in the Refrain of the Burning Sun and her role in 1.161, the latter text showing a more benign example of her heat as a connection to the land of the dead. The Refrain thus represents a “perverted” form of the relationship shown in 1.161. In the funerary text, the “good” powers control the proceedings: Shapshu can burn hot, opening the way to the netherworld, without falling into the hands of Mot.

### 2.3.2 The Drying Devourers—CAT 1.12

Another Ugaritic text that may possibly involve the relationship between drought and death is CAT 1.12, one of the most enigmatic texts in the entire literary corpus. The quite poorly preserved story seems to narrate Baal's calamitous encounter with the so called Devourers or Eaters (*aklm*), also known as Tearers or Renders (*ʿqqm*), apparently some type of monsters. This text has been mentioned in passing earlier on in the study, as it appears to include some of the most important Ugaritic terms connoting the idea of burning heat or drought—namely the roots *šhr*, *hrr* and *šhn* (probably meaning “burn,” “be hot” and “be warm”). I shall return to these terms later on in my discussion of the text. The text also ends on an intriguing note, with a possible reference to some sort of ritual action, often interpreted as a ward against drought.

#### 2.3.2.1 The Monsters, Baal and Drought

As noted above, the “Devourers” seem to be monsters of some sort, and it appears that they are not simply acting on their own accord but that they are to some extent under the control of El, the divine patriarch. Baal's encounter with them appears to lead to young storm god collapsing and/or dying—in a way quite different than the usually discussed “death of Baal”-story known from the Baal Cycle.<sup>193</sup> The god of death is not mentioned at all, and neither is there any reference to the hero being buried. After Baal's collapse, it does however seem as though a seven (or eight) year drought starts afflicting the land. This is of course highly important for the present study.

However, it must be acknowledged that CAT 1.12 is an extremely difficult text because both of its poor state of preservation and to the excentricities of its apparent context. Thus, any “drought-death”-centered interpretations must be regarded as inherently questionable from the get-go—as must indeed any interpretation of the text as a whole.

Yet, if one looks through the text with the drought motif at the center of one's enquires, there are parts of the narrative that stand out as highly conspicuous. The most apparent of these is the possible outright mention of drought in lines 42-43 of column II (analyzed later on in this chapter). Those lines appear to speak of the earth being cracked and scorched as a consequence of Baal's fatal meeting with the two monstrous enemies.

There is also a plausible instance earlier on—the text describes the (divine?) women that are pregnant with the monsters. The pregnancy does not appear to be a happy one: the prospective mothers complain to the high god El that their “livers” and “breasts” are being burned by the fetuses:

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<sup>193</sup> The importance of this text to the idea complex of Baal as a “dying god” has been pointed out by Gaster (1936), Mettinger (2001: 67-68) and others.

<i>kbdn . il . abn</i>	Our livers, El our father,
<i>kbd k iṣ&lt;ṭ&gt; . tikln</i>	they eat (our) liver like fire, <sup>194</sup>
<i>tdn . km . mrm . tqrṣn</i>	they consume our breasts like worms [?].

(CAT 1.12 I 9-11)

Thus, in their embryonic stage the monsters create an effect highly reminiscent of the ideas studied in this book: intense, negative heat (“eating like fire”—cf., for example, the burning furnace of Ps 102:4). Through this experssion, the creatures are put in the associative sphere of burning and destructive temperatures from the very outset, presaging the role they are to play within the main story itself.<sup>195</sup>

It seems as though the complaints of the women have rather the opposite effect from what the mothers intended: El becomes very happy, starts laughing and instructs the two female figures (here explicitly named *tlš* and *dmgy* and described as the handmaidens of the moon god Yarikh and Athirat, respectively) to go out into the desert/wilderness (*mdbr*, in the text misspelt as *mlbr*) and give birth to the monsters of the tale.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Since Ugaritic word for “fire” is normally feminine (*iṣt*) just as the Akkadian cognate *iṣātu*, the above emendation, adding a *t*, is common. However, the Hebrew version of the word, *ʿēš*, lacks the feminine ending. As an interesting sidenote, the Mesopotamian god of plague and drought Erra has the character *Išum* as his companion, a name which looks like the Akkadian word for “fire,” but once again without the feminine termination.

<sup>195</sup> Compare the way in which Yatpan, the agent of death in the Aqhat story, is given a similarly indicative placement as an inhabitant of the verdureless desert, which becomes almost by definition a symbol of the domains of death; see section 2.3.4.5 for more on this phenomenon.

<sup>196</sup> At this place in the text (lines I 21-22,) the “wilderness” is further qualified by use of the difficult words *il šiy*, the second of which is often taken to be a derivation from the root *šʿy*, “to be desolate, ruined” etc. This interpretation opted for by Wyatt (2002: 163, esp. n. 7), who translates the collocation as “the vast and awful desert” (viewing *il* as indicating a superlative). Simon B. Parker (*UNP*: 189) also accepts this derivation, and translates *mdbr il šiy* as the idiomatically impressive “the god-awful wilderness.” One could also very well translate it as “the wilderness of the god of desolation,” i.e. the wilderness of Mot, which would make the link to the death motif quite inescapable; this translation was suggested by Schloen (1993: 215, esp. n. 44), who did, however, not see any drought-death motif in the text at all but rather viewed the tale as one of “disinherited kin.” One should note that the Hebrew equivalent of the root *šʿy* (i.e. *šʿh*) is a possible source of the name of the Israelite netherworld, Sheol—a fact that again reinforces the connection between the liminal location of Baal’s fall in this text and the idea of the land of the dead. See section 3.2.3.3 for more on the traditions underlying Sheol and its connection to the drought-death motif.

As the story then progresses, El decides to sponsor the dangerous beasts by “proclaiming their names” (*pʿr šm*), an act which is, in effect, the same as defining their role in the cosmos and in the story.<sup>197</sup> As El has now publicized his “sponsorship” of the burning beasts, they are somehow acting under his aegis. This fact, which may at the outset seem strange, is corroborated by the appearance of the heat- (and thus death-) themed monsters *īšt* (“Fire”) and *ḏbb* (“Flame”) as beings close to El in the formulaic monster list in *CAT* 1.3 III 38-46 (for more on this list and its importance to the drought-death motif, see section 4.3.2). The monsters of the present text also seem to bring heat and drought, and, accordingly, they are associated with El.

### 2.3.2.2 The Motif of Death in the Text

The painful burning of their mothers’ innards is not the only factor symbolically connecting the monsters with death. Their very title, *aklm*, would probably have carried with it such an association to many of the Ugaritians hearing the story read or recited to them. One of the most defining traits of the god of Death in the Baal Cycle is, after all, his enormous, swallowing maw and insatiable appetite.<sup>198</sup> The topos-like description of Mot’s gaping jaws as putting “a lip to earth, a lip to heaven” (*CAT* 1.5 II 2) is echoed in the narration about the two ravenous children in *The Birth of the Good and Gracious Gods* (*CAT* 1.23 61-62), and these children appear to be very similar to the monsters of the present texts in that they are somehow connected to El, have a voracious appetite and are shown to have as their home the “desert/wilderness,” a place otherwise connected with the god of Death.<sup>199</sup> Thus, this description of Mot can be indirectly tied to the monsters, whose aggressive “eating” and “tearing” seems to put them in the sphere of Mot-like monsters, especially when viewed in combination with the burning heat they create in their mothers’ bodies.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Compare the use of the same expression when Kothar creates and names the weapons of Baal in *CAT* 1.2 IV 11 and 18, giving detailed prescriptions for their use, and the idea of naming as it appears in the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*. Note additionally that the expression *pʿr šm* is also used with El as its subject in *CAT* 1.1 IV 15, when he apparently names Yamm as his “chief executive” and presumably thereby makes him Baal’s enemy.

<sup>198</sup> Interestingly, *CAT* 1.5 I 14-15 states that Mot’s appetite is the “appetite of the lions in the wasteland” (*npš lbim thw*), squarely securing the desolate wilderness as the domain of the god of Death.

<sup>199</sup> The connections between *CAT* 1.12 and 1.23 have been pointed out for example by Schloen (1993) and by Wyatt (2002: 162).

<sup>200</sup> The line that parallels the one in which the foetuses burn the livers of their mothers may also point in the direction of the sphere of death. The difficult word *mrm* (which I have tentatively translated as “worms,” based on the Hebrew root *rmm*, “to decay,” “to be full of worms” and the noun *rimmā*, “worm,” “maggot”) may also hint at such a connection. Whether or not one chooses such a concrete translation or a more abstract one like “corruption” (so Gray 1951: 148), the symbolic realm of death seems

One clear difference between these death-like monsters and Mot himself—as he is depicted in the Baal Cycle—is the attitude that Baal shows towards them. While Ilmilku’s story has Baal being afraid of Mot, *CAT* 1.12 speaks of the Storm God being somehow attracted to his prospective enemies. This is described in the following way:

<i>bʿl . ḥmdm . yḥmdm</i>	Baal greatly desires them,
<i>bn . dgn . yḥrrm</i>	the son of Dagan covets them.

(*CAT* 1.12 I 38-39)

Just as in the Baal-Mot story, the confrontation takes place at the “edge of the wilderness” (*pat mḏbr*, the latter word once again misspelt as *mḏbr*), the liminal realm in which the representatives of death can be encountered. Baal’s attraction to the beasts apparently plays a large part in his downfall, as he seems to be lured into the (presumably unsuccessful) confrontation.

### 2.3.2.3 *The Role of El in the Demise of Baal*

The sometimes submerged and sometimes more open conflict that seems to exist between Baal and El is in evidence in one form or another in both narratives of Baal’s demise: in *CAT* 1.12 it is not disguised at all, as El is the one who pronounces the names of the monsters, and in the Baal Cycle the killing and drought-inducing god Mot is himself referred to as “El’s beloved” (*ydd il* or *mdd il*). As I will argue later,<sup>201</sup> the idea that El seems to be connected (albeit somewhat surreptitiously) with the parties in these stories that cause the death of Baal and the subsequent drought of the land may have been appropriated by the Israelite theological thinkers who gradually turned this drought/death-power from a hostile divine force into a prerogative of YHWH himself (as identified with El). As shown later in the book, there are a number of places in the Old Testament where the burning power of drought and death are made into a weapon of the Israelite God. Texts such as this, in which the drought-giving monsters are associated with El, may have provided a paradigmatic background for such a conception, as YHWH and El were gradually conflated in Israelite religious thought.

It has at times been argued<sup>202</sup> that El is unconnected with the beasts of this text and that he is not involved in any plot against Baal or in his demise.

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very much to be in focus. The mothers are not merely burned by a monstrous drying fire—they are even being gnawed at by representatives of deathly decay!

<sup>201</sup> See section 4.3.2.

<sup>202</sup> E.g. Schloen 1993: 212. His argument, that El is in no way connected with the maliciousness of the beasts but merely sends the women away because they or their offspring have become “objectionable,” is counterindicated by the text’s contention that he laughs when he hears of the burning predicament of the mothers.

However, there is a piece of extra-Ugaritic evidence in support of an interpretation of El as in some way being culpable. This is the Myth of Elkunirsa, preserved in Hittite but clearly based on a Northwest Semitic *Vorlage*.<sup>203</sup> In that text, Elkunirsa (a Northwest Semitic borrowing from an expression such as Hebrew *ʾēl qōnē ʾereṣ*, “El, creator of the earth”) and Asertu (i.e. Athirat/Asherah) together plan a vengeful attack against the Storm God (i.e. Baal), whereupon Baal appears to be injured. It appears that Baal is then brought up from the netherworld, ritually purified and recreated. The Elkunirsa story thus provides a distinct piece of evidence not only of Baal’s death but also of the idea of El(kunirsa)’s complicity therein.

### 2.3.2.4 The Battle and the Mourning of Nature, and the Terminology of Burning Heat

When the drought seemingly appears following Baal’s fall in *CAT* 1.12, it remains for seven/eight years, the same formulaic number used for the drought that accompanies the death of the young hero of the Aqhat Epic.<sup>204</sup> It is at this central point in the story—Baal’s encounter with the beasts, his fall and the subsequent drying up of nature—that the text starts to become really difficult. The beginning of column II is badly damaged. Lines 31-33 seem perhaps to speak of someone (the monsters?) either grasping Baal’s eyes, back, bow (?) and feet or grasping something before his eyes, behind him and at his feet. When the text becomes a little easier to follow, someone destroys someone, someone grasps someone, and someone falls. There are basically two lines of interpretation open. One is that represented here: Baal is defeated by the monsters and “falls.” The other is that of the Devourers being regarded as the losers of the confrontation: the verbs are either endless perfects or narrative infinitives, and can thus be interpreted either as 3<sup>rd</sup> person singulars or as 3<sup>rd</sup> person plurals/duals.<sup>205</sup> One thing that speaks in favor of Baal being the one

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<sup>203</sup> There may even be one case of Semitizing mistranslation in the preserved Hittite text, securely showing the “Canaanite” or Northwest Semitic origin of the tale: a strange *parallelismus membrorum* between two words meaning “owl” and “cup,” respectively. Hoffner (1965: 13-14) made the brilliant suggestion that the second of these two words is a Hittite misinterpretation of the Northwest Semitic word appearing in Hebrew as *kōs*, which can mean both “cup” and a form of owl. A transliterated edition of the Hittite text of Elkunirsa can be found in Laroche 1969: 139-144. A modern translation is Hoffner 1998: 90-92.

<sup>204</sup> At least, this appears to be the meaning of the difficult lines II 44-45 and 48-49, the first of which speaks of El “filling” seven years (*šbʿt šnt il mla*). Is this a reference, perhaps, to El and his subordinates being in power instead of Baal?

<sup>205</sup> The interpretation in which Baal is the one falling and being destroyed is adopted by Gaster (1936: 41) and by Wyatt (2002: 165), whereas the opposite position is taken by Parker (UNP: 190) and, with some hesitation, by Schloen (1993: 217). Dietrich and Loretz (2000: 28) take something of a middle path, regarding Baal as the “seizer” and

undergoing harsh treatment is that, in the lines following, Baal appears to grow hot and feverish. Why he would react in this way if he were the victor is somewhat difficult to understand.<sup>206</sup> If Baal is the one overcome, however, phenomena of this sort could easily be interpreted as representing the effects of his demise. Also, later in the text, he is definitely found fallen, and as there is no clear indication of Baal having been dealt any other injury, I will assume—with some hesitation—that he is indeed the loser in his confrontation with the Devourers.

Bearing this assumption in mind, I give the following tentative translation of the passage dealing with the encounter itself:<sup>207</sup>

‘n . b <sup>c</sup> l . aḥd <sup>208</sup> . [ ]	Before Baal’s eyes, they seize ...
zrh . aḥd . qš[t ]	Behind him they seize the bow ... <sup>209</sup>
p <sup>c</sup> n . b <sup>c</sup> l . aḥd[ ]	At Baal’s feet, they seize ...
w šmt . ḡllm[ ]	The thirsters (?) ...
aḥd . aklm . k/w[ ]	The Devourers seize ...
npl . b mšmš[ ]	He falls in a swamp ...
anpnm <sup>210</sup> . yḥr[r ]	his nostrils burn ...
b mtnm . yšḥn . x[ ]	in his loins he is hot ...
qrnh . km . ḡb[ ]	his horns are as though in an acute fever <sup>211</sup>
... hw . km . ḥrrx[ ]	he is as one burning ...
šn mtm . dbṭx[ ]	...
tr <sup>c</sup> . tr <sup>c</sup> n a[rš <sup>212</sup> ]	The ea[rth] is completely cracked,

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“destroyer” but still having him as the one who “falls.” Kapelrud (1969: 327) believes that it is the Devourers who seize initially, whereupon they then are seized and fall.

<sup>206</sup> One possible solution might be to regard the heat as a result of Baal’s being covered by blood (something stated outright in lines II 46-47). But even though blood is, indeed, hot, it takes some stretch of the imagination to think that the poet would have described this situation as Baal having hot nostrils, etc.

<sup>207</sup> My rendering is informed by the ideas of Ceresko (1980: 97-98), Mettinger (2001: 67-68) and Wyatt (2002: 165-167).

<sup>208</sup> The older spelling of this verb with *d* instead of *ḡ* supports the idea that *CAT* 1.12 represents a more archaic version of the myth of Baal’s demise than does the Baal Cycle—a view expressed by Dietrich and Loretz (2000: 124) and mentioned by Mettinger (2001: 68).

<sup>209</sup> Earlier on in the text (I 34), Baal is said to be “hunting” (root *šwd*). A bow would fit well in this context, again indicating that Baal is the one being “seized.” This increases the probability that the monsters are doing the “seizing” later on as well.

<sup>210</sup> *CAT* reads this word as two: *an pnm*.

<sup>211</sup> The word *ḡb* was explained by Driver (1956: 73, 143, n. 11) as meaning “ague” or “tertiary fever,” based on Arabic *gibb*, an understanding fitting well in this context. This interpretation was also followed by Wyatt (2002: 166), who translates the word as “malaria.”

<sup>212</sup> Conjecture not in *CAT*, but following, among others, Driver (1956: 73) and Wyatt (2002: 166).



<i>bnt . šdm . šhr[rt]</i>	the “daughters” of the fields” <sup>213</sup> are scorched.
<i>šb<sup>c</sup> . šnt . il . mla</i>	Seven years El does fill
<i>w tmn . nqpnt .</i>	and eight cycles of time.

(CAT 1.12 II 31-45)

As noted above, this passage includes—in very close connection with one another!—the three verbs *šhn*, *hrr* and *šhrr*, all of which have at other places in this study been shown to occur within the context of drought. Not only that, but they occur in a context almost programmatically associated with death: there are all-swallowing monsters metaphorically described as fire and as worms of decay, Baal fights these monsters in the liminal zone at the edge of the barren desert (known from the Baal Cycle as the place where the god of Death roams) and then collapses (as though) dead. Prior to his collapse, Baal is stricken by a feverish sickness, burning as if in terrible heat—and the land seems as a consequence to be stricken with drought. Two of the verbs, *šhn* and *hrr*, are used to denote the very fever that attacks Baal, and the third (*šhrr*, the verb used in the Refrain of the Burning Sun in the Baal Cycle) seems to be used to paint an image of the scorched earth. The combined effects are exactly those associated for example with an attack by such deities as Erra, the Mesopotamian god of pestilence and the scorched ground (cf. the discussion of the *hrr*-etymology of that name and the work of J.J.M. Roberts in section 2.2.2). Rather than simply being a story of “fratricide and atonement” (Gray), I believe, therefore, that CAT 1.12 describes the encounter between Baal and the powers that cause death, heat, fever and drought.<sup>214</sup> Note that the verb *šhrr* here occurs in connection with the “fields” (*šdm*), probably the very cracked fields that Shapshu takes upon herself to search in CAT 1.6 IV, when Baal is dead—and Shapshu is of course the one in connection with whom the verb *šhrr* is used in the Baal Cycle (in the Refrain of the Burning Sun). The verb *šhn* is used in CAT 1.161 when Shapshu is called upon to “be hot” in the dark netherworld (probably in order to help create a connection between the lands of the living and of the dead).

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<sup>213</sup> The precise significance of the phrase *bnt šdm* (here translated as “daughters of the fields”) is a matter of educated guessing at best. A quite possible idea suggested by Virolleaud (1935b: 262, n. 1) and followed by e.g. Driver (1956: 73, esp. n. 4) and by Wyatt (2002: 166, esp. n. 27) is that the expression is a parallel to the Arabic phrase *banātu l-arḍi* (literally “daughters of the earth”), used to denote wadis. Given the mention of heat earlier in the text and the nearby attestation of the verb *šhrr*, this supposition is attractive, though by no means certain. I would not discount the possibility that the “daughters of the fields” are none other than the furrows in the fields, that Shapshu is called upon to search through in CAT 1.6 IV.

<sup>214</sup> Cf. Mesnil du Buisson 1978, who also reads the text as a story of drought, albeit one applying to Phoenicia (Byblos, in particular). He explicitly (p. 69) associates the text with what is described in what I refer to as the Refrain of the Burning Sun.

Thus, even though Shapshu is mentioned nowhere in *CAT* 1.12, the text abounds with terminology connected with her and with her role in other Ugaritic writings. If it is correct, as Dietrich and Loretz surmise and Mettinger accepts,<sup>215</sup> that the text represents an earlier version of the tradition of the death of Baal than does the “*stark literalisierte*” Mot-episode of the Baal Cycle, one may imagine that the basic motifs are expressed here without using the medium of the sun as a literary device—that the role of Shapshu in the Baal Cycle and in a number of ritual texts is a later development, to some extent brought about by metaphorical considerations. *CAT* 1.12 has very little of the ingenious metaphoric play found in the Ilimilku version of the Baal Cycle. In comparing these two stories about the fall of Baal, the literary astuteness of the longer one stands out in high relief. Through such a comparison, it becomes quite apparent how expertly the roles of the solar deity are interwoven and probably ironically used in the Baal Cycle (Shapshu both causing the drought and surveying the burned fields, both being under the sway of Mot and being the instrument of his downfall, etc.). In *CAT* 1.12, none of these features are present, this yielding a much “straighter” story, one in which the drought simply appears out of nowhere when Baal becomes feverish and falls.<sup>216</sup>

### 2.3.2.5 *The Climax of the Text*

As has been shown, the central gist of *CAT* 1.12 is still very much a matter of debate and conjecture. The philological problems are vast, making a religio-historical interpretation precarious at best. Even if one accepts (as I am inclined to do) that the text describes the death of Baal at the hands of monsters somehow sent out by El, that these monsters are thematically connected with the Ugaritic imagery of death and dying and that drought is spread throughout the land as a result of this, the main motivational thrust of the story is still unclear, as the ending of the text (and thus, one might surmise, its climax) is also quite philologically difficult. But it does appear that this ending is highly important for understanding what the text is really about. I here present the relevant words together with a possible translation which is informed by the insights of Wyatt and Mettinger, and to a considerable extent by those of Dietrich and Loretz.<sup>217</sup>

b'1 . i<š>ttk . l awl	Baal, be thou libated, O first one, (?)
išttk . lm . ttkn	be libated ...
štk . mlk . dn	May the king libate a jug,
štk . šibt . 'n	may he libate what is drawn from the spring,

<sup>215</sup> Dietrich and Loretz 2000: 124; Mettinger 2001: 68.

<sup>216</sup> The same “sun-less” drought is in evidence in the Aqhat and Kirta texts as well.

<sup>217</sup> Wyatt 2002: 167-168 (see in particular n. 36), Mettinger 2001: 67. The version of Dietrich and Loretz (2000: 29 and especially 89-98, with ample references and a digest of earlier translations) differs from my understanding in certain respects but provides a plausible view of the text as being a ritual of “Hydrophorie.”

<i>štk . qr . bt . il</i>	may he libate the well in the house of El,
<i>w mšlt . bt . ḫrš</i>	and the deep in the house of the crafty one!

(CAT 1.12 II 56-61)

The interpretation of this passage is extremely difficult and fraught with numerous philological problems. I regard the verbal forms ending in *tk* as being derived from *ntk* (“to pour out”), the verb here occurring in the *Št* and *Š* forms—in the first two lines in the *Št* imperative and then in a precative suffix tense or infinitive absolute of the *Š* stem. Seeing this root in the above passage is not very controversial; however, my interpretation of the first two lines as an exhortation to Baal to “be libated” is perhaps somewhat unusual.<sup>218</sup>

However sketchy our understanding of the passage may be, it seems as though it entails some sort of ritualized “pouring,” i.e. a libation, that is to be carried out by “the king.”<sup>219</sup> One should note that use of the root *ntk* in reference to libations is also attested in the ritual texts, for example in CAT 1.41 12 and (using the nominal derivation *mtk*) in CAT 1.119 25.<sup>220</sup> The water for the libation is to be taken from the house (temple) of El, which apparently included

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<sup>218</sup> There are, of course, a multitude of alternative explanations of the identity of the verbal forms in question. Korpel (1990: 596) apparently reads the first verb as *ittk* and analyses it as a Gt form of *ntk*. Korpel’s analysis is similar to mine, that Baal “is implored to let himself be poured out [...]” Another suggestion is “to cease, desist, be silent,” which has been related to the Arabic verb *sakata* (with metathesis) and to the Hebrew *šṭq* (to which one could perhaps add Hebrew *šeṭet*, “silence,” again with metathesis and here with emphasis spread). Such a view is taken e.g. by del Olmo Lete (1981: 634), Ginsberg (1936: 148) and Segert (1984: 203). It was also espoused by Gray (1971: 67), who had, however, earlier favored a derivation from *ntk* (Gray 1951: 150). This latter interpretation, which I also follow above, has adherents such as Dietrich and Loretz (2000: 29, 90), Kapelrud (1969: 328), Mettinger (2001: 67), de Moor (1987: 134), Wyatt (2002: 167-168) and others. A survey of the various suggestions can be found in Dietrich and Loretz 2000: 90-95.

<sup>219</sup> Of Ugarit? Such would certainly be a valid assumption. The other possibility is to regard the expression as a reference to the king of the gods, i.e. to El. This option was taken by Aistleitner (1959: 57). Given the centrality of El to the passage and to the text in its entirety, such an identification is definitely possible. However, making libations is not usually connected with El himself. Johannes de Moor (1987: 134, n. 45) suggests that Baal himself may be the “king,” but settles for the king of Ugarit as a more probable alternative, as he was regarded as one of the most central agents of cultic functions. I concur with the latter assessment.

<sup>220</sup> In CAT 1.119 25, the full expression used is *mtk mlkm*. This could mean either “libation of [the god] Milku” or (highly interesting in the present context) “libation of the king(s)”. If the latter is correct, it could refer either to the deified royal ancestors as recipients of the offering or to the current king as the ritual agent, which would, of course, provide support for the interpretation of the end of CAT 1.12 which is espoused in the present section.

some form of water basin or the like—alluded to here by use of the term *mšlt*. This term is commonly explained as being a cognate of the semi-rare Hebrew word *mēšôlâ/mēšûlâ*, which is used as a term for watery deeps in Jonah 2:4, Ps 69:3, Ps 107:24, Job 41:23 and in other places. One may note that most of the attestations of this word in Hebrew seem to be in reference to the great, chaotic deep of the sea, not to some peaceful basin in a temple.<sup>221</sup>

One could speculate that the use of this word to describe the source from which the presumably drought-combating libation is to be drawn could imply an attempt to play out the two major chaos powers (Death and Sea) against each other, but this is, of course, a highly tenuous idea.<sup>222</sup> Wyatt compares the “deep” in this temple with the “sea” in the Jerusalem temple, as described in 1 Kings 7:23-26, which seems to me to be quite a reasonable parallel.<sup>223</sup>

The last line speaks of the “deep” being situated in *bt hrš* (provisionally translated as “house of the crafty one”), which apparently forms a parallelism with *bt il* (“the house of El”). A small excursus may be necessary on the identity of this “crafty one” and the question of why the expression is used here.

There have been a number of suggestions as to the referent of this word in the present context, but I for my part am rather certain that it refers to El—which is indicated by the parallelistic structure of the lines.<sup>224</sup> However, I believe that there may be yet another reason for making this assumption, namely that there is an additional place in which El is connected with the root *hrš* (“to be crafty,” “to use skill”). This is in the Epic of Kirta, where El uses his magical and/or crafty powers to create the golem-like being Sha<sup>c</sup>taqat, who is to remove the illness that has befallen king Kirta:

*ank iḥtrš . w aškn*  
*aškn . ydt . [m]rṣ .*  
*gršt zbln .*

<sup>221</sup> There is also another cognate in Arabic *mišwal*, which signifies (in the words of Lane 1863: 1749 [s.v. *mišwalun*]) “[a] thing in which colocynths are soaked in order that their bitterness may depart,” a meaning more clearly elucidated by HALOT (s.v. *mēšôlâ*) as a “basin for washing seeds.” This seems to imply some sort of smaller, basin-like structure.

<sup>222</sup> As a small piece of support for this idea, there does seem to be textual evidence for the powers of dryness being used as a magical weapon against the sea monsters (that is, the other way around); see the discussion of CAT 1.83 in sections 2.2.5.1, 3.2.1.2 and 4.3.3.

<sup>223</sup> Wyatt 2002: 168, n. 39.

<sup>224</sup> Kapelrud (1969: 328) viewed the word not as an appellation of a person but as an abstract noun (“House of Divination”). Similarly, de Moor (1987: 134) has “House of Magic”. Gray (1951: 150) took quite a different view (“House of the Forest”), but later changed his mind to “house of confinement” (1971: 68). Wyatt (2002: 168, n. 38) believes Kothar is the “craftsman” in question. The interpretation of the term as an epithet of El is common (Aistleitner 1959: 57, Dietrich and Loretz 2000: 101 etc.).

I on my part will use my crafts and create!  
 I will create her who drives out illness,  
 her who removes disease!

(CAT 1.16 V 25-28)

As I have argued elsewhere, this *hrš*-terminology is related to conceptions of the “craftiness” of divine creation and to the battle against the powers of chaos, in this case Mot, who is mentioned outright as representing Kirta’s illness later on in the text.<sup>225</sup> Note that sickness is at the forefront in CAT 1.12 as well, with Baal being stricken by fever. At the end of the Kirta text, also, a drought occurs together with the sickness of the hero. Thus, it is perhaps no coincidence that the (semi)magical “craftiness” of El is mentioned in this context, too, as we know that this could be the very means to fight sickness and drought in another Ugaritic text. We therefore do not have to introduce any other character as the “crafty one” in this text (Kothar, for example): both the poetical structure of the lines in questions and evidence from Kirta show that the one referred to is in all likelihood El, probably in his aspect of helping to combat feverish sickness and drought using his semi-magical powers. Given that the lines seem to describe some form of ritual working intended to combat drought, such a craftsmanlike or magical designation of El would fit very well.<sup>226</sup>

Considering the somewhat dubious role of El in this text, enlisting his help in ritually clearing the effects of his “mischief” seems very appropriate: he is, after all, the king of the gods, and therefore, his assistance may very well be regarded as necessary if the sad state of affairs is to be alleviated. The very fact that the divine father was seemingly part of the plot that made Baal fall in the first place makes the concluding ritual in his temple even more interesting: do we perhaps see some sort of propitiating ritual here?

A common—and in my mind very convincing—view is to regard this final part of the text as a “ritual appendage” to the story, implying a libation ritual probably intended to fend off drought through a sort of sympathetic magic: pouring out water in order to make water fall.<sup>227</sup> This would imply that the narrative making up the bulk of the text is a sort of preamble or illustrative motivation for the ritual. This line of interpretation creates a coherent structure

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<sup>225</sup> Wikander 2011. In that article, I argue that El’s “crafty” creation is associated as a motif with the “plan” of YHWH in Job 38:2 and with the expression *niklātu* (“wise things”) applied to the works of Marduk in the *Enuma Elish*. In all of these texts, terms suggesting wisdom and craftiness are applied to gods involved in creation and in battling chaos, especially when these functions are combined with each other. For Mot as the enemy in this passage of the Kirta text, see section 2.3.4.7 below.

<sup>226</sup> The combined reference of this root both to handicrafts and magical workings is exemplified by the Syriac word *ḥarāšā*, meaning “magician, enchanter”.

<sup>227</sup> This interpretation has many adherents. See, for example, Dietrich and Loretz 2002: 125, Mettinger 2001: 67-68 and, it appears, Wyatt 2002: 167-168.

in the text: other possibilities, such as viewing the text as a description of atonement on the part of Baal for shedding the blood of his brothers or as a ritual used at the judging of cases of fratricide demand, in my mind, much more contorted analyses.<sup>228</sup> A water ritual fits well not only with the philology of the text but also with what we learn earlier on: the powers of death make themselves known, Baal falls and there is a drought.

### 2.3.2.6 Biblical and Rabbinical Parallels

This sort of ritual libation in cases of collective emergency is attested in the Hebrew Bible, as well. The most famous example is perhaps 1 Sam 7:6, where Samuel and the Israelites fast and libate to YHWH in Mispah. This instance has sometimes been linked to the threat of drought,<sup>229</sup> though no such clear reference can be found in the biblical passage in question.

Libation of water to the Israelite God during Sukkot is described in the Mishnah (mSukkah 4:9-10). In this latter case, the connection to “rain-making” is clearly articulated, as the Mishnah itself states that the judgment of the rain (literally “water”) for the year to come is made during Sukkot, and the entire festival is concentrated around themes of rain and water.<sup>230</sup> Thus, one may safely argue that rain-making libations have a well documented survival even into the post-OT age.

One may wonder if narratives and ideas such as those found in *CAT* 1.12 provided a backdrop for what later became the rituals alluded to in Mishnah Sukkot. Such a supposition is certainly not far-fetched if one accepts the contention of Dietrich and Loretz, that the ritual delineated in the text had an autumn/new year festival as its *Sitz im Leben*.<sup>231</sup> The question of such a festival and its nature is, of course, an entire *Forschungsgeschichte* unto itself into which it is not possible to delve in this volume, but the possibility of some connection does remain.

*CAT* 1.12 is a text in which the classical paradigm of combining a mythological narrative with ritual action seems to appear in an unusually clear form. Are we to assume that the story told in the text was thought of as some form of aetiology for a yearly ritual? Perhaps, but such a supposition would certainly not be easy to prove. As noted above, libations (possibly carried out by the king of Ugarit) are known from the purely ritual texts. Nevertheless, we cannot with any certainty pronounce a judgment on the relation of the present text to those disjointed references.

What is, however, possible is to note the co-occurrence in *CAT* 1.12 of the following motifs:

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<sup>228</sup> These views are represented by Gray in his two articles from 1951 and 1971.

<sup>229</sup> So, for example, de Moor 1987: 134, n. 45 and Stolz in *DDD*: 806 (s.v. “Source”).

<sup>230</sup> mRosh HaShanah 1:2. For further discussion, see Schaffer 2001: 117-118 (who, however, mistakenly gives the reference as mSukkah 1:2 in his note 14).

<sup>231</sup> Dietrich and Loretz 2002: 124-125.

- monsters reminiscent of the god of death (gaping maws, insatiable appetite),
- a connection between these monsters and the high god El,
- the storm god apparently dying,
- a drought ensuing and a ritual action (possibly propitiating El and calling on his “crafty” powers) trying to negate it.

The combination of these motifs provides a possible background not only for similar water rituals in Ancient Israel but also for the appropriation of drought powers by the Israelite God, and puts humanity at the forefront of the battle against the death of the arable land in a way quite comparable to the role taken by Elijah in his great anti-drought action in 1 Kings 18 (discussed at length in section 3.1.1): note how the pouring of water is a central part of Elijah’s ritual proceedings in 1 Kings 18:34-35! In *CAT* 1.12, El first helps to bring about drought and lets lethal monsters run free, but at the end, it seems that a libation in his own temple brings him over to the “right side”: compare how YHWH first causes drought and then takes it away following a ritual (involving pouring of water) in the Carmel story! In both cases, the land dies, whereupon its life is rekindled using ritual action and the power of the high god. The conflict that exists between El and Baal in the Ugaritic text, with El “filling” the years when Baal is absent, also creates an interesting backdrop to the implied conflict between YHWH and Baal in the Carmel episode.

Kapelrud’s contention that the monsters of the text are in fact to be identified as locusts would, if true, create an interesting parallel to the combined attacks of locusts and drought in the beginning of the Book of Joel, another text studied in this volume. However, that suggestion must be regarded as highly uncertain and has not found much favor in the history of research. The idea is intriguing, though, and would create an interesting religio-historical pattern, and I shall refer to it later in the study when discussing Joel 1.<sup>232</sup>

### 2.3.2.7 Conclusions

To sum up, *CAT* 1.12 provides a rare glimpse into how the people of Ugarit may have viewed and interpreted their part in the great cosmological drama of life and death—and distinct religio-historical echoes of these conceptions appear to persist far into Israelite thought. It tells much about the relationship between death and drought, and how the people of Ugarit saw fit to combat them, using mythological patterns to motivate their actions. The text associates dying in the untamed wilderness with heats of the body (fever) and with heat of the natural world (drought). The monstrous beings that kill Baal are connected with El, who somehow seems to be behind the demise of the young god. The god Mot himself is not mentioned, but the results of Baal dying are similar to what is found in the Baal Cycle, indicating that the connections between drought and death are more

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<sup>232</sup> Kapelrud 1969: 324-325.

generalized in Ugaritic thought. One may note with some interest that just as Mot himself is conspicuous by his absence in *CAT* 1.12, there is no mention of Shapshu in the text.



### 2.3.3 Drought, Fertility and the Sun in Ugaritic Ritual and Para-Ritual Texts and the Relationship between the Sun, Mot and Rashpu/Resheph

One of the conclusions of Juliane Kutter's study of the roles of Shapshu is that she is a bringer of fertility, the rays of the sun giving life to greenery and vegetation.<sup>233</sup> This view of the Ugaritic solar deity might, at the outset, seem contradictory to the picture formed of her in the present study, where the very opposite function, the sun as a bringer of drought, has been very much at the forefront (indeed, it appears as though Kutter herself sees such a dichotomy, as she hardly recognizes the "drought sun" as a concept of Ugaritic mythology or religion at all). However, one need not consider these two depictions of the solar deity as completely irreconcilable from an ontological or conceptual point of view: as has been seen earlier, the drought and heat appear as a result of Shapshu's connection with death and its realm, and it is thus not impossible to imagine a situation in which Shapshu's warmth would work as a bringer of fertility when the power of death is not overwhelming. However, it is necessary to put these questions to the texts themselves.

#### 2.3.3.1 CAT 1.41/1.87 and the Role of Rashpu/Resheph

The number of texts that Kutter adduces to prove the fertility-giving aspect of Shapshu is not large, and none of them seems conclusive in itself. One example is the ritual text *CAT* 1.41/1.87, which prescribes an offering to be made to Shapshu in the month *riš yn*, "the first wine."<sup>234</sup> The name of the month can, of course, be taken as an indication of a fertility connection (the internal logic of giving offerings to a god who helps produce new wine is of course easily understandable). However, two arguments may be adduced against such an interpretation. The first is that the name of the month of the offering need not necessarily show what the offering was for (it would be quite ludicrous, for example, to imply that all religious rites performed in the month of July in Imperial Rome must have been aimed at pleasing the deified Julius Caesar). Against this counter-argument one might say that much in the Ugaritic cult seems to have been generally concerned with fertility, which would make this a plausible horizon of interpretation in this case too. Yet "much" does not equal "all," rendering this defence somewhat weak.

The other problem with interpreting the reference to *riš yn* as a sign of Shapshu being thought of as a giver of fertility lies in the fact that she is not the only deity the text wants its readership to honor during that month. A number of

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<sup>233</sup> "Dass die Sonnengöttin aufgrund der wärmenden, Leben, Wachstum und Gedeihen spendenden Kraft ihrer Sonnenstrahlen mit dem Aspekt der **Fruchtbarkeit** in Verbindung gebracht [...] wurde, ist unmittelbar einsichtig." (Kutter 2008: 208, bold face in original).

<sup>234</sup> Translations of this text can be found in *COS*: 299-301 (by Levine, de Tarragon and Robertson) and in Pardee's *RCU*: 56-65, the latter of which includes a practical synopsis of the two manuscripts.

different gods are mentioned in this context. A most interesting name in this list is that of Resheph/Rashap/Rashpu, occurring right next to that of Shapshu in the standard reconstruction.<sup>235</sup> Does this, then, imply that Resheph, the god of war and pestilence, is a “fertility deity”?<sup>236</sup> Certainly not, and this shows us that we cannot so easily draw such a conclusion concerning Shapshu either. In fact, the association between Shapshu and Resheph found in this and other sacrificial texts from Ugarit (see the sacrificial list *CAT* 1.148 32, with syllabic equivalent RS 92.2004 15-16)<sup>237</sup> leads one to believe that these two deities were in some way regarded as “having something to do with each other,” eminently understandable if Shapshu is viewed in terms of her potentially destructive and drought-inducing aspects.<sup>238</sup> Kutter argues against the interpretation of what I

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<sup>235</sup> Also well noted by Kutter herself (2008: 56). One may also note that, while the name Rashpu is unquestionably attested in line 13 of *CAT* 1.41, the occurrence of Shapshu in line 28 is a reconstructed passage with only one of the letters visible. Thus, logically, the case for Rashpu as a fertility deity based on this text alone would, ironically, be stronger than the case for Shapshu!

<sup>236</sup> A similar point is made by Münnich (2013: 153-154), who notes that Resheph and Shapshu occur together in these texts and rhetorically rejects a possible (but of course nonsensical) idea that this would make him a solar deity. However, his categorical denouncement of the idea that a deity could be thought of as solar and chthonic at the same time is not compelling—such gods are certainly in evidence in the Ancient Near East, one salient case being the Hittite “Sun Goddess of the Netherworld.”

<sup>237</sup> Conveniently available in synoptic format in *RCU*: 17-18. Shapshu and Resheph/Rashpu are also listed close to each other in the partially reconstructed lines 30-31 of *CAT* 1.87, where Shapshu’s name is wholly reconstructed. Another possible (though tenuous) argument for Rashpu’s connection with the sun and the solar deity may perhaps be found in his epithet *ršp šbi*, which occurs only in *CAT* 1.91, line 15, and is translated in Caquot, de Tarragon and Cunchillos 1989: 176 as “Rashap, au déclin du soleil.” Even though such a translation is possible, the majority view—that the epithet is to be translated “Rashpu of the Army”—seems to me more likely. The latter type of translation is found in Rahmouni 2008: 298 (who has further references to relevant literature and different translations of the epithet) and is also endorsed in Münnich 2013: 150-151. A reference to the possibly chthonic deity Arsay next to Shapshu can be found in the sacrificial texts as well (*CAT* 1.47 22-23, with parallels, see *RCU*: 14), which may be important in this context. The name *arsy* means “of the earth” or “of the netherworld.”

<sup>238</sup> The character of the god Rashpu/Resheph is, of course, a subject of intense debate. The etymology of his name is not certain: one possibility is to interpret it as “flame” (root *ršp*—a view discussed, with a high degree of uncertainty, by Xella in *DDD*: 701 [s.v. “Resheph”]); another is to connect it to the Akkadian *rašbu* (“awesome, fearsome,” etc, apparently with devoicing of the labial following the unvoiced sibilant later generalized), an etymology endorsed by Lipiński (2009: 23-24) as well as by Münnich (2013: 8) and represented as early as Albright 1926: 151. Whichever of these etymologies may prove to be correct, I think it highly probable that the name was (at least in a Northwest Semitic milieu) interpreted as meaning “burning” or “flame,” given the existence of a homophonous root with that meaning and the high degree of correlation between such a meaning and one of Resheph’s central spheres of influence:

refer to as the Refrain of the Burning Sun as a description of drought partly on the basis that drought in neighbouring cultures (specifically Mesopotamia) is not usually connected with the solar deity but with more “evil” divine beings such as Erra.<sup>239</sup> However, in *CAT* 1.41/1.87 Shapshu and Erra’s nearest Ugaritic analogue, Resheph/Rashpu, appear in close proximity.<sup>240</sup> Such a connection

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plague (which, of course, gives burning fever). Whether this etymology is the original one or not is a different matter. In the Hebrew Bible, it is clear that *rešep* can by itself mean “flame” or “glow” (as in Song 8:6), and it would have been strange indeed if a connection between this and the divine name had not been made at least synchronically (cf. the discussion of the etymology of the name of the kindred deity Erra in section 2.2.2); Münnich (2013: 9) sees the “flame” meaning as a secondary re-etymologization in Hebrew and draws a parallel to the semantic spheres (heat, anger) represented by the root *hrr*, which is of course quite important for the present study. He also has references to relevant earlier literature. Another view taken by Fulco (1976: 64-65), who holds the synchronical usage of the root *ršp* for the meaning “to burn” (and thereby “pestilence,” etc.) is actually *derived from* the name of Resheph and not the other way around. Besides plagues, Rashpu/Resheph is often described as a god of war (Day 2002: 198, Xella in *DDD*: 701 [s.v. “Resheph”]) and is sometimes thought to have chthonic associations (Day 2002: 198, Fulco 1976: 69), an idea that is, however, denied by Lipiński (2009: 263). Münnich (2013) also has a negative view of the idea that Resheph was a god of the netherworld. He does, however, portray the Ugaritic Resheph as a god “who could send death, most probably through disease” and as a “menacing, warlike deity, bringing death” (pp. 262-263). For further discussions concerning the etymology of the name Resheph and its possible (though tenuous) mythological and poetical connections, see section 2.2.3, n. 114. Fulco’s (1976: 65) connection of the name with the roots *šrp* and *rpp* (presupposing an original biradical *rp*) is speculative, though perhaps still worthy of consideration. These roots share a common semantic field of “burning” or “glowing” and may be relevant to the topics studied in this volume. Also, it should be noted that the root *ršp* connected to burning or flames may be of quite old Afro-Asiatic provenance, having a possible cognate in the Egyptian word *ššb*, which also means “to burn” (for the etymology see Schneider 1997: 194, who expressly mentions the root as “mögliche Etymologie des Gottesnamens *Rašap*”).

<sup>239</sup> Kutter 2008: 148.

<sup>240</sup> Rashpu is identified outright with Nergal (written <sup>d</sup>GÌR.UNU.GAL), another name of Erra, in the Ugaritic god-lists RS 1.017/RS 24.264/20.024/RS 24.643, given in synoptic form in Pardee (RCU): 14-15. On an even more intriguing note, an association between Erra/Nergal and feverish, droughtlike heat directly connected to the wordings of the Baal Cycle can perhaps be found in Job 28:4, if one subscribes to the view of Dick (1979) that this line speaks of Nergal/disease and also accepts the analysis of the verb *tkh* as a word basically meaning “be hot” (see the special study in section 2.2.4). We would then end up with a situation in which the drought of Shapshu and Mot in *CAT* 1.5 I and the disease of Nergal/Erra/Resheph are described using the very same verbal root, thus greatly reinforcing the connection between the two! This idea is expounded upon at greater length in section 3.3.3.4. The fact that the Hebrew word *rešep* seems to mean “flame” lends even more credence to this interpretation. The baleful results of the association between the hot sun and Resheph may perhaps also be alluded to in the omen text *CAT* 1.78, which speaks of dangerous consequences when the sun “goes in” in the

between Shapshu and the destructive divine powers may also be in evidence in the “teratological” text *CAT* 1.103+1.145, in line 45 of which Shapshu is possibly said to “abase” the land if a certain omen occurs, a few lines after a reference to a similar destructive power of Resheph.<sup>241</sup> Also, as I have tried to show in the comparativist outlook in section 2.2.2, the very verbal root from which the name Erra is derived is possibly distantly related to the one used to describe the burning Shapshu in the Refrain. All in all, I would argue that *CAT* 1.41/1.87 rather reinforces the connections between Shapshu and the terrible danger of drought and bad growth.<sup>242</sup> However, this does not mean that the sun could not also have been thought of as giving life through her solar rays when functioning in a more “proper” fashion. A sacrificial rite including offerings to Shapshu and Rashpu/Resheph in the month of the first wine may very well have been meant to dispel the unfavorable effects of these deities (i.e. drought and lack of verdure) and thereby invoke the more favorable ones (in Shapshu’s case, a more fitting amount of sunshine). The ritual may have been both apotropaic and invoking at the same time—at least as far as Shapshu is concerned.

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company of Rashpu (probably indicating Mars). For one possible interpretation of this text, regarding it as a record of a solar eclipse with Aldebaran in close proximity to the sun (and subsequently being mistaken for Mars), see Sawyer and Stephenson 1970. A convenient digest of various differing translations of this text is given by Wyatt (2002: 366-367). I further expand on possible interpretations of the roles of Resheph and the burning, destructive Shapshu in *CAT* 1.78 (and their historical influences) in Wikander 2013b. Münnich (2013: 148) apparently makes somewhat similar connections as I do in that article, as he points to the connecting characteristics of “fever and heat” as providing the link between Shapshu and Resheph in the omen text.

<sup>241</sup> The translation “will abase” is advocated by Pardee (*RCU*: 140). Other views are held by Dietrich and Loretz (1990: 96), who, basing themselves on a different reading of the text, speak of the sun being “pierced” in the “baseness” of someone’s land.. Lipiński (2009: 38) notes that Resheph/Rashpu is connected to the sun goddess at Ebla as well. There is also possibly evidence for such a connection at Zincirli, where an inscription mentions Hadad, El, Rakkab-El and Shamash (Lipiński 2009: 223-225, who does not, however, view the link as very strong).

<sup>242</sup> Münnich (2013: 154) has a view similar to the one presented here and in the earlier edition of the present study, that the “burning” aspects of Shapshu, Resheph and his analogues, Nergal and Erra, are of importance as a source of association between Shapshu and Resheph in the Ugaritic ritual texts, and adds: “here the violent god of battle fervor, drought and fever occurs next to the flaming sun-goddess.” He connects this with the interpretation of Resheph’s name as meaning “flame” or similar, which he regards as secondary. Yet, Münnich also adds that “Resheph’s occurrence next to Shapash on the lists of offering might as well not have a deeper meaning.” Given the possibility (outlined in this sub-chapter) of reading these associations in the light of the Refrain of the Burning Sun and other passages from the Baal Cycle, I find it highly likely that such an intended meaning is, indeed, there.

2.3.3.2 *Shapshu, Baal and Resheph in an “Exorcizing” Incantation—CAT 1.82*

A comparable interesting relationship between Shapshu and Rashpu may be in evidence in CAT 1.82, a text referred to by de Moor as an “incantation.”<sup>243</sup> In this text, Baal appears to be called upon to combat various powers of chaos (apparently in order to cure some form of malady): the dragon Tunnan is mentioned, as is Resheph and his “arrows” (*hṣ*) in line 3.<sup>244</sup> This is interesting in itself, but for the present purpose it is especially noteworthy that Shapshu is invoked shortly thereafter (l. 6), and that the text appears to mention a “covenant with Mot” in line 5 (cf. Isaiah 28, as discussed in section 3.2.1.2). The deities Shapshu, Resheph and Mot are here mentioned in close proximity to one another as all having a relationship to the bodily ailment that the text is apparently meant to cast out. Johannes de Moor himself observes: “Because Shapshu (the Sun) visited the Nether World every night she had the power to drive away the forces of evil by her light and warmth [...].”<sup>245</sup> It appears that Shapshu is called upon to “give life” (*ḥw*) as Baal is called upon to catch or seize “serpents” (*btm*)—note that the task of battling snakes and their venom is often given to Shapshu in other texts (e.g. CAT 1.100).<sup>246</sup> Again, Shapshu here is a benevolent deity and not a destructive one—but it seems that her relation with the netherworld once more makes her an ideal candidate for battling the demon-induced disease the text refers to. Whether or not it really was her “light and warmth” that gave her this position in the minds of the Ugaritians is a question not easily answered; as noted elsewhere in this book (see for example section 2.3.1.2.), I see no strong separation between these characteristics and Shapshu’s role of traversing the bounds between living and dead.

Juliane Kutter also points out that CAT 1.82 speaks of Shapshu in connection with “Unterweltsgöttheiten und sonstige Chaosmächte.”<sup>247</sup> She notices, among others, the references to Tunnan, Resheph, Mot, Horon and *ppšr*; the latter she interprets in the way endorsed by del Olmo Lete (and earlier by de Moor),<sup>248</sup> seeing in this otherwise unattested divine name a variant of the Mesopotamian netherworld deity Papsukkal. Kutter interprets these allusions to

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<sup>243</sup> Translation and introduction in de Moor 1987: 175-181, seeing menstrual difficulties as (at least part of) the ailment that the incantation tries to cure. See also the discussion in de Moor and Spronk 1984. The interpretation concerning menstruation rests on extensive textual reconstruction.

<sup>244</sup> The “arrows of Resheph” are probably a reference to sickness and plague (de Moor 1987: 176, n. 2).

<sup>245</sup> de Moor 1987: 176, n. 7.

<sup>246</sup> In that text, too, there is a combined reference to Shapshu and the netherworld, the latter in the form of the god Horon, who is the one who can actually destroy the snake’s venom. Resheph is also mentioned in this text, but he has no special role and is only enumerated as one among various other deities, which probably makes the connection irrelevant.

<sup>247</sup> Kutter 2008: 131-132.

<sup>248</sup> del Olmo Lete 1999: 377, n. 150; de Moor 1987: 180, n. 138.

dangerous deities in this ritual text as references to Shapshu's role as "diejenige Gottheit, die sich um die Erhaltung der ‚Weltordnung‘, des kosmischen Gleichgewichts bemüht, was gleichzeitig ihre Zuständigkeit für die Abwehr dämonischer, lebensfeindlicher Mächte impliziert."<sup>249</sup> She also associates this phenomenon with the Shapshu-hymn at the end of *CAT* 1.6 (see sections 2.2.6.3 and 2.2.6.4), where the solar deity is connected to the *Rāpi'ūma* of the netherworld.<sup>250</sup> I believe this explanation to be half right: Shapshu is certainly a character that was given a role of "keeping the balance" in the universe, but I would say that this function was to a large part dependent upon the very connection with the netherworld realm and dangerous powers to which the list of gods mentioned in *CAT* 1.82 appears to allude. Again, Shapshu is related to the netherworld and to the burning heat of sickness, to Resheph, Mot, Horon and (perhaps) Papsukkal, and this liminal role makes her the ideal one to heal the ailments against which the incantation is directed, regardless of whether those ailments came in the form of menstrual problems, snake-bite<sup>251</sup> or something else entirely.

### 2.3.3.3 *Shapshu and the "Gracious Gods": CAT 1.23*

Another text central to the question of Shapshu as a bringer of fertility is *CAT* 1.23, often known as *The Birth of the Good and Gracious Gods* (or similar titles). This well-known but difficult text consists of two major parts, the first of which seems to have (at least to some extent) a ritual character, while the second appears to be more clearly narrative in structure. The second part describes the sexual escapades of El and his fathering of the twin gods Dawn and Dusk—it has sometimes been interpreted as an incantation of some sort, perhaps aimed at curing impotence (this could be implied by the many references to El's sexual organ and its current states). Another possibility is viewing it as some sort of vintage or harvest festival.<sup>252</sup> What concerns us here, however, is mainly the former part of the text, which appears to depict some sort of ritual action including the king, queen and other important functionaries.<sup>253</sup> It is in this part of the text that the solar deity has an important part to play, which we will now consider.

Immediately following the introduction of the cultic functionaries, the text begins by presenting what seems to be its basic "problem":

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<sup>249</sup> Kutter 2008: 132. Kutter finds this role especially in the Baal Cycle.

<sup>250</sup> Kutter 2008: 132.

<sup>251</sup> A view propounded by del Olmo Lete (1999: 373).

<sup>252</sup> A very thorough modern study of this text is Smith 2006.

<sup>253</sup> True, there are certain lines in the first part which seem more mythological and narrative than ritual, but these appear to be breaks in the larger structure, perhaps intended as lines to be spoken or as exegetical remarks of some kind.

<i>mt . w šr . yṭb .</i>	Motu-wa-Sharru sits enthroned;
<i>bḏh . ḥṭ . ṭkl .</i>	in his hand is the scepter of childlessness,
<i>bḏh ḥṭ . ulmn .</i>	in his hand is the scepter of widowhood.

(CAT 1.23 8-9)

This terrible, iconic figure, whose name literally means “Death-and-Suffering,” seems to be some sort of specialized variant of the very same Mot who is so often connected with Shapshu and drought in the Baal Cycle. The two scepters in his two hands (or one, if one prefers to see the two lines as poetic parallels) show the affliction that he brings in this context: lack of childbirth and conjugal fertility.<sup>254</sup>

The solution to the problem is metaphorically described using the following words:

<i>yṣbrnn . ṣbrm . gpn</i>	May those who prune the vine prune him,
<i>yṣmdnn . ṣmdm . gpn .</i>	may those who bind the vine bind him,
<i>yṣql . ṣdmth km gpn</i>	may they fell his vineyard/death-field/tendril like a vine!

(CAT 1.23 9-11)

These lines seem to prescribe some sort of ritual action clothed in metaphorical terms; exactly what kind of reality they might have referred to is beyond the sphere of the knowable. However, the continued references to wine and vines (also in the introductory section of the text) seem to imply some form of agriculturally oriented rite for producing fertility.

The meaning of the term *ṣdmṭ* has been a point of contention. Wyatt regards the word as a viticultural term for a tendril or a shoot.<sup>255</sup> His etymology, regarding the word as a causative Š nominal derivation of *dm* (as in “blood of the vine” or “juice of the vine”) does, however, not satisfy me, as the semantics do seem a bit strange: the word would have literally to mean something like “bringer forth of blood,” viz. “the blood of the vine,” i.e. “a shoot.” Specifically, Wyatt regards this “tendril” word to be the background of attestations of Hebrew *ṣdmṭ/ṣdmwt* in Deut 32:32 and Isa 16:8, passages which do indeed seem to indicate some individual part of a vine (rather than a vineyard or terrace, as is often supposed).<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> This fits very well with the second, “post-ritual,” part of the text, where El’s fatherhood stands at the very center.

<sup>255</sup> Wyatt 1992 and 2002: 327 n. 12.

<sup>256</sup> The word *ṣdmṭ* appears to be present in CAT 1.2 I 43 as well, in the context of Baal’s conflict with the sea god Yamm. However, the passage is damaged, and it is very hard to get any real sense out of.

Another idea is that of Lehmann,<sup>257</sup> that the Hebrew *šdmt/šdmwt* be analyzed as a compound of *šādē* and *mōt* (thus “fields of death”) in more than a few instances. I personally find Lehmann’s idea intriguing, and I regard the possible attestation in *CAT* 1.23 as strengthening it, if anything, as Mot himself is very much at the forefront here. Also, the text itself talks of “fields” (*šd*) of more benign deities (Athirat and Rahmay) only a few lines later (l. 13, and again in l. 28), which may very well be intended as a counterpoint to the terrible “fields of Death” mentioned earlier. Lehmann himself makes the point that the attestations of the word in the Hebrew Bible seem often to be connected with non-Israelite cults and (which is important) to aridity and barrenness,<sup>258</sup> closely matching the semantic spheres of the drought-death motif studied in this volume. Isa 16:8 is a good example of this, including as it does the verb *ʾumlal* (“to wither, dry out”) discussed at other places in the present study (e.g. section 3.2.4.5). “Fields of Mot” would fit well in these instances. The objection made in *HALOT* that Hebrew does not possess the ability to form compound words<sup>259</sup> at all is not that convincing, as we know from Ugaritic that such compounds do indeed sporadically occur in the Northwest Semitic linguistic sphere, and especially with the word Mot as the second part: cf. the word *šhlmm̄t*, “coast plain of death.”<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Lehmann 1953. The discussion concerning this word is well summed up by Smith (2006: 45-46), who goes with the majority opinion that the word means “terrace” (p. 40). Lehmann’s hypothesis is defended by Gulde (1998: 295, 305-307; 2007: 98-99, esp. n. 97), whereas de Moor (2009: 593) refers to it as “a *petitio principii* rather than the result of sound philological work.” Pardee (*COS*: 277-278) also views the word as a compound, but opts for the word *mt* meaning “man” as the second part (thus “the-field-of-a-man”).

<sup>258</sup> Lehmann 1953: 361. The aridity motif is clearly articulated in Isa 17:8 and Hab 3:17. Lehmann also notes (p. 364) the connection with the Ugaritic attestation.

<sup>259</sup> *HALOT* (s.v. *šēdēmā*). Ginsberg (1936: 147, n. 38) thought that a singular form of the Ugaritic word is in evidence in the text known today as *CAT* II 1.12 (line 43). If this were so, it would make it more plausible that *šdmt* actually is a plural and not a compound. However, this theory has little to support it: the text has *šdm*, which is much easier to explain as a plural of the word for field and also fits the context (see section 2.3.2.4). Ginsberg rejects such an interpretation, but does not state his arguments.

<sup>260</sup> The objection of Day (2002: 194) and Smith (2006: 46) that *šdmt/šdmwt* could not contain the name of Mot because of the Hebrew word having a *šin* instead of a *šin* is not entirely compelling. From the vocalization of the second half of the word (*mōt* instead of *māwet*), it is clear that the Masoretes did not interpret the word as a compound (as they did, for example, in the case of *šalmāwet*) but as a plural of an unrelated word. That word would then more or less have been “invented” by the Masoretes, who would not have understood the actual (compound) word that was before them. Given that *šin* is a much more common consonant in Hebrew than *šin*, one might very well imagine this reading as being the “easier” or default one in an otherwise unknown word. Pardee (*COS*: 278, n.17) notes that the Hebrew construct form *šadmōt*, which occurs instead of the expected *\*šidmōt*, points to the word being anomalous, possibly foreign in origin with respect to Hebrew. All this is not to say, however, that the “fields of Mot” interpretation



The “arid” associations possibly inherent in the word *šdmt*, coupled with the references to childlessness and widowhood, leads one to consider this piece of text in the light of the dichotomy fertility/infertility. It is not until lines 22-24 that the titular “good and gracious gods” appear again (they are mentioned in the introductory invocation but are then absent). The identities of these deities are not entirely clear, but it is a common stance to identify them with the gods Dawn and Dusk who are born to El in the second half of the text.

It is in this context that Shapshu appears in the narrative:

<i>špš . mšprt . dlthm</i>	Shapshu takes care of (?) their branches
[ ] w <i>ḡnbm</i> . [ ... ]	and grapes.

(CAT 1.23 25-26)

Here, one might argue, we have a perfect testimony for the fertility-giving aspect of the solar deity. The “branches” of the new-born gods are to be” taken care of” (shone upon ?) by Shapshu, presumably giving them strength (note the agricultural language!). The relevant verb is translated “shines (?)” by Lewis in *UNP* (p. 209). There certainly does not seem to be any drought implied here.

Yet when one examines the context, the situation becomes more complex. The main “problem,” as expounded by the text itself, does seem to have to do with infertility and inability to produce growth or offspring (both “childlessness” and viticulture are, after all, referred to), and the reason for this state of affairs is none other than Mot, the figure that causes the drought (manifested through Shapshu) in the Baal Cycle. There is possibly talk of two kinds of “fields”: the presumably fertile fields of Athirat and Rahmay and those of Mot (*šdmt*), which are probably less so.<sup>261</sup> The basic “problem sphere” of infertility associated with Mot in the Baal texts does seem to be relevant here as well, and I believe that the appearance and actions of Shapshu should be interpreted with this borne in mind. It is definitely probable that Shapshu gives some form of strength or growing power to the young gods of the text (by

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is philologically self-evident—but it is definitely possible. It is quite interesting to note that both these possible compound words (*šdmwt* and *šalmāwet*) have the word for “death” as their second part. A possible third such “death” compound has been proposed by Al-Yasin (1952: 77), who interpreted the Ugaritic word *nhmmt* (meaning something like “drowsiness”) as representing a combination of *nhm* and *mt*, and thus meaning approximately “deep sleep (of death)”. This word occurs in the Kirta Epic in the description of the king’s deep prophetic slumber (CAT 1.14 I 32, 34). The possibility of the name of Māwet/Mot being used as an ending to nominal expressions as an indication of greatness (much like the use of *’ēl* and *’ēlōhīm* in this sense) has been pointed out by Rin (1959).

<sup>261</sup> The connection with the fields of Athirat (and also El) has also been made by Gulde (1998: 306; 2007: 99).

helping or shining on their “branches”)—but is it a coincidence that she does this in a context in which Death/Mot is once again so much on the center stage?

I think not. Rather, I would like to argue that the situation in *CAT* 1.23 is comparable to that found in the “funerary liturgy” 1.161 (see section 2.3.1), where the author seems artfully to use the liminal character of Shapshu for his own artistic and theological reasons. Seen in such a perspective, the question is one of “being warm,” but not so hot that she is in the power of Mot, as in the Refrain in the Baal Cycle. Here the “good” rays of the sun are invoked precisely because “Motu-wa-Sharru” is the “enemy”: the fact that Shapshu shines benevolently on the newborns is in itself a sign that the powers of Death are being overcome. Were those destructive powers victorious, one would expect destructive heat rather than vivifying sunshine. Thus, Shapshu’s fertility aspect here becomes an explicit marker of what the ritual seems (at least partly) to be about: curbing the dessicating and destroying powers of Mot.

#### 2.3.3.4 “Shapshu of the Corpse” and “Anat the Mutilated”

When we look at other ritual material, we find that the evidence for Shapshu in her chthonic and death-related capacities is quite apparent. One striking instance of this is the use of the expression *špš pgr*, possibly meaning “Shapshu of the Corpse,” which occurs in line 12 of the god-list *CAT* 1.102 and in lines 12 and 17 of *CAT* 1.39.<sup>262</sup> Again, this deathly title of Shapshu occurs in close connection with Rashpu/Resheph, whose name appears in line 10 of 1.102.<sup>263</sup> Between the two, we find *ʿnt ḥbly*, translated by Pardee as “Anat the mutilated,” another rather ominous reference, which may be highly important.<sup>264</sup> This designation also occurs close to “Shapshu of the corpse” in 1.39. These words give a direct and very striking image of the connection between death and the sun in Ugaritic religious thinking. The image seems almost too concrete, given the usual presupposition of Shapshu’s role as psychopomp—here it is hardly the “soul” (psyche) which is in question but the very dead body itself. In what light is this expression to be understood?

If we again turn to the Baal Cycle, we actually do find a case in which Shapshu deals directly with a corpse—that of Baal himself. In *CAT* 1.6 I 10-15, Shapshu is the one who helps Anat in taking care of and burying the hero, she “loads him” onto Anat’s shoulder, and together the two goddesses slaughter animals, probably as a burial offering for the fallen god. Interpreting myths as “paradigms” for ritual action is a risky business, but one cannot help wonder whether the passage from the Baal Cycle combined with the title “Shapshu of

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<sup>262</sup> This is the interpretation favored by Pardee (*RCU*: 284). Another possibility is regarding *pgr* as a reference to a type of sacrifice. This alternative is represented by Schmidt (1994: 52-53), who does not see any allusion to death here.

<sup>263</sup> Possibly, Rashpu/Resheph is attested nearby in 1.39 as well (see the proposed reconstruction in *CAT*:s note 2).

<sup>264</sup> Pardee (*RCU*): 21.

the corpse” might in some way suggest an idea involving Shapshu being thought to be present during burial rites, as a “carrier” not only of the soul (if such a concept is applicable here) but also of the corpse itself.<sup>265</sup>

Yet I would propose that not just any corpse is alluded to in these god-lists. The corpse of Baal may have been viewed as a sort of prototypical “corpse” and as a symbol of Shapshu’s role as connector to the land of the dead. We are, of course, obliged to exercise caution as to the general applicability to Ugaritic religious thought of the ideas found in the Baal Cycle, but there is an interesting piece of circumstantial evidence pointing in this direction: the fact that Anat is mentioned in both of the “Shapshu of the corpse” texts with the strange epithet *hbly* (probably something like “the mutilated one” or “the damaged one”).<sup>266</sup> Pardee fittingly explains the epithet as signifying the mutilation of Anat in connection with Baal’s death (as recounted in the Baal Cycle, *CAT* 1.6 I 2-5).<sup>267</sup> This interpretation seems to me to be highly plausible, as this is to my knowledge the only place where a “mutilation” of Anat occurs (while in that context it is highly conspicuous).

If this connection is a correct one, we would have here a direct association between the “psychopompal” role of the solar deity (her travels to the netherworld) and the drought-inducing death of Baal and the rule of Mot over the land. The two aspects of death are once again turned into one.

### 2.3.3.5 Conclusions

The question remains: does the goddess of the sun act as a bringer of fertility in these ritual and para-ritual texts, and how does such a role relate to the connection between the solar deity and the underworld? Does Shapshu provide fertility?

The answer may be given as a qualified “yes,” but one that needs a further and very clear specification: her fertility-bringing aspects seem very often to be related to or associated with her connection with potentially destructive powers such as Mot and Resheph (or the underworld itself), that signify the very opposite of fertility, and with chaos powers in general. Thus, Shapshu grants fertility precisely because her benevolent powers signal the defeat of the powers of drought and dying. There is therefore no contradiction between this function and her otherwise well-established role as giver of drought—rather, the two are different sides of the same coin, signifying the state of the universe (once again, see the excellent example of this duality in the accounts of Shapshu’s “being hot” or “burning” in the Refrain of the Burning Sun and *CAT* 1.161, respectively). Shapshu stands between the forces of life and death, and thus also

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<sup>265</sup> On Shapshu as *psychopompos*, see e.g. Mettinger 2001: 63.

<sup>266</sup> This expression is not common; it occurs also in *CAT* 1.162 14 and 1.176 14, both of which texts use it to refer to Anat. The epithet is sometimes translated as an active form, “Destroyer” (e.g. Watson 1993: 49).

<sup>267</sup> Pardee (*RCU*): 274.

between drought and fertility. Her radiance and connection with the netherworld must be in the service of humanity and of the benevolent gods in order for her “dangerous” associates (Mot, Resheph, etc.) to be kept in check.

### 2.3.4 When Heroes die: Drought and Death in the Epics of Aqhat and Kirta and their Echoes in 2 Sam 1:21

In this chapter, I shall examine a number of instances (both from the Ugaritic corpus and the Hebrew Bible) in which the killing drought seems to be connected with the death of specific heroic individuals. In a number of cases, this occurs in the form of poetic utterances of mourning that predict the sympathetic death of nature.

#### 2.3.4.1 The “Hero’s Drought” in Aqhat

In the Epic of Aqhat (*CAT* 1.17-1.19), the role of drought as a story element is very conspicuous. Directly following the murder of the young, eponymous hero of the story at the hands of the nomad warrior Yatpan (at the instigation of Anat) the whole land is stricken with a most debilitating drought and lack of fertility. The hero’s father, Danel, the one who originally petitioned Baal for a son, and the hero’s sister, Pughat, see this terrible state of affairs. In an earlier passage (in very poor state of preservation), it seems that Anat herself notes the drought that she has brought on by seeking to take the hero’s divine bow by force:

[ <sup>c</sup> ]l ḥṯh . imḥṣh .	For his staff I slayed him, <sup>268</sup>
kd . <sup>c</sup> l . qṣṯh . imḥṣh .	as I slayed him for his bow,
<sup>c</sup> l . qṣṯh . hwt l . aḥw .	for his arrows I did not let him live.
ap . qṣṯh . l ttn ly .	But his bow was still not given to me,
w bmtḥ . ḥmṣ ṣrr	and by his death the sprout is <i>parched</i> (??), <sup>269</sup>
pr <sup>c</sup> . qṣ . [ ] <sup>270</sup>	the first fruits of summer are <i>withered</i> (??),
šblt b ḡlph .	the ear of corn in its husk.

(*CAT* 1.19 I 13-19)

<sup>268</sup> The initial <sup>c</sup>ayin is restored with Parker (*UNP*): 67, whose understanding of the line I have followed. The “staff” could be a *double entendre*, referring both to the limbs of the bow and to Aqhat’s masculinity, which, it may be assumed, Anat has tried to rob him of (with the bow as its symbol)—cf. the use of the word ḥṯ (“staff”) for El’s penis in *CAT* 1.23 37.

<sup>269</sup> The correct translation of this line is extremely uncertain (as is the very reading of the signs). The interpretation of the words offered here is inspired by Dijkstra and de Moor 1975: 197 and de Moor 1988b: 67. This version would provide an excellent parallelism with the following lines. There is, however, no necessary reason to regard the lines as specifically “seasonal”; the drought is due to Aqhat’s death in and of itself, regardless of cycles of the climate. As will be seen later on in this section, I believe the case is rather the other way around: the death of the hero causes a cosmic and quite “unnatural” cosmic catastrophe, which does not necessarily constitute an allegory for the seasons (cf. Wyatt 2002: 293, n. 193).

<sup>270</sup> *CAT* reads yḥ. Dijkstra and de Moor (1975: 200) suggested yb[l], possibly from the root *nbl*, “to wither, dry out.”

The action of the story then returns to Danel and Pughat, who find that drought has spread throughout their grounds, and that vultures swoop over their house. They greet this information with ritualistic acts of mourning (the tearing of Danel's garment etc.), whereupon (depending on the interpretation of certain verbs as indicatives or jussives) Danel either adjures the clouds to make rain, but finds that Baal and his rains will stay away for "seven years" (the familiar stock measure of a long period of time), or himself curses the clouds using this very threat. My interpretation is that Danel tries to bring the rains back: as he has not yet heard of the murder of Aqhat, there is really no reason for him to curse the clouds and thus make things worse than they already are.<sup>271</sup> Danel's adjuring of the clouds is described using the following words:

*apnk . dnīl . mt rpi .*  
*yšly . ʿrpt . b ḥm . un .*  
*yr . ʿrpt tmṛ . b qz .*  
*ṭl . yṭll . l ḡnbm .*  
*šbʿ . šnt ysrk . bʿl .*

Then Danel, the man of Rapiu,  
 prays to the clouds in the terrible heat:  
 "May the clouds give rain in the summer,  
 may dew settle on the grapes!"  
 For seven years he is in need of Baal,<sup>272</sup>

<sup>271</sup> See, for example, the translation of Parker (*UNP*): 68-69. The translation "pray" or "adjure" fits closer with the meaning of the verb in Akkadian, Aramaic and Arabic, as noted by Ginsberg (1938: 211, n. 6.) For a translation of the other variety (involving cursing instead of praying), see Wyatt 2002: 295-296. One argument for the "curse"-translation is the broken attestation of a word *šily[atu?]* in syllabic transcription in one of the polyglot vocabularies, translated by the Hurrian *šidarni* ("curse") and probably by the equally broken Akkadian word *[ar]āru* ("curse")—see Huehnergard 1987: 26, 170-171. The meaning of Hurrian *šidarni* is otherwise known to be "curse," which would imply this meaning for the Ugaritic root as well (for the meaning of *šidarni* see e.g. Haas and Willhelm 1974: 87). One may, however, well imagine a situation in which the basic meaning of the verb is broader, being something like "invoke magically." Wyatt is of the opinion (2002: 295, n. 200) that Pughat's "weeping in her liver" and other acts of mourning are a sign of her having "spiritual gifts" and thus intuitively knowing that something terrible has occurred. This interpretation is hardly necessary; an awful drought is reason enough for grief.

<sup>272</sup> With Margalit (1989: 374-375), I consider the common translations of the types "Baal is absent" (e.g. Parker [*UNP*]: 69) or "Baal failed" (so Driver 1956: 59) to be unsatisfactory. Even if one accepts the usual derivation of the verb *yšrk* from a verb *šrk* (cognate with Arabic *ḍaruka* and Aramaic *šrak*), which Margalit does not, "fail" or "be absent" is too far removed from the basic meaning of the word, which seems to be "be in need of" or "be poor." Margalit tries to solve the problem by following Gordon (1965: 476) in viewing the verb as being derived from the root *šrr* ("to be hostile to; hurt; afflict" etc.) and interpreting the *-k* as a pronominal suffix ("you"), here directed at Danel (the speaker is supposed by Margalit to be a sort of *bat-qôl*, answering Danel that his prayers are for nought—but the lack of an introductory speech formula makes this unlikely). In my mind, the verb may very well be *šrk*, but to make sense of it, it ought to be construed as being transitive, yielding the above translation, which would be much closer to the apparent root meaning of the word. If this translation is correct, Danel's intense "need" of Baal would then be beautifully and parallelistically expressed by the

<i>tmn . rkb ʿrpt .</i>	for eight, the Rider of the Clouds—
<i>bl . ṭl . bl rbb</i>	without dew, without downpour,
<i>bl . šrʿ . thmtm .</i>	without surging <sup>273</sup> of the double-deeps,
<i>bl ṭbn . ql . bʿl .</i>	without the sweet voice of Baal.

(CAT 1.19 I 38-46)

## 2.3.4.2 2 Sam 1:21 Seen in the Light of the Aqhat Material

Already in 1938, H.L. Ginsberg made a brilliant but audacious connection between this passage and David's curse on Mount Gilboa after the death of Saul and Jonathan in 2 Sam 1:21.<sup>274</sup> The text runs as follows according to the MT:

<i>Hārê baggilbōaʿ</i>	O mountains of Gilboa,
<i>ʿal-ṭal wēʿal-māṭār ʿālêkem</i>	may no dew, no rain [descend] upon you
<i>ûšēdê tērûmôt</i>	and fields of offerings (?)!

In both the Ugaritic and the Hebrew text, the death of heroic characters is followed by someone speaking of the place of that death being devoid of rain. If one adopted the interpretation of the Ugaritic passage CAT 1.19 I 38-46 as a "curse" (as Ginsberg did), the parallel would be even stronger, but even without that, the similarity of these expressed statements of a lack of rain in connection with death or dying is very notable, and implies a shared poetic heritage.<sup>275</sup>

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lines that follow. For a discussion of the phonological history of the root in question, see Halpern 1987: 123. Another possibility would be to regard the present *šrk* as a cognate of the Aramaic word *ʿrq* ("to flee," attested early as *qrq* in the Sefire inscriptions, III:4), the first radical of which must represent the Proto-Semitic consonant appearing in Arabic as *q* (see Cathcart 2005: 10-11). As that phoneme shifted to *š* in Ugaritic, one would only have to postulate an emphasis-loss in the final radical to get to *šrk*. The translation would then be "for seven years Baal flees." The controversies concerning Aramaic *ʿrq* play a part in a later section, in the discussion of Job 30:3 (see section 3.3.3.5).

<sup>273</sup> For *šrʿ* ("to surge up"), see Arabic *saruʿa* ("to hasten," "to rush"), or compare possibly Akkadian *šurrû* (meaning, among other things, "to reach the water level"; see Speiser 1950: 378). There may possibly be yet another relative of this word in the Hebrew Bible, the word *šēʿ irīm* in Deut 32:2—see further section 4.2.2.

<sup>274</sup> Ginsberg 1938, esp. p. 213. His suggestion has been vigorously defended (see e.g. Fenton 1979), partially accepted (McCarter 1984: 69-71) and argued against (Dahood 1972: 398). For my part, I find Ginsberg's argument and Fenton's defense thereof to be highly convincing. Note especially Fenton's (p. 165) demonstration of the paleographic similarity between the versions. Speiser's (1950) connection to a similar expression in the *Atrahasis Epic* is yet another argument in favor of Ginsberg's theory.

<sup>275</sup> Yet another instance of this heritage can perhaps be found in 1 Kings 17:1, at the beginning of the story of Elijah and the great drought. In that verse, Elijah predicts the lack of precipitation using the same combination of *ṭal* and *māṭār*, and it is my view that there, too, the implied reference is to death and the mourning of nature (see further the analysis of this text in section 3.1.1).

The Hebrew has *ʿal-ṭal* and *ʿal-māṭār ʿalēkem* (“may no dew, no rain [descend] upon you”),<sup>276</sup> in a manner highly reminiscent of the Ugaritic *bl ṭl* and *bl rbb*, and the parallel becomes even more salient if one accepts Ginsberg’s (somewhat bold) suggestion to emend the strange and contextually unexplainable expression following these (*ūšēdē tērūmôt*, literally “and fields of offerings”) to something like *wšr<sup>c</sup> th(w)m(w)t*,<sup>277</sup> which would then be the equivalent of the *šr<sup>c</sup> thmtm* (“surging of the double-deeps”) in the Aqhat text. The received text of the MT is quite strange, and some form of correction does seem necessary. If Ginsberg’s emendation is correct, these two pieces of text use almost identical language to express the drought-laden results of the death of the heroes.

Another manuscript reading does exist, the one found as a rare variant in the Lucianic recension of the LXX, ἐπὶ τὰ ὕψη σοῦ, ὅρη θανάτου (“on your heights, O mountains of death!”). The Vetus Latina similarly has *montes mortis*. This reading is a quite possible solution, but it still fails to create the beautiful tripartite parallelism and historical connection provided by Ginsberg’s proposition. And I think that there is yet another possibility pointing in Ginsberg’s direction: an easy way of explaining the Lucianic reading containing “death” would be to assume that it had as its *Vorlage* a Hebrew expression containing the word *tēmūtā*.<sup>278</sup> The consonantal writing of this word, *tmwth*, could quite easily have arisen as a bungled writing for an original *th(w)m(w)t* (“deeps”). The Lucianic interpretation involving “death” could very well have arisen from the adoption of a *lectio simplicior*, as death is very much the question at hand. We must not forget that, if Ginsberg’s emendation is correct, we are dealing with an exceedingly ancient poetical formula, the exact meaning of which was probably highly unclear at a later point in Israelite history; note, for example, that no noun *šr<sup>c</sup>* is otherwise attested in Hebrew, a fact that has sometimes been adduced against such an emendation.<sup>279</sup> Both the MT and the

<sup>276</sup> The use of “dew” (*ṭal*) as an expression of life is also found, e.g., in Isa 26:19.

<sup>277</sup> Or, possibly, following Gordis 1940: 35-36 and McCarter 1984: 71, the similar-meaning *wšdy thmwt* (something along the lines of “or flowing of the deeps,” based on the Aramaic verb *šdy*, “pour, flow, empty out”).

<sup>278</sup> Another explanation of the Lucianic reading is proposed by Fincke (2001: 116-117). His initial supposition of a misreading *harē māwet* (*hry mwt*) for *tērūmôt* is certainly possible, but his convoluted way of explaining the rest of the Lucianic expression by alleged misreadings of references to Arimathea and its “princes,” Jesus and Samuel, as well as to numerous hypothetical glosses being incorporated into the text, are less compelling. Fincke’s insistence on the text shared by the MT and the Qumran Samuel scroll forces him to translate the strange *tērūmôt* as “first-yields,” a vegetational reference that is certainly not self-evident. If the *harē māwet* explanation is accepted despite the peculiarities thus imposed on the rest of the expression, one can still see the Ugaritoid expression as the original text underlying *tērūmôt* (the strangeness of which Fincke cannot explain away).

<sup>279</sup> So, e.g., HALOT (s.v. *šādē*), criticizing “the introduction of a new substantive in the Hebrew.”



Lucianic LXX version of the expressions could be viewed as different attempts to come to terms with an (at the time) unexplainable text. Indeed, the introduction of the word “death” into the *Vorlage* of the Lucianic version of the text is a sign that the drought-death connection was very much alive in the minds of early interpreters without their necessarily understanding the ancient Northwest Semitic wording in its entirety.

As Wyatt points out,<sup>280</sup> both the biblical text and the Aqhat passage would then describe all three natural sources of water (dew, rain and “swirling of the deeps,” i.e. springs) being stopped and hindered as a result of the slaying of the heroes. The idea that the slaying of heroes will (and even ought to) bring about terrible effects in nature seems to have been very much alive in the Northwest Semitic cultural sphere, and it is hard not to see a survival of, or an allusion to, such a tradition in the cursing of Gilboa. This would show that the deaths of Aqhat, Saul and Jonathan belong to the same mythological category. After the deaths of both Aqhat and the Hebrew heroes, the places of the killings are cursed (expressed in the Ugaritic text through the long passage in which Danel travels from city to city cursing those near which Aqhat was slain), and drought is an implicit effect of the heroes’ demise.

The sorrow of the land over the death of a great hero is thus to be viewed as an ancient Northwest Semitic literary trope. This does, of course, not in any way mean that the author of the deuteronomistic text borrowed the words from the Aqhat Epic—what it means is that absence of rain as a result of a hero being murdered, and its description using formulae of this type, probably occurred in many epic tales, of which the Aqhat text and the cursing of Gilboa are but two examples.

A still more expressive interpretation of 2 Sam 1:21 as a statement of “mourning drought” was advocated by Kennedy, who suggested emending David’s initial invocation *hārē baggilbōa* (“O mountains of Gilboa”) to *hārōb gilbōa* (“Be parched, o Gilboa”).<sup>281</sup> As Kennedy points out, such an emendation would remove the strange syntactic construction involving a noun in a construct state followed by a prepositional phrase (literally something like “O mountains of in Gilboa”).<sup>282</sup> Again, the proposed emendation is paleographically plausible: it would be very easy for the *hēt* of *hārōb* (*hrwb*) to be misread as a *hē*, and similarly the *mater lectionis wāw* to be misread as the corresponding *yōd* of *hārē* (*hry*). If the *bēt* were read in conjunction with the word following, one would arrive at the extant Hebrew text. This is not at all certain, however.

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<sup>280</sup> Wyatt 2002: 296, n. 203.

<sup>281</sup> Kennedy 1916: 119. The idea was based on a similar suggestion by Klostermann, but Kennedy does not give a full reference.

<sup>282</sup> On an intriguing sidenote, an almost identical syntactic conundrum appears in Ps 9:10 and 10:1, in a context in which the problem disappears if the expression in question is read as a reference to drought—see note 341 for my discussion.

*2.3.4.3 Death Defined as a Main Theme by the Texts Themselves*

In the cursing of Gilboa, the question of death is of course explicitly at the forefront. The question of how (or from what perspective) the drought is to be interpreted in the Aqhat Epic is actually answered by the text itself. Aqhat's earlier speech to Anat on how he, too, will have to undergo death as much as anyone else sets the tone for much of the remaining story, defining it as one of the major problems of the tale, one that the narrative will revolve around:

<i>mt . uḥryt . mh . yqh</i>	A man—what end does he get,
<i>mh . yqh . mt . aṭryt .</i>	what destiny does a man receive at last?
<i>spsg . ysk [l] riš .</i>	Glaze is poured on the head,
<i>ḥrs . l ṣr . qdqdy</i>	and quicklime on the skull.
<i>[ap] mt . kl. amt .</i>	Yea, the death of all I shall die,
<i>w an . mtm. amt</i>	I too shall certainly die.

(CAT 1.17 VI 35-38)

The conflict between life and death (and the hero's realistic attitude towards it) here presages the drought that is later shown *in extenso* by the author. It is thus clear—not only from the perspective of expected theological motifs but also because of the basic narratological thrust of the story—that the text views the sympathetic death of the land as a direct consequence of the death of the protagonist. This is, of course, quite in line with the picture of drought given in the Baal Cycle. As the text clearly associates the lack of moisture and verdure with Baal's absence, the parallel is made quite clear, and even though the god of Death himself is nowhere mentioned in the Aqhat Epic, one could still well say that Baal is in a way “vanquished” (or at least driven away) by Death here, too. More surprising is the role played by Anat in the drama: she is the very one who (indirectly) puts the forces of death into power in the land, thus decreasing the power of her own brother Baal (whether Baal's absence is so to speak “automatic” or provoked by a curse uttered by Danel is not a central issue here, although the former alternative does seem more probable, as Danel seems to discover the drought as a matter of fact before he utters his lines concerning the coming absence of Baal).

*2.3.4.4 Drought as a Natural Result of Death rather than a Consequence of a Dead Storm God in the Aqhat epic*

A noteworthy difference between the drought in the Baal Cycle and that occurring in the Epic of Aqhat is the type of character who has died. In the Baal Cycle, it is the god of fertility, rain and lightning himself who has perished and fallen into the jaws of Death, thus making precipitation impossible in a very concrete way. In the Aqhat Epic, the victim of death is no god but a mortal hero, one who even rebukes Anat's deceptive promises of immortality by referring to

the inevitability of dying. Not only is the dying hero Aqhat a mere mortal—he actively rejects divine immortality when it is offered to him.

What this means is that the connection between death and drought, which in the Baal Cycle would be internally explicable in terms of the story even without taking the general drought-death motif into consideration (because of the absence of the fertility god), represents a purely symbolic connection in the Aqhat story.<sup>283</sup> It would be quite ludicrous to suggest that the young Aqhat would be necessary for rain to fall in the same way that Baal is: rather, we must conclude again that drought is a manifestation of death itself, not simply a natural consequence of the death of the rain-giver. In reference to the Aqhat text, this conclusion is even more apparent than it is when discussing the Baal Cycle. Nature mourns Aqhat just as his father does, and it seems that the powerful (and unnatural) incursion of death in the realm of the living that the murder of the son of a high-ranking individual such as Danel constitutes is in itself enough to curtail the powers of Baal (although the text does not clearly state whether or not this is against his will—partly because of the unclear meaning of the verb *yšrk*).

Death and drought thus share an intrinsic symbolic link in the text. This link could quite possibly have its background in stories such as the Baal-Mot episode, in which the giver of precipitation is himself subjected to Death's power, but the correspondence and metaphor seem to have been severed from this "mechanistic" relationship in the Aqhat story and turned into something deeper. Death means drought: the concepts have become semantically linked to each other, whether the dying one is a weather deity or not. The same is the case in 2 Sam 1:21, where the drought is used almost as a metaphorical consequence of heroic death.

This gives us an indication that interpretations of the Ugaritic literary and religious texts as aetiologies for natural phenomena (such as the dry season in the summer) cannot be taken for granted; of course, there can be no doubt that such interpretations sometimes hit the mark, but we should also be conscious of the fact that drought and death occur together when no such aetiology seems to be necessary. The two phenomena seem to be linked at a deeper metaphorical level; it would be my guess that theological ideas such as those of the Baal-Mot story provided the impetus for this metaphorical association, but this is something we really cannot be certain of. We can, however, say that the drought in the Aqhat Epic cooccurs with the death of the hero without clearly being an aetiology for anything at all. The pairing of the concepts expresses certain ideas the poet (and possibly much of Ugaritic society) had about what death meant and of how the microcosm of human destiny corresponds to the macrocosm of nature.

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<sup>283</sup> Cf. Margalit (1989: 374), who speaks of "innocent blood" having defiled the earth, and thus keeping the rainmaker away.

### 2.3.4.5 *Yatpan and Pughat as Representations of Death/Drought and Life/Precipitation*

Given the clear role of the drought as symbolic correlate of death in the Aqhat story, it is probably no coincidence that Aqhat's sister Pughat, the one who finally avenges him, is described with the epithet *tkmt my*, "she who carries water." Just as she avenges the murder of Aqhat, and thus presumably, in a sense, reverses the power of death in the story, one of her stock epithets literally means that she is a water-carrier, that is, a dispeller of drought. In this context, it might also be fruitful to note another of her epithets, "she who knows the course of the stars" (*yd't hlk kbkbm*), as we learn in the Baal Cycle that the stars were thought of as givers of precipitation.<sup>284</sup> Pughat is thus described as an "anti-death" figure from the start.

There is also the matter of Aqhat's assailant. Rather than murdering Aqhat herself (and thus, presumably, "getting her hands dirty"), Anat enlists a warrior to fight for her, the nomad Yatpan. He is described as *mhr št*, which in the past has been translated in a number of ways (one common example is "the warrior of the lady," taking *št* as a cognate of Arabic *sitt*, a dialectal feminine form of *sayyid*), but has been shown by Margalit to contain an ethnic designation, Sutean.<sup>285</sup> The Suteans were a well-known people of nomadic desert-dwellers, often attested in Egyptian and Akkadian sources (many times, for example, in the Amarna literature). They are possibly also alluded to in the Hebrew Bible (Num 24:17). The nomadic lifestyle of the hired warrior is directly alluded to in the Aqhat text, as Pughat is described in *CAT* 1.19 IV 50-52 as meeting him at the "tents" (*ahlm*) (paralleled by the unclear word *dd*, which also occurs in the Baal Cycle as part of the description of El's abode between the two waters).

It is probably no coincidence that Anat chooses as her agent of violence a person connected with life in the uncultivated desert. Yatpan is a dweller in the verdure-less, dead land, an ideal person to symbolically personify death. The desert is an area outside of the ordered confines of society, outside the realm of the cultivated land. In the desert, drought is always in power, and it therefore becomes, by extension, a symbol of death. The lack of moisture which is the normal state in Yatpan's home regions is also visited upon the abode of the protagonists as a result of Aqhat's death.

The two central characters of the end of the story as it is preserved to us, Pughat and Yatpan, are therefore polar opposites when seen from the perspective of their relationship to death and drought. One of them is a bringer of water, a knower of astral irrigation and an avenger of wrongful death, while the other is a dweller in the land of heat and drought, outside the sedentary and agricultural sphere, and a bringer of wrongful death. The poet has used drought

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<sup>284</sup> See *CAT* 1.3 II 40-41, where Anat washes herself with water that "the Stars pour on her" (so Smith [*UNP*]: 109).

<sup>285</sup> Margalit 1989: 338.

and precipitation as potent symbols or metaphors using which to paint these two characters and their respective roles.

#### 2.3.4.6 Drought as a Consequence of the Illness of King Kirta

The Epic of Kirta also seems to include a passage where severe drought appears as a result of a contact with death. In this case, the problem is not that Kirta has actually died, but he has entered a death-like state, being stricken with a terrible illness, making him unable to rule his kingdom as he should. It appears that this has the effect of stopping the life-giving rains of Baal from falling, in a way quite reminiscent of what was found in the Aqhat passages.

In CAT 1.16 III, a badly damaged column, the preserved text seems to describe how someone (the verb indicates a masculine subject) tells someone else to search earth<sup>286</sup> and sky, and the bounds of the earth for Baal's life-giving rains. Especially interesting in this context is the use of the parallelistic expression *l ksm mhyt* (possibly meaning something like "to the limits of the watery regions"),<sup>287</sup> a turn of phrase that closely resembles the description of the liminal "good land of the wilderness" (*n'my arš dbr*) and "coast plain of death" (*šhlmmt*) in which Baal is found dead in the Baal Cycle. This gives us an inkling that the sphere of death is once again fixed in the author's mind and provides a backdrop for our interpretation of the passage.

The text does not clearly state what the unnamed recipient of the speech is to search for, but it does give an idea. Directly following the order to "search" comes what appears to be a sort of eulogy to Baal's rains, and painful lament over the lack of fertility:

<i>tr. arš . w šmm</i>	'Search through earth and sky
<i>sb . l qšm . arš</i>	go round the reaches of the earth,
<i>l ksm . mhyt .</i>	to the limits of the watery regions!
<i>‘n l arš . mṯr . b' l</i>	Look to the earth for the rain of Baal,
<i>w l šd . mṯr . ‘ly</i>	and to the field for the rain of the Highest One!
<i>n'm . l arš . mṯr . b' l</i>	Sweet for the earth is the rain of Baal,
<i>w l šd . mṯr . ‘ly</i>	and for the field, the rain of the Highest One,
<i>n'm . l ḥṯt . b 'n</i>	sweet for the wheat in the furrow,
<i>bm . nrt . ksmm</i>	for the spelt in the plowland,
<i>‘l . tlmk 'trṯrt</i>	for the crowns (?) in the ... <sup>288</sup>

<sup>286</sup> Ugaritic *arš*, which—as pointed out by Wyatt (2002: 231, n. 250)—could of course just as well mean "underworld." This would yet again point to the centrality of the realm of death and dying to the passage.

<sup>287</sup> Thus Gibson 1978: 98; a similar rendering is found in Caquot, Sznycer and Herdner 1974: 560. Following them, Wyatt (2002:231) translates "to the edge of the abyss". Dissenting views are given by Driver (1956:43) and Greenstein (*UNP*:35) who both interpret the words as referring to some kind of cereals.

<sup>288</sup> The meaning (and exact reading) of this line is highly unclear. An agricultural reference is plausible, but not certain. Reading follows Greenstein (*UNP*): 36.

<i>nšu . riš . ḥrṯm</i>	The plowmen raise their heads,
<i>l ẓr . ʿbd . dgn</i>	upwards, those who work the corn:
<i>kly ḥm . b mʿdnm</i> <sup>289</sup>	Spent is the food their storage,
<i>kly yn . b ḥmthm .</i>	spent is the wine in their skins,
<i>k[l]y šmn b [...]</i>	spent is the oil in ...

(CAT 1.16 III 2-16)

It seems not unreasonable to suggest that the thing the speaker wants someone else to search for is signs of rain, precipitation and fertility. The passage would then form a clear parallel to Danel's tour of his grounds in the Aqhat text and possibly also to Shapshu's search of the parched furrows in the Baal Cycle. This sort of "survey" of the stricken land seems to be a sort of *topos* of Ilmilku's stories, and one cannot discount the possibility that this is one of his more personal stylistic touches.

#### 2.3.4.7 Death Defined as the "Villain" in Kirta

A pointer to this "sympathetic natural disaster" being directly connected to the idea of death is given in column V, in which El (unsuccessfully) asks the other gods in the divine council to drive away Kirta's illness. Again and again he puts the question to them: "Who among the gods will drive out the illness / drive off the disease?"—and again and again he gets no answer.<sup>290</sup> When all else fails, he decides to solve the problem himself, and creates a female golem-like being out of clay named Sha'ṭaqat, "she who makes [illness] pass away."<sup>291</sup> El sends his creation towards Kirta, whom she subsequently cures. The words which are of interest to the present discussion occur when El gives Sha'ṭaqat her mission to drive away Kirta's illness:

<i>[m]t . dm . ḥt .</i>	Mot, be weak!
<i>š'ṭqt dt li</i>	Sha'ṭaqat, be strong!

(CAT 1.16 VI 1-2)

<sup>289</sup> The reading of this word follows Greenstein (*UNP*): 36, as does the final line.

<sup>290</sup> This description of the high god asking for help from his council and not receiving is not a unicum in Ancient Near Eastern poetic storytelling: something quite similar occurs in the second tablet of *Enuma Elish*, when Anshar tries to get someone to go out in battle against Tiamat (see especially lines 120-125).

<sup>291</sup> The word is probably a singular feminine formation from the causative Š-stem of the verb 'ṭq, "to pass away" (Hebrew *ʿātaq*, Akkadian *etēqu*). For an example of a quite differing interpretation of the name (although based on the same verb), see Dietrich 2007: 116-118, who renders it "[die] Vortreffliche" or "die (alle Götter) übertrifft."

Later on (when the actual healing occurs) the same expressions are used:

<i>mt . dm . ḥt .</i> <sup>292</sup>	Mot is weak,
<i>š<sup>c</sup> tqt dm . lan .</i>	Sha <sup>c</sup> taqat is strong!

(CAT 1.16 VI 13-14)

This shows that (in the mind of the author of the text at least) the illness and subsequent problems experienced by Kirta are fixed in the semantic domain of death. Thus the connection to the drought serves the same theological and narratological purpose as in the Aqhat story. When Sha<sup>c</sup>taqat dispels Kirta's disease, the text says that she "opens his throat for eating," using the word *npš*, whose well-known double meaning of "throat" and "life" gives an ideal expression to the victory of the power of Death (whose throat or gullet is itself enormous and all-swallowing). The combination of these factors help drive home the message that death is the problem, thus creating a thematic link with the passage that seemingly describes drought and famine. Once again (just as in the Aqhat episode) the link between drought and death is here purely a symbolic one. It is suggested that Baal and his rains are absent, but the one subjected to the powers of death is not the Storm God himself but a mere mortal. It is the role of death itself in the story that brings on the drought: the battling weather deity here becomes little more than a symbol. This again reinforces the fact that drought in these texts represents more than the result of a Baal-Mot type story with a dying or missing weather deity: it is a metaphorical expression of death.

When Kirta's terrible disease is finally vanquished, the words used create another link with a similar text of the Old Testament. The Ugaritic text says of Sha<sup>c</sup>taqat:

<i>npšh . l ḥm . tpth</i>	She opens his throat for eating,
<i>brlth . ltrm</i>	his gullet for dining.

(CAT 1.16 VI 11-12)

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<sup>292</sup> The verb *ḥtt* could possibly be somehow related to *ḥt*<sup>c</sup>, the verb used in the Refrain of the Burning Sun to describe Mot's crushing of his victims while swallowing them, in which case the present attestation could very well constitute a piece of intertextual play with that text (even if the words are etymologically unrelated, the phonetic association could still be valid as a type of intertextual word-play). Note also how both passages use forms of the verb *l'y* (albeit in seemingly opposite senses). If these connections are correct, this snippet of text in which El adjures Mot to be weak and Sha<sup>c</sup>taqat to defeat him can be viewed as a sort of magical apotropaism intended to ward off the very effects normally associated with Death when he is, so to speak, in his prime. The Hebrew cognate of the verb *ḥtt* also occurs in verse 4 of Jeremiah 14 (the poem of drought discussed in section 3.2.2).

Here, the defeat of the disease is associated with the return of the ability to consume food. The connection between inability to eat and death-like states is also found in Ps 102:5 (discussed in section 2.2.4 of this book). Psalm 102 is a text that very clearly uses the motifs of dryness, drought and hotness to describe the rule of death, and thus such a combination (drought/heat and lack of appetite) is an element which Kirta and Psalm 102 have in common.<sup>293</sup> The burning/wilting/parched state associated with death implies lack of the appetite needed to eat and gives yet another metaphorical background to the text's earlier talk of the food being used up, etc. Instead of symbols of life (food, water, rain, wine), Kirta gets those of death: heat, drought and lack of appetite, in much the same way as does the speaker in Psalm 102.

On an interesting side-note, Psalm 102 is also one of the two occasions in the MT where the word *tēmūtā* occurs (in verse 21, which speaks of *bēnē tēmūtā*, “the children of death” or “those who are condemned to die”). This may, as we have seen, have been the word used in the *Vorlage* of the Lucianic variant text of 2 Sam 1:21. It is not impossible that this word was thought to be somehow conceptually connected to this sort of description of a death-like state, facilitating its introduction into the text of 2 Sam. This is of course an uncertain suggestion, however.

The association between the sun and death is also alluded to in the Kirta Epic. Much earlier in the text, the warriors of Hubur (symbolically referred to as “bulls” and “gazelles”) predict the coming illness of the king and talk of his death, stating that Kirta will “reach the sunset” (*CAT* 1.15 V 18-20).<sup>294</sup> This is used as a metaphor for dying. Thus the Kirta text shares with the Baal Cycle the combination of the motifs sun-drought-death, and again the heat and the underworld (both connected to the sun) are used as combined symbolic representations of dying.

In Kirta and Aqhat, as well as in the biblical texts here discussed, the drought sets in as a result of the power of death—not only because he has swallowed and brought the weather god under his sway, but because drought was seemingly associated with his very being. There is no god that dies in these texts, but the killing heat remains and can be “avenged” by as human a figure as the hero's sister. Drought and the death of a great hero seem to be intrinsically connected on a both literary and theological level.<sup>295</sup>

<sup>293</sup> If the analysis of Ps 102:5 and its use of the verb *škh* to mean “be hot, parched” (see the special study in section 2.2.4) is accepted, this combination occurs *within a single poetic line*—and the “hotness” in question is in fact shown to be the very reason for the Psalmist's inability to consume his food.

<sup>294</sup> A similar literary usage may be present in *CAT* 1.16 I 36-37, where sunset also is given as the appropriate time at which to announce the feast that is to “cover up” Kirta's illness.

<sup>295</sup> Yet another instance of this connection may perhaps be found in the sixth tablet of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, in which Ishtar demands (and is granted) the Bull of Heaven to be used against Gilgamesh because the young king has slighted her in love. The description



The line between literary technique and theology seems here to be a thin one indeed.

#### 2.3.4.8 Genre, Poetics and Categories of Drought

Three passages from Aqhat, Kirta and 2 Sam have now been studied from the standpoint of their use of the drought motif as a symbol or metaphor for heroic death. In this context, it may be fruitful to say something about the question of the genres of the three textual entities here discussed. Two of them are identical in this respect: both the passages from Aqhat and 2 Samuel 1 are examples of the genre of the lament, which of course lends them a common horizon of interpretation (and of course is part of the reason for the connection between them being made in the first place). One could also say that these two texts are laments within a greater context of heroic epic. The passage from Kirta, on the other hand, is not a lament in any normal sense of the word, and neither are the drought texts from the Baal Cycle with which they have been compared above. These similarities and differences probably have some bearing on the way in which the drought in these passages is to be understood.

As has been shown, there is a fundamental difference between the “theologically motivated” drought in the great myth of the Baal Cycle and the more poetic use of the drought motif found in the laments of Aqhat and 2 Samuel 1. It is quite probable that the use of lack of verdure as a poetic image of sorrow over the dead heroes constitutes a sort of repoeticalization of the kind of drought we find in the Baal Cycle. As Marjo Korpel has pointed out,<sup>296</sup> the Hebrew corpus possesses the ability to reinterpret old mythological descriptions of divine action in terms of more human events, and such may very well be the case here.

In the Kirta passage, however, the drought is much more than a poetic device. Here it seems to be noted in the divine world itself (as the speaker of the passage may very well be someone in the divine council), and there is no lament of which the drought may be a standardized part. This is perhaps not surprising, as there is a very real matter of divine conflict within the text, because of Athirat's antipathy towards the titular character. In the Aqhat passage, too, there seems to be no firm border between the use of the drought motif as an image of ritualized lamentation and the actual occurrence of it in nature: the text does, after all, describe the drought as literally being there. Only in 2 Samuel it seems

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of the Bull in lines 104-111 (the land of Uruk having to live on empty husks or chaffs for seven years, etc.) have led some (e.g. King 2009: 23) to see the terrible monster as some sort of personification of drought itself. When the Bull is subsequently killed, Enkidu is sentenced to die by the gods, thereby, of course, causing the death of a hero. If this example does indeed belong here, the order between the drought and the hero dying seems to be reversed: killing the drought-monster leads to the death of a hero.

<sup>296</sup> Korpel 1990: 635.

that it is merely a rhetorical device: there is no sign in the text of Mount Gilboa actually being bereft of rain.

In the context of this discussion of genre it might also be necessary to assess the idea that the possibly seasonal drought shown in the final part of the Baal Cycle is somehow meteorologically different from the drought that occurs in these more “epic” passages. One might, for example, argue that what the Baal-Mot episode talks of is the “normal” drought that comes and returns with the passage of the seasons, whereas the drought in Aqhat, Kirta and the Gilboa text is so to speak extraordinary, being the result of a break in the normal function of the world (and the story). To this I would answer that such a distinction seems hypertechnical, if not entirely gratuitous. There is nothing in the texts themselves to support such a clear-cut distinction: no part of the Baal Cycle, for example, clearly stipulates that the drought in that text is somehow more “normal” than any other. If the drought described was thought of in terms of the usual workings of nature or as a sudden, terrible and unusual affliction is not easy to know, and even if we do acknowledge some sort of seasonal pattern to be present in the Baal Cycle and not in the other texts (and such may very well be the case) there is still absolutely nothing to prevent borrowings of motifs between these two traditions and poetic contexts, thus making a distinction between seasonal and extraordinary drought hard to sustain. In all the cases here discussed (Baal-Mot, Aqhat, Kirta, 2 Samuel) there is a clear association and correlation between drought and the power of death: dividing this further seems to be a precarious exercise.<sup>297</sup>

#### *2.3.4.9 Conclusions*

The passages here studied from the Aqhat and Kirta texts appear to show death as the cause of drought—the drought is not simply the result of an absent weather deity but is conceptually associated with dying. The parallel with the lament on Mount Gilboa shows the idea of drought as a result of heroic death persisting into the Hebrew Bible. Even though the character of personified Death is not as prominent in these passages as in the Baal Cycle, the results of his influence are similar, and the texts themselves point out that death is a central problem, making this a natural frame of interpretation for the drought passages in Aqhat and Kirta. The characters of Pughat and Yatpan are themselves associated with the patterns of precipitation and drought.

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<sup>297</sup> There are, however, isolated instances in the Hebrew Bible where I believe a different strand of tradition concerning drought to be present (although intertwined with a concordant to the drought-death motif); see, for example, my discussion of the fourteenth chapter of Jeremiah in section 3.2.2.

### 3. Biblical Focus

#### 3.1 Narrative Old Testament Literature

##### *3.1.1 Death and Drought in the Ideological Battle on Mount Carmel and the Survival of Rain-Ideology into Deuteronomistic Theology*

In discussing the relationship between the conceptions of drought and death in ancient Israelite religion in relation to its Northwest Semitic contemporaries and predecessors, and to the “micropolytheist” intermediary stages which must have existed in pre-exilic times, there is one text that stands out almost as a manifesto of this (perceived) distinction. This is the description of the prophet Elijah and the great drought in 1 Kings 17 and its culmination in the ideological battle with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel in 1 Kings 18. Here the drought becomes the very test used by the author to prove YHWH’s superiority over Baal. In essence: what was shown in the Baal Cycle to be one of the most central problems to be addressed by Canaanite religion is used in the same way by the apologists of the Israelite faith.

In this text almost all the main objects of this study are found together: drought, multiple cases of death and the direct confrontation of Israelite and Canaanite reactions to these concepts. Thus, the text forms an important piece of ideological self-definition concerning the subjects mentioned.

A primary question in analysing this text of course concerns the very identity of the god with whose priests Elijah is contending. A common stance is to regard the “Baal” of the text as being a representation of the Tyrian Melqart.<sup>298</sup> One of the main arguments supporting this idea is the fact that the Carmel episode can be seen as a part of the larger context of the story of Jezebel, princess of Tyre: the prophets, to be sure, are explicitly connected with the queen in verse 18:19, where it is said that they “eat at her table.” However, I do not believe this to mean that it can be conclusively argued that Melqart is the god hiding behind the designation “Baal” in the present text. Indeed, it is stated in the verse immediately preceding that the house of Ahab has started worshipping the *bē’ālīm*, a plural form indicating that more than one divine figure could definitely be involved here. Thus, I would regard Melqart as a plausible but by no means certain candidate for the “Baal” of the Carmel episode.

##### *3.1.1.1 Life/Death and the Identity of God as the Fundamental Oppositions in the Carmel Story*

The story of Elijah and the great drought deals with two basic binary oppositions. The first of these is the most apparent one: the text describes and processes the dichotomy between drought and fertility. The drought is brought on, seemingly at the behest of the God of Israel, at the beginning of chapter 17,

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<sup>298</sup> Thus, for example, de Vaux 1971: 239 and Prentice 1923: 36-37.

and gives immediate results in the form of famine, lack of bread etc. It is ended, also through the action of YHWH, when prompted by the prayers of Elijah atop Mount Carmel. The other opposition addressed by the text is that between the two gods YHWH and Baal, interpreted by the author as the bitterest of enemies and representing religious systems fundamentally at odds with each other. This opposition is resolved by the author at the same point as that between drought and fertility, and indeed, the (violent) resolution of the conflict between the followers of Baal and YHWH comes about as a direct consequence of the return of rain to the land.

Yet, as has been the case in other texts studied thus far, the conflict between rain and drought is not simply one of meteorological significance. I believe that the connection between drought and death is attested even in this comparatively late and ideologically “purist” text. One thing that points to this is the way in which the actions of the Baalist prophets on Mount Carmel are described. An explicit reference is made to the self-mutilating practices sometimes attested in the worship of such gods as Tammuz/Dumuzi and Baal (those sometimes described as “dying and rising” deities). As is well known, descriptions of actions such as these occur in the Baal Cycle, during the mourning rites performed by Anat and El in response to the death of Baal.<sup>299</sup> The descent of Baal into the netherworld (as well as its subsequent negation and his return to power) is therefore possibly directly alluded to by the author.<sup>300</sup>

One can, of course, ask whether it is plausible that the author possessed anything more than the most superficial knowledge of Baalist mythology, but it would make very great sense for the subtext to be one in which the Baal prophets interpret the drought in terms of Baal’s descent to the netherworld and the rule of Mot over the earth. In the drought, they see the concrete manifestation of the mythological prototypes found in texts such as the Baal Cycle. In that text, the mourning rites are followed by the vengeful actions of Anat, the rescue of Baal’s body and, finally, the restoration of his power through the intervention of Shapshu, the very means by which the deadly drought came about. The author of the Carmel story probably pictures the Baal prophets expecting a similar cyclical turn of events—one in which the death of Baal and the resulting death of the land are turned around into “life”: rain and fertility. Thus, the rites of self-mutilation and mourning probably allude to the very connection between drought and death that occurs in the Ugaritic texts. But in the religious polemic created by the author, the message is clearly that the Baalists are wrong, and that the cosmological assumptions underlying their actions are equally erroneous: in this text, Baal turns out to be powerless, and

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<sup>299</sup> The fact that the Carmel episode is construed as a deliberate polemic against the ideology inherent in the Baal Cycle has been suitably highlighted for example by Bronner (1968: 139 *et passim*), whose overtly confessional view of the “wondrous” attempts to “liberate” (p. 49) the people from Baalism needs of course to be discounted.

<sup>300</sup> The importance of the theme of death in the Carmel episode has been well put forward by Hauser (1990).

the resulting massacre of the Baal prophets becomes a very obvious representation of his inability to maintain the lives of his worshippers.

A very clear definition of the role of the opposition between life and death and its importance to the Carmel story is found immediately prior to it, in the episode in 17:17-24, in which Elijah restores a woman's dead son to life. These verses state that the death involved is both caused and negated by YHWH himself (both of these ideas being clearly articulated by Elijah in verses 19-21). The woman seems to think that the "man of God" is the cause of her son dying: she believes his presence to be the reason for her misfortune (and therefore, implicitly, that God himself has made it happen) but later praises Elijah using the same title ("man of God") when the son is again brought to life.<sup>301</sup> YHWH is explicitly stated to be the lord of both life and death,<sup>302</sup> and this little "prologue" to the ideological battle almost seems like a microscopic pre-definition of the dichotomies that the main episode seeks to illustrate.<sup>303</sup>

Another indication of death being a main theme of the story is supplied at the very beginning of the drought episode itself. In 17:1, when Elijah predicts (or threatens?) that no precipitation will fall unless he says so, he uses the expression *'im yihyê ... ʔal ûmāṭār*, a collocation highly reminiscent of the "cursing" or "mourning" expressions concerning nature found in the *Epic of Aqhat* and in 2 Sam 1:21 at the death of important heroic figures.<sup>304</sup> These pieces of text also use combinations of terms similar to these (in the case of 2 Sam 1:21, exactly the same terms) in describing the lack of rainfall in connection with death. These intertextual references help to secure "death" as one of the main problems treated in the text.

The story of Elijah and the great drought is thus an unusually clear example of how Israelite religion reinterpreted the ancient Northwest Semitic opposition between death/drought and life/rainfall, using it as an ideological construction of emergent Yahwist monotheism/monolatry. In both Ugaritic and Israelite texts, we find the juxtaposition and binary opposition of drought and fertility, but this is cast in a radically different light. In the Elijah story this old opposition has been reinterpreted in a programmatically (proto-)monotheist fashion: no longer is the conflict one between the ruler god and an opposing divine power, but both drought/death and the subsequent release from it are tools of the Israelite God, tools which he uses in order to manifest his sovereignty. When YHWH finally lets the rain come at the end of 1 Kings 18, it is not because of any cosmic struggle he has won, as Baal does against Mot: the struggle is within the human worshippers themselves, and the power is all of the time in the hand of the deity.

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<sup>301</sup> Cohn 1982: 336.

<sup>302</sup> Fritz 2003: 184.

<sup>303</sup> Sweeney 2007: 214-215, who also connects the "dead son" narrative with the ancient motifs of death and life, interpreted as drought and fertility.

<sup>304</sup> See the discussion in sections 2.3.4.1 and 2.3.4.2.

I believe that Hauser is quite right in his view<sup>305</sup> that the opposition between life and death is one of the most central ones in the Carmel story. However, I disagree with his conclusion that the difference between Baal and YHWH as presented by the text is the fact that one of them repeatedly dies and the other is challenged by death but overcomes it. Rather, the message of the text seems to be that the “death/drought” in the story is subsumed within the power of YHWH himself,<sup>306</sup> whereas in Baalist mythology it is hypostasized as a separate god to be fought and (temporarily) defeated. YHWH is not “challenged” by death at all: he is the lord of death as well as life.<sup>307</sup> Therein lies the opposition between Yahwist and Baalist mythology that the author wants to highlight.

The connection between the destructive drought and the cosmological assumptions of Baalist ideology is made apparent in the text itself. When Elijah taunts the prophets of Baal with the suggestion that their god is away on an errand or traveling, it is difficult not to associate this with the idea of the descent of the Ugaritic Baal (and, for that matter, of the Tyrian Melqart) into the netherworld, especially as this comment is connected to the ritual mutilation which in the Baal Cycle relates to this very event.<sup>308</sup> One could also note the fact that “going away” is used in the Ugaritic texts as a metaphor for dying: this is the expression (root *tb*<sup>c</sup>) used to describe the death of the hero’s wife at the beginning of the Kirta epic (*CAT* 1.14 I 14). Also, one could very well regard the talk of Baal going away as a reference to the idea of his entering the uncultivated land, the liminal zone of the edge of the wilderness, which the authors of both the Baal Cycle and *CAT* 1.12 say is the place where Baal falls.<sup>309</sup> Elijah points out that, according to Baalist mythology, Baal has left the sphere of the living and entered another ontological realm, from which he cannot

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<sup>305</sup> Hauser 1990: 11-14.

<sup>306</sup> “In the following narratives the anticipated drought is understood as not being a natural disaster but as a punishment caused by YHWH because of the inappropriate behavior of the king. The whole cycle of narratives is thus placed under the will of God.” (Fritz 2003: 182).

<sup>307</sup> Note that Elijah states clearly in 17:20 that YHWH is the cause of the death of the landlady’s son. Thus, this can hardly be described as a challenge by death against the divine power and a hypostasized Death “seizing” the boy (thus Hauser 1990: 80). Also, verse 18:1 gives the distinct impression that the drought is all the time under the control of the Israelite God and is used as a sort of test (although this verse might be of a later date, see Fritz 2003: 188).

<sup>308</sup> I find this idea much more likely than de Vaux’s suggestion (1971: 246-247) that the “travel” refer to an earthly journey (based on descriptions of the Tyrian Heracles) and that his “sleep” and having to “awaken” should be connected with early morning chants. Such references would make much less sense in the context: ritual mutilation would hardly be required on account of Baal/Melqart travelling to another country or falling asleep during the night.

<sup>309</sup> The idea that Baal’s “going away” could be a reference to the liminal wilderness of the Baal Cycle was mentioned to me by Elisabet Nord (p.c.); I would like to thank her for this suggestion.

exercise any power over the world of the living, such as manifesting his weather god characteristics and combating drought: note the direct opposition between Baal's sojourn in the netherworld and his drought-combating powers many times alluded to in the Baal Cycle and seen earlier in this study! Elijah (or rather, the author's version of Elijah) seems to mean that the very ideas underlying the Baalist ideology undermine Baal's power. To put it bluntly: Baal has left the building.<sup>310</sup>

Roland de Vaux points out that the notion of Baal's "being asleep" and having to be awakened is probably a reference to the title *mqm ʾlm* ("awakener of the god") and the ceremonies connected with that concept,<sup>311</sup> but in contrast to him I would see in this expression a reference to the death of the god: Elijah taunts the Baalists with their god being asleep because Baal was, in fact, believed sometimes to enter the supreme sleep of death itself. The fact that the "Baal" of the Tyrians was conceived of as dying and/or disappearing in a manner reminiscent of that described at Ugarit is shown by the well-known parallel between the name of Jezebel herself and the (probably cultic) call of *ʿēyya zabulu* ("where is the Prince?") occurring in the Baal Cycle during Baal's sojourn in the underworld.<sup>312</sup> The god is "away" and "asleep" in the belief-

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<sup>310</sup> A similar but subtly different interpretation of the religio-historical background of the Carmel episode is provided by Parker (1989). He sees the main comparanda in the Kirta text, most specifically *CAT* 1.16 III, where someone (El?) asks someone else to search for the fertility provided by the absent Baal, and in the Hittite "absent god" myth of Telepinu (see esp. p. 296). This view is in accordance with mine on a general level, although I regard the Telepinu tradition as being somewhat different than the drought/death motif that I believe to be in evidence here (see section 3.2.2.1 for a discussion the Telepinu text in relationship to Jeremiah 14). Parker does not see the clear "death" motif in the text that I do, but appears to regard the absence of the storm god in more general terms. He also states (pp. 294-295) that the Kirta passage does not deal with the death of Baal; this is indeed so, but, as I argue in my section on *CAT* 1.16 III (see sections 2.3.4.6 and 2.3.4.7), the concept of death is very much at the forefront as a motivator of drought in Kirta as well, a circumstance made even more conspicuous by the fact that the one in moral danger is *not* a divine granter of precipitation but a mere human. It is quite correct, as Parker notes (1989: 295), that Elijah appears to mock the theological traditions connected with the Baal-type storm god, but again I do not quite agree with the "absent god" myth being the ideal *comparandum*. Of course, the conception of a deity being missing (which in itself leads to drought) is closely related to the more death-centered ideas I believe to be in evidence in the Ugaritic texts, and the two motifs are easily combined; yet, even in the Elijah text, death is clearly at the forefront (the dead son of the widow!), which makes me think that a little more than mere "absence" (or at least a very special form of it) may be what is being spoken of here. A connection between the Elijah story and the motifs of *CAT* 1.16 III was also suggested by Schwab (1987: 335-337).

<sup>311</sup> de Vaux 1971: 247.

<sup>312</sup> The expression (in full *iy aliyn bʿl / iy zbl bʿl arš*, "where is Victorious Baal? / Where is Prince Baal of the earth?") occurs in *CAT* 1.6 IV 4-5, as part of the lines in

system of the Baal prophets, and they act accordingly, using the ritual maiming techniques that the text seems to regard as standard procedure, but Baal *still* fails to manifest his power. He does not bring the rain which YHWH later showers down as a result of Elijah's acts of worship, and thus he is shown by the author to be powerless to overcome both drought and death. The drought is sent by YHWH and taken away by YHWH, and the author seems to say that the conflict motif described in the Baal Cycle is not real: drought is not the result of the absence of Baal (and therefore, by implication, the rule of Mot or some comparable figure), nor can he be resuscitated to bring about release from it. Both "life" and "death" are in the hands of the sovereign, single God, and the Carmel episode thus becomes a thorough mockery of the most central tenets of "Canaanite" mythology. The death of the land is conquered not through the victory and resurrection of Baal but through the divine will of the Israelite God.

Two different ideological interpretations of the same drought/death-idea are therefore contrasted to each other in the story. The central problem of the "death of the land" is made into a test-case for the question of divine power. This in itself shows the importance of the concept in the religious culture of the time. The question here is not one of seasons changing but of the fundamental issue of power over the universe. Drought is the manifestation of death, not only in a seasonal sense but as an organizing principle of world-wide power. It is quite possible to imagine a similar state of affairs in the Ugaritic texts: that the statements about drought and fertility are not exclusively seasonal but deeper still: they are markers of superhuman power. Whether or not the interchange between drought and rain found in the Baal Cycle is to be interpreted as an allegory for the changing seasons of the year is, viewed in this perspective, perhaps less important than it might seem at first glance.

The Carmel episode ends not only with the slaughter of the Baalist prophets and the coming of the rain, but also with a communal (and reduplicated) exclamation of *YHWH hū' hā'ēlōhīm* ("YHWH is [the only (?)] God"). This statement is the highpoint towards which the author has been striving. He has endeavored to show that the Israelite God is lord over death and drought, over life and fertility, using much of the same motifs that occur in Ugaritic poetry. He has even staged a direct contest between YHWH and Baal concerning the power over death/drought (two concepts which are very clearly construed as two sides of the same coin) in which the God of Israel has, in effect, beaten Baal at his own game.<sup>313</sup> Baal was "away" or "sleeping," but this was not (as in Ugaritic

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which Shapshu is instructed to search for Baal and the dried up state of the furrows is recounted, discussed in section 2.2.5. Note the prominence of the drought motif in that piece of text as well as in the anti-Baalist polemic of the Carmel episode. The interpretation of the name Jezebel as a version of the call *iy zbl* was first made by Virolleaud (1935a: 185, n. 1).

<sup>313</sup> A similar mocking reference to non-Yahwistic cults not fulfilling their obligation to remove the powers of drought can be found in Isa 1:29-30, where the author compares the people with the sacred terebinths (*'ēlīm*) and gardens (*gannôt*) of the Canaanite



mythology) a temporary descent into the world of death: in this story it is a permanent state. Baal is not there at all. It is quite fitting that YHWH's acceptance of Elijah's offerings is described not as a verbal communication but as what almost looks like a classical storm theophany: "fires of YHWH" fall down and set the offering ablaze. This lightning-imagery, in connection with the coming of the rain, in essence replicates what we read about the ruling theophany of Baal in the Ugaritic texts, when Athirat says the following to her husband, El:

<i>wn ap . ʿdn . mtrh</i>	And now, the time of his rain
<i>bʿl . yʿdn .</i>	let Baal appoint,
<i>ʿdn . tkt . b glt</i>	the time of the chariot in the storm,
<i>w tn . qlh . b ʿrpt</i>	of giving out his voice from the clouds,
<i>šrh . arš . brqm</i>	of his letting loose lightning-bolts at the earth! <sup>314</sup>

(CAT 1.4 V 6-9)

In the Carmel text, too, fire falls from the sky and the rain is finally seen, but the one who "decides the time of his rain" is another deity entirely.

### 3.1.1.2 The Carmel Story in Deuteronomistic Context and its Literary History

The question of the dating and sequential growth of the Elijah episode is of course a very complicated one. In the literature, one finds widely diverging views on the subject, some scholars considering the text to be very old indeed (perhaps as old as the events it purports to portray) and others assigning a much later date to it. One of the reasons making the time-frame so vague is the curious (and in the context of traditional Old Testament exegesis almost contradictory) combination of thematic elements found in it. On the one hand, the text seems to drive home a very classical Deuteronomist message: the necessity of worshipping a single God, the condemnation of the "Northern" and "foreign" cultic usages and ideology which are explicitly connected with Ahab and Jezebel. On the other hand, the text makes a very deliberate and artful use of thematic imagery and ideological strands usually connected with ancient Northwest Semitic

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gods—that will dry up and wilt, which is, of course, quite the opposite of the ideal. There, as in the Carmel episode, the author seems to be mocking the perceived inability of the other gods to combat drought—at least on a metaphorical level. It is interesting to note that the verse that follows (v. 31) speaks of the "strong one" and his works being burned (root *bʿr*), which, of course, fits well not only with the language of war or sacrifice but also of destructive, solar heat, as seen in a number of instances in this study (the clearest example being Mal 3:19-21).

<sup>314</sup> My translation follows the view of Loretz (1996), that the word *tkt* is to be interpreted as a loan from the Hurrian *šukitu*, meaning "chariot," thus referring to the well known image of the chariot of the storm god. See also the similar translation of the first two lines in Mettinger 2001: 60.

religion of the type exemplified by the texts from Ugarit, often regarded as very archaic parts of the Israelite religious material.

It is a rather common stance that the Elijah episode was originally made up of a number of smaller, disparate stories, which were later brought together and made into a coherent whole. Thus we find little bits and pieces such as the description of the food given to Elijah at Wadi Cherith and the story of the sick son connected to form a larger narrative.<sup>315</sup> Even the contest on Carmel itself is sometimes argued to be lacking in unity. However, I would agree with Cogan,<sup>316</sup> who considers the attempts to divide the Carmel combat into two different layers connected to (a) drought and (b) contest over godhood "hypercritical."<sup>317</sup> The drought is undoubtedly the test case used to determine the identity of the "true" god of the text: without the drought as a backdrop, the contest would become rather devoid of meaning. It is quite possible that different authorial layers can be found in the Carmel narrative, but I do not believe that these two themes stand in necessary contrast to each other. If one wishes to search for layers in the text, it is rather to the images of the deity and the theology concerning him—as well as in the relation to the surrounding context—that one must look.

And here one does find discrepancies. For example, the relationship between Elijah and Ahab does not seem quite coherent in the body of the text. In the context of the surrounding Deuteronomistic history, Ahab is of course presented as very much of a "bad guy," and Elijah is indeed presented as his foe, representing the condemning hand of the Israelite God, who brings the terrible drought on the land.<sup>318</sup> But at the end of the story, in the concluding verses of chapter 18, Elijah and the king appear almost to be allies, with Elijah becoming a sort of herald of the king. It is hard not to see a later "Deuteronomized" layer in the version in which Ahab is an outright foe of Elijah. A possible interpretation of this is that the final part of chapter 18, describing the sacrifice and the miraculous rain, belong to an earlier textual layer (or at least tradition), in which the surrounding story of the great drought and the context were not yet present but Elijah's "magical" rainmaking was the focus.<sup>319</sup> Also, despite the fact that the author seems to have some rather intimate knowledge of "Baalist" material (which could be used as an argument that the text is of archaic origin),

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<sup>315</sup> See Hentschel 1984: 104-105; Cogan 2000: 431.

<sup>316</sup> Cogan 2000: 445-446.

<sup>317</sup> Such a division is, for example, made by White (1997:30-31), who regards the opposition between the two results of Elijah's intercession (the fire and the rain) as pointing to different textual layers. A division between the drought story and the ordeal on Carmel is also made by Steck (1968:78-83), who does, however, see both textual entities as being quite old, going back to the time of Ahab.

<sup>318</sup> I would like to thank Reinhard Kratz (p.c.) for valuable discussions concerning the history of the Carmel text.

<sup>319</sup> A possibility also hinted at by Smend (1975: 541).

he presents it with a rather sharp (proto-)monotheist<sup>320</sup> twist that becomes apparent in 18:21. Here Elijah asks: “If YHWH is [the] God, follow him, and if Baal, follow him.” This dichotomy—the idea that (real) godhood should belong exclusively to either YHWH or Baal—would probably have come across as rather strange to the actual 9<sup>th</sup>-century worshippers of the *bē’ālīm*. In the same vein, it is difficult to imagine that actual prophets of Baal (or, for that matter, Jezebel herself) would claim that Baal were the *only* deity in a period when even Israel seems in many respects to have been polytheist (or at the most “oligotheist,” as evidenced in the Kuntilet Ajrud-inscriptions, at Elephantine and in other places).<sup>321</sup> The demand of choosing between one god and the other, therefore, gives the impression of being a rather late part of the text. And if that is so, it also seems likely that the contest-motif is also of Deuteronomistic date: after all, the contest is (at least ostensibly) about this one question: who is the real God. The drought that is used as the cause of the contest also has clear Deuteronomistic markings: the idea of the drought as punishment for religious “unfaithfulness” and the enmity between the heroic Elijah and the sectarian Northern Kingdom with its foreign rites.

But still, the author (or redactor) drives home his theses by using very ancient thematic items and motifs such as the conflict between death/drought and life/fertility. He mentions specific cultic practices (self-laceration), which he describes the Baal prophets performing “according to their custom” (*kē-mišpātām*), practices which have direct parallels in the Baal Cycle. The latter fact could perhaps be taken as a sign of the text being early, but the expression *kē-mišpātām* itself could also be viewed as a sort of religio-historical aside by the author: in essence, it could be read as meaning not only “in the way that the foreign Baal worshipers do” but something like “in the way that we have traditionally heard Baal worship described.” Indeed, if the text were of really ancient origin, such a comment might even be regarded as somewhat superfluous; it reads more like a learned comment on “strange ancient practices” than like a contemporaneous description.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> Perhaps one should say (with Goldingay 2003: 619) that the point Elijah is making in the extant text is not that the people ought to be “monotheists” in a general sense, but “mono-Yahwists”: the question is probably not how many gods there are, but which god is the acting, powerful one.

<sup>321</sup> Of course, the Elephantine texts are much later than the setting of the Carmel story, but they point to unclear status of “monotheism” in Israelite faith. On this situation and its relationship to the promulgation of the Torah and the relationship between the views of the Elephantine community to the Jerusalemite elites, see Kratz 2007: 84-85. On the relationship between the different cults prevalent in Israel in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, see Albertz 1992: 226-233.

<sup>322</sup> For a parallel case of a Deuteronomist author adding religio-historical comments to his text, see 1 Sam 9:9, where the note about an ancient word for “prophet” seems to be of the same category.

The Elijah episode therefore seems to constitute an enigmatic combination of the very old and the rather recent: the text as we have it today appears to have been put together at a late date, but it uses traditions from a much earlier period to lend it credibility and provide backdrop.<sup>323</sup>

### 3.1.1.3 *The Survival of the Drought-Death Motif into Deuteronomistic Times*

It is important in this context to realize that the motifs of rain and fertility may well have been very much alive in the culture surrounding the Deuteronomist authors; one very clear example of this is 1 Kings 8:35-36 (a part of Solomon's great speech at the introduction of the Ark of the Covenant into the Jerusalem temple), where the awful threat of lack of rain is directly tied to the Deuteronomistic "theology of obedience" and to its temple-centered ideology:

*Bēhē' āšēr šāmayim wē-lō' yihyē māṭār kī yeheṭ' ū-lāk wēhitpalēlū 'el-hammāqôm hazzē wēhōdū 'et-šēmekā ūmēḥaṭṭā' tām yēšūbūn kī ta' ānēm / wē'attā tišma' haššāmayim wēsālaḥtā lēḥaṭṭa't 'ābādēkā wē'ammēkā yišrā' ēl kī tōrēm 'et-hadderek haṭṭōbā 'āšer yēlēkū-bāh wēnātattā māṭār 'al-'arṣekā 'āšer-nātattā lē'ammēkā lēnaḥlālā*

If the heavens are closed and there is no rain because they have sinned against you, and they pray towards this place and praise your name, and they return from their sins as you chastise them, may you then listen in heaven and forgive the sin of your servants and of your people Israel. May you teach them the good way on which they are to walk, and send rain over your land that you have given to your people as an inheritance.<sup>324</sup>

This text seems to refer to and depend on the threats laid out in Deut 11:17, where it is described how YHWH will close the heavens and stop the rainfall if his commands are not obeyed (the same root, *ʿṣr*, is used for the "closing" there as well).<sup>325</sup> In these more purely Deuteronom(ist)ic texts, the concept of death is not mentioned clearly at all, and its old effects are metaphorically transferred

<sup>323</sup> Cf. Smend 1975: 540-541.

<sup>324</sup> Note that the burning, solar *kābōd* plays a central role in 1 Kings 8, and may very well have been in the mind of the author at this point as well when he speaks of the dangers of terrible heat—see section 3.3.1.2 for further discussion.

<sup>325</sup> A similar example of rains being withheld because of disobedience is found in Jer 3:2 and Hag 1:10-11 (in the latter case, the special form of disobedience consisting in not building a temple/house for YHWH, a motif very reminiscent of the inability of Baal to provide rain before his palace has been constructed). One should also not forget how YHWH withholds the rain from the "vineyard" in Isa 5:6, which is of course not a Deuteronomistically oriented text but shows that the motif was widespread. The same phenomenon occurs in Amos 4:7-9; in Amos 4:9, the terms *šiddāpōn* and *yērāqon* again occur together, just as they do in Deut 28:22 (quoted here), and in 1 Kings 8:37, the verse that follows the passage from 1 Kings 8 quoted above.

from the actual idea of dying to the theologized concept of disobedience. I would suggest that the metaphorical link connecting these ideas were the kind of descriptions of drought given in the first chapters of Joel (see section 3.2.4), in which the two ideas are almost inseparable from each other. But in the Carmel story, the scope is larger than that of obedience or disobedience: it is a question of the very nature of divinity itself, and death is certainly present as a subtext.

There are instances other than the Carmel narrative where D-themed writings appear when speaking of drought to retain, if not the “death” motif as such, at least the imagery of fever and sickness that is thematically connected with it, as we have seen. Such a passage is found in the Book of Deuteronomy itself, in 28:22-24:

*Yakkēkā YHWH baššaḥpet ūbaqqaddaḥat ūbaddalleqet ūbaḥarḥūr ūbaḥōreb*<sup>326</sup> *ūbaššiddāpōn ūbayyērāqōn ūrēdāpūkā* ‘ad ‘obdekā / wēḥāyū šāmēkā ‘āšer ‘al-rō‘šēkā nēḥōšet wēḥā‘āreš ‘āšer-taḥtēkā barzel / yittēn YHWH ‘et-mēṭar ‘aršēkā ‘ābāq wē‘āpār min-haššāmayim yērēd ‘ālēkā ‘ad hiššāmēdāk

YHWH will strike you with wasting disease, with fever, with heat, with hotness, with drought, with scorching and with mildew (?), and they will pursue you until your undoing. And your heavens above you will become (like) copper, and the earth below you will become (like) iron. YHWH will make the rain of your land into dirt and dust; from the heavens it will descend upon you until your destruction.

The Deuteronomist school (or pre-Deuteronomist, as the Carmel episode as a whole does seem to be part of tradition of its own) was in all probability a rather small movement, possibly almost sectarian in nature, for which the unswerving monolatrist and centralized cult was of supreme importance, and it is by no means certain that its emphases on monolatry and cultic centralization were shared by the main part even of the exilic population. The fact that the Elijah narrative may have been composed quite some time later than the period with which it deals does not preclude the fact that traditions concerning Baal-worship and the ideas connected with it may have persisted for a very long time.<sup>327</sup> And

<sup>326</sup> The MT vocalization *ūbaḥereb* (“and with sword”) would not fit well in the context of the other afflictions mentioned and with the descriptions given of the reactions of nature. Thus I have chosen *hōreb*, which is not uncommon (see, e.g., Craigie 1976: 342, n. 19). Such a reading is reflected in the Vulgate version, which has *aestu*. An interpretation of a similar nature was also favoured by Ibn Ezra, who says that the word is *miggizrat hōreb*, “from the same root as *hōreb* (drought).”

<sup>327</sup> An example of the possible survival even into Christian times of thematic material found in the Baal Cycle has been pointed out by Smith (1994: xxvi-xxvii). He somewhat audaciously calls attention to the parallels between the three main parts of the Baal Cycle (the vanquishing of the sea god, the building of Baal’s palace and the defeat of Death)

the old “drought theology” here makes a perfect vehicle with which to attest YHWH’s superiority over Baal.<sup>328</sup> Thus, the author uses an eminently archaic survival of Northwest Semitic religion to drive home the central message of what will one day become Judaism: the importance of serving YHWH alone. The incorporation of shorter, episodic stories also seems to be done with this greater theme in mind, as is evidenced by the inclusion of the passage on the landlady’s dead son, which seems to create an overt ideological statement of YHWH’s control over death, a matter which becomes of utmost importance to the story of the Carmel conflict, as argued above.

#### *3.1.1.4 The Curious Lack of the Sun*

Despite all the obvious parallels between the “ideology of the other” with which the Carmel story takes issue—the drought, the issue of death (both of the land and of humans), possibly the descent to the underworld, the ritual lacerations—and the Baalist mythology as preserved to us at Ugarit, there is one element that is crucially missing, and that is the figure of the sun. The allusions to the Baal-Mot conflict are there and the drought is at the very center of the discussion, but the instrument through which death is manifested throughout the land is not even mentioned in the story. This almost begs for clarification.

Why is there no “burning sun” or anything of that sort in the narrative of Elijah and the drought? Wouldn’t this have been expected even without any reference to the Ugaritic material—the sun being, after all, the visible object that causes dryness and hotness? And given the ideological background of the story, wouldn’t such an appearance have been appropriate?

The answer could theoretically be something as trivial (and unrecoverable) as the author “not thinking about it.” But there is another possibility, and that has to do with the probably late date of the text. Because of the fact that the Carmel episode as we have it was probably put together quite some time later than the early era it portrays, one should keep in mind that the old storm god-like descriptions of YHWH (of which there are traces in the Carmel text, as noted above) had at this time become joined by the “solarization” of YHWH discussed elsewhere in this study (see section 4.1). Because of the Egyptian-sounding descriptions of the Israelite God in solar terms, as well as the association of solarly and kingship, there may have been very little room left for the “drought sun”-motif known from Ugaritic religion. The sun may have had a quite different set of metaphorical and connotational connections by this period of Israelite religion, so that it was no longer as workable as a device for

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and elements present in the Apocalypse of John (the pacifying of the sea, the coming down of the heavenly city and the final defeat of death).

<sup>328</sup> As a matter of fact, the propagandistic and probably late form of the composition may render the actual identity of the “Baal” of the text a moot point: it is quite possible that the author here merely uses “Baal” as a generic designation of a type of divine figure which he intends to deride. The question of whether the contest was thought of as being with Melqart or some other similar deity may actually be beside the point!

describing drought. As will be seen later in the study, there are biblical passages in which I believe that remnants of the “drought sun” imagery have been preserved using various theological and rhetorical strategies, but it is nonetheless striking that the Carmel narrative, one of the most explicit tales of drought in the Hebrew Bible, has none of it whatsoever.

### 3.1.1.5 Conclusions

To sum up, the Carmel narrative uses very old layers of Northwest Semitic religious tradition to drive home a message that was essentially a rather “late” one. The ancient motifs of death and drought and Baal-style cultic practices are transformed by the author/redactor into a succinct theological statement concerning a monotheist/monolatrist conception of God. It is not at all impossible that the very fact of YHWH being presented as the lord of both life and death/drought carried a special significance for the readership or audience of the text, being so to speak the ultimate accomplishment which shows one god to be lord of the universe and another to be powerless, non-acting and non-present. Thus, in this text, the old imagery of overcoming death and drought has been completely turned on its head. And it is quite important to note once again that there is little inherently seasonal material in this thematic pattern. The drought that YHWH sends and then takes away after proving his point, so to speak, is not just any dry summer: it is an utter catastrophe representing the death of the land and thus the ultimate power both of upholding and of destruction which the authors ascribe to the Israelite deity. The basic cosmological problem presented is in essence the same as that of the Baal-Mot story, but whereas Baal has temporarily to succumb to the might of Death, needing help from Anat and Shapshu (the very instrument of the killing drought) to regain his power and guarantee fertility, the God of the Carmel story is himself the director of every piece of this ideological play. This is the message that the one putting the episode together wants to drive home. It is perhaps no coincidence that the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal has an actual ideological battle to the death as its climax, for the text itself constitutes an ideological frontal assault or intertextual attack: the power over drought, death, fertility and life (the sign of Baal’s victory in the Ugaritic Baal-Mot story) is symbolically taken away from him and put in the hands of YHWH. The text becomes, on a meta-textual level, an ideological weapon or a “counter-narrative,” and it is therefore rather fitting that it takes the form of a battle within the context of its own story.

## 3.2 Prophetic Old Testament literature

### 3.2.1 Some Passages from the Book of Isaiah

There are a number of different textual passages from the Isaian corpus that will be referred to during this study, many of them as corroborating evidence presented in other sub-chapters. Here, I will only talk of some relevant texts that do not fit naturally into other lines of argument.

#### 3.2.1.1 Isa 5:13-14

In Isa 5:13-14, the threat of famine and thirst (i.e. drought) is brought directly into association with the gaping maws of the netherworld (used here as a potent metaphor for exile and national catastrophe):

*lākēn gālā ‘ammī  
mibbēlī-dā‘at  
ûkēbôdô mētē<sup>329</sup> rā‘ āb  
wahāmônô ṣihē ṣāmā’*

*lākēn hirhībā šē’ ôl napšāh  
ûpā‘ ārā pihā liblī-ḥōq  
wēyārad ḥādārāh wahāmônāh  
ûšē’ ōnāh wē’ ālēz bāh*

Therefore my people goes into exile  
because of lack of understanding.  
And its nobles die of famine,  
and its multitudes are parched with  
thirst.

Therefore Sheol makes its gullet wide  
and opens its mouth without bounds,  
so its nobles and multitudes descend,  
and its noise, and those who exult in it.

The motif of death is quite conspicuous here, with an outright reference to Sheol right next to an account of multitudes who are “parched with thirst.” The threat of death in this text does not refer to any mortal danger concerning a single individual: rather the concept has been reinterpreted on a collective/nationalist scale (cf. the discussion of Psalm 102 in section 3.3.2). The context of the words is, depending on the analysis, ethical, political or both, a far cry from the dangers of death that threaten individuals in many other texts studied in this volume. The death described is collective and metaphorical, and yet the old drought imagery remains and is reused by the author as a literary tool. Note how he accentuates it by using the alliteration *ṣihē ṣāmā’*. This is not in any way a text about agriculture, seasonally bound or otherwise, but still, death is equated with drought, if only on a metaphorical level. At Ugarit, drought was used to express the rule of Death over the entire world: here the “entirety” has turned into a political entity: the people threatened by exile. Yet the poetic inheritance remains, notwithstanding the immense difference in context.

#### 3.2.1.2 A Covenant with the Drying Powers of Mot in Isaiah 28? (Excursus)

In a passage from the first part of the Book of Isaiah, the relationship between humanity and personified Death is very much in focus, in a way that could

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<sup>329</sup> BHSApp.



imply a connection to the mythology of Mot as preserved at Ugarit. The passage is Isa 28:14-22. It has been given a thorough religio-historical analysis by Joseph Blenkinsopp, who argues that the point of the author of the verses is that the religious and political leadership of Judah had (in some sense) entered into pact with the god of death himself, in order to help them against the onslaught of the Assyrian armies during the last years of the eighth century BC.<sup>330</sup> Although this micro-story does not in itself involve drought or a killing sun, the passage warrants some examination from the point of view of the present study.<sup>331</sup> Since the passage is tangential to the main purpose of the study, this section should be regarded as an excursus.

One of Blenkinsopp's main points is that the alleged support sought from Mot was linked metaphorically to the mythological opposition between him and Hadad/Baal, and that the coming attack of the Assyrians was associated with the power of the East Semitic analogue of the latter, Adad, an idea reinforced by the description of the attack as a *šōṭ šōtēp*, perhaps meaning a "raging flood," a motif which Blenkinsopp thinks lends itself well to an association with that god, especially as the Assyrians venerated Adad as a sponsor of their campaigns into the west.<sup>332</sup>

I believe that this analysis of Isa 28:14-22 touches upon many important points. However, I would like to expand it somewhat and look at a different possible, if closely related, frame of interpretation. I agree that the text appears to imply some form of bond between the Judahite elites and the god of death—probably as a rhetorical device created by the author of Isaiah 28 rather than as an actual piece of religio-historical information.<sup>333</sup> It is quite possible that the opposition between Mot and storm gods such as Hadad is being referred to here, but the passage offers other alleys of interpretation as well.

If one agrees that the text portrays people allying themselves with the god of death in order to fend off a foreign threat, expressed in metaphysical terms, one must ask oneself with what divine power such a threat might have been

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<sup>330</sup> Blenkinsopp 2000.

<sup>331</sup> One may note with some interest that the beginning of Isaiah 28 (vv. 1-4) invokes the opposition between the "wilting flower" (*šīš nōbēl*) of Ephraim and the storm of YHWH, which could imply that the drought motif is in the mind of the author or redactor of the text.

<sup>332</sup> Blenkinsopp 2000: 477-478.

<sup>333</sup> The fact that this passage should be regarded as a rhetorical construct is underscored by Blenkinsopp himself (2000: 478), and in want of other evidence, there is no reason at all to suspect that such a "covenant with death" was something that existed in actuality. The idea is used by the author as an accusation of unacceptable behavior on the part of the leaders, and possibly as a religiously suggestive metaphor. This sort of reference to a (probably imaginary) form of "black magic" also seems to occur in Job 3:8, which speculates about sorcerers skilled in calling forth Leviathan without there being clear evidence of any such rites actually being practiced (on this problem, see my analysis in Wikander 2010).

associated. Baal/Hadad/Adad is of course one option, but in my mind one should not discount the possibility that the implied metaphysical enemy is none other than Sea itself, the divine character normally associated with chaotic attacking power. At Ugarit, one finds the three gods Baal, Yamm and Mot forming a triangle of power, especially as all three are at some time shown favor by the supreme god El. Of course, the plot of the story of the Baal Cycle pits Baal against the other two, but there are isolated instances of textual evidence suggesting that these two other powers—Sea and Death—could sometimes be regarded as adversaries of each other. This idea comes to the fore in the text *CAT* 1.83, which has been referred to earlier in the present study—a text in which it seems that the power of drought is used against the sea monster. Of course, that text does not mention the god Death outright, but, as has hopefully been shown in this book, the ideas of drought and death were quite firmly associated with each other in the preserved Ugaritic mythology. Thus, there appears to be evidence indicating that the power of drought/death could also be employed against the forces of the sea monsters or deities. Especially interesting in this context is the fact that *CAT* 1.83 appears to constitute some kind of spell or incantation, perhaps providing an idea of what form the imagined “covenant with death” could have taken.

The danger that the elites of Judah are described as wanting to ward themselves from is, after all, referred to as destructive “water” (*mayim*) in v. 17.<sup>334</sup> Such imagery could very well be construed as a reference to the powers of the chaotic sea just as well as those of Hadad/Baal. Of course, these options need not be mutually exclusive,<sup>335</sup> but the text would gain a layer of meaning if one analyzed it as accusing the elites of choosing the wrong divine power to defend them: instead of the storm god (i.e. YHWH), the one classically imagined as the fighter against the chaotic powers of the Sea, they would have turned to the third point in the triangle, to the power of drought and death, an idea of course vehemently opposed by the prophet. Especially if the integration of the drought power into the arsenal of YHWH was already in process at the time of this passage being written, such a covenant with Mot would not only be regarded as blasphemous but also as pointless.<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> Note again the reference to a *šōt šōtēp* (perhaps meaning a “raging flood”) in vv. 15 and 18, which could fit well with an implied Sea figure. The word *šōt* used in this context does carry a number of uncertainties with it. It appears to have been a problem for the scribes as well, as the first of these instances has a *qere* reading *šīt*, showing that the reading of the word was not altogether clear.

<sup>335</sup> The text does, after all, also speak of “hail” (*bārād*) in v. 17, which seems less typical of a sea deity.

<sup>336</sup> A very different and innovative view of Isaiah 28 is propounded by Christopher B. Hays (2010), who argues that the deity referred to is not the Semitic Mot but the Egyptian mother goddess Mut. Hays gives ample references to other proposals on pp. 228–230. His supposition that the “covenant” is with the Egyptian Mut rests upon the, to my mind questionable, idea that the passage actually refers to a real covenant made by

### 3.2.1.3 *The Flower Withers in the Desert Wind—Drought Imagery in Deutero-Isaiah*

The part of the Hebrew Bible that perhaps is most effective and artful in its reception of the drought motifs is the Deutero-Isaianic corpus. The collection of Isaiah 40-55 abounds in nature metaphors, and the ideas of drought and drying are an important part of this prophetic vocabulary. But more clearly than perhaps at any other place in the Bible, these motifs are transformed into a language describing theological ideas, specifically of salvation and release from exile.

This stands out in the very first chapter of the collection, with the well-known phrases *yābēš hāšār* and *nābēl šīš* occurring already in Isa 40:7-8. The drying and withering of grass and flowers are used as metaphors for the power of the Israelite God. As many times in the Psalms, the withering is a symbol of powerlessness. A few lines earlier the whole situation is described in terms of YHWH's *kābôd*, which (as will be discussed in the section on Ps 84:12, 3.3.1) was sometimes conceived of in solar terms. The *rûah* which blows on the metaphorical "grass" and "flowers" seems like a hot desert wind, manifesting the *kābôd* of God and demonstrating its potentially destructive power.

The talk of the wilting flowers and parched grass harkens back to ancient mythological material, but in the hands of Deutero-Isaiah these images serve to show YHWH's mastery over nature. In a quite interesting turn of religio-historical rhetoric, the texts make an explicit connection between the blowing "wind of YHWH" (*kî rûah YHWH nāšēbâ bô*) and the destructive heat, creating an association between YHWH's classical powers as a weather god and something resembling a burning sirocco; I will return to this idea in my discussion of Hosea 13.<sup>337</sup>

As is also the case in Malachi 3 (see section 3.2.5), the drying and heating powers are here part of the very arsenal of the God of Israel himself—and what else could be expected from an author such as Deutero-Isaiah, whose main theological point is that YHWH is the lord of all history, unaided and peerless? Placing the powers once in the sphere of death into the hands of the Israelite God makes the argument for his rulership of the world even more convincing—and it works exceptionally well as a poetical device. In the Carmel episode, YHWH appears to withhold the fertility-giving rains so that he can prove his

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the Judahite elites with some deity or other; Hays objects that no cult of Mot is known and, specifically, that he is not a deity with whom covenants are known to have been struck (p. 229; Hays does not accept the possible reference to a covenant with Mot in CAT 1.82 5 as the genuine reading [Hays' n. 76]). This, however, is not a necessarily compelling objection: the author of Isaiah 28 is merely making a rhetorical point by comparing the alliance with Egypt with a covenant with Death himself. Thus, I believe that Mot/Māwet is indeed the deity referred to in Isaiah 28, and a reference to the death/drought motif appears to provide a good explanation of the poetic simile.

<sup>337</sup> This brings to mind the importance put on the destructive powers of the sirocco by de Moor (1971: 173-177 *et passim*).

mastery over the powers of life and death and victory over the prophets of Baal, in Jeremiah 14 he seems to leave the scene and let the people suffer without him, and in Malachi 3 he uses the dual nature of the sun for his parenetic and apocalyptic purposes—but in the first chapter of Deutero-Isaiah, we find something more far-reaching than any of this: a case in which the killing drought becomes part of the very glorification of the Israelite deity. The desert wind and the power to make the flowers wilt make him the metaphorical ruler of salvation history.

The wilting flowers of Deutero-Isaiah, however, are themselves no central point of the discourse. They are merely introduced as a of comparison, their “mortality” being juxtaposed to something that in the mind of the author is ever so much more enduring: the word of God (*ûdēbar-ʿēlōhēnū yāqūm lēʿōlām*). The specific imagery of wilting greenery as a symbol of life’s inconstancy can be found in such places as Ps 90:3-6, and it is apparently this type of reuse of the drought-death motif that the author Isaiah 40 employs for his own purposes.<sup>338</sup> Using such imagery makes eminent sense in the context of Isaiah 40, which abounds in the use of nature phenomena as poetic illustrations of its theological propositions. Alongside the various other extraordinary events mentioned (mountains sinking, the whole geological landscape changing, etc.), wilting flowers appear rather mundane. This is, of course, the very point made: the destruction of fertility is a normal part of the cycle of the world, which can be contrasted with the supernal “word of God” which does not succumb to the effects of time.<sup>339</sup> The “wilting” being the result of YHWH’s destructive, hot wind does, however, make a subtle but important theological point: the Israelite God is lord over the deathly powers as well, an idea very much in line with the main message of the Deutero-Isaianic collection. The ephemeral beauty of nature is here a mere trinket for YHWH to do with as he pleases, which shows him, metaphorically, as lord of history. As opposed to the geological metaphors used early in chapter 40, drought is in this case no miracle—but it is a sign of power. The cyclical/dying nature of vegetation is deliberately contrasted with the endurance of the “word.” In Isaiah 40, there is no question of an actual theological *Nebeneinander* of drought/death and fertility/life; the old motif has been reduced to a mere rhetorical device.

The Deutero-Isaianic collection includes further references to drought as a weapon of YHWH, such as 42:15, a verse in which the bellicose powers of the Israelite God are given the form of destructive heat, wiping out both vegetation

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<sup>338</sup> Note also the parallel in Ps 103:15-18, which also refers to the life of man as grass drying up, the destructive wind passing over it, and contrasts this with the influence of YHWH (here *hesed*) enduring for all time. This text appears in certain ways to be less theologically “processed” than the famous version in Isaiah 40, as Psalm 103 simply uses the imagery in order to underscore the difference between man and God.

<sup>339</sup> The question is of course what this “word” refers to. A quite plausible interpretation is that of Elliger (1978: 28), that it is a term for the message of consolation that forms the main thrust of Isaiah 40.

and streams of water when he chooses to act. This makes it even more conspicuous that, later in the text (49:10), the salvific acts of YHWH include sheltering his people from the destructive glare of the sun—and the *šārāb*, an uncommon word that apparently means something like “heat of the sun” or “dryness.”<sup>340</sup> This word also occurs once in Proto-Isaiah, in Isa 35:7, where it apparently refers to the dry land itself, and in the Hebrew text of Ben Sira (43:22), where it seems to have the same connotation. The attestation of the drought-giving sun in Isa 49:10 is one of the more overtly extra-divine descriptions given of that motif in the Hebrew Bible: the burning sun here appears as no more than an unfortunate natural phenomenon from which YHWH can provide shelter.

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<sup>340</sup> HALOT, s.v. *šārāb*.

### 3.2.2 *The God who Keeps Away: Jeremiah 14 and the History of its Motifs*

The fourteenth chapter of the book of Jeremiah (and the beginning of the fifteenth) contain one of the most clearly stated descriptions of drought in the entirety of the Hebrew Bible. The chapter as such is even given an explicit rubric in verse 1: “The word of YHWH that came to Jeremiah concerning the drought” (the word used for “drought” is an intensive plural of *baššārā*).<sup>341</sup> But, as will be seen in the following, this chapter describes its subject in a way which on the surface diverges from the now familiar patterns of drought and death and seems partly to invoke another tradition of drought. However, the main motif studied in this book reappears at a deeper level and in the artistic use of certain words which bring it to mind even when the context is somewhat different.

The chapter describes in very expressive language the plight of the Judean people, stricken with terrible drought: the earth is parched, and “there has been no rain in the land,” the text states. Nobles send their servants for water, but those sent out return empty-handed. All in all, Jeremiah 14 shows a terrible state of affairs, without precipitation or verdure, and the author expressly connects these afflictions with the sinfulness of the people. The text presents a sort of three-way dialogue between the people, the prophet, and the deity. The people cry to YHWH and make sacrifices to him, but the deity makes it quite clear that he has no intention of coming to the rescue, and the reason for this lack of action is firmly stated (Jer 14:10): “So they love to wander, they have not held back their feet; so YHWH does not take pleasure in them—now he will remember their misdeeds and punish their sins.”

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<sup>341</sup> There are two other examples of the word *baššārā*. In both Ps 9:10 and 10:1, the ambiguous consonantal skeleton *bšrh* occurs as a description of the difficult times (*ittôt*) for which the psalmist is asking for God’s help. One possibility is to view this as the word *baššārā*, and to see the whole phrase as a construct relationship: “times of drought.” The other option is to follow the Septuagint, which renders the phrase as ἐν θλίψει (“in hardship,” “under pressure”), and thus emend the vocalization of the phrase to *bē-šārā* (or possibly seeing the doubled *š* as the result of a definite article, “in the hardship”). These latter options certainly do seem more palatable in view of the rest of the psalm, which does not seem to involve heat or burning in any manner whatsoever. However, this interpretation of the MT is not entirely self-evident from a grammatical point of view, as the complete expression, *lē ittôt baššārā*, shows a somewhat strange use of prepositions and would literally translate as something like “for times in the hardship.” For this reason, some emend the text, reading *lē ittôt haššārā* (see BHSApp). This is certainly a possible reading, but the fact remains that the MT has the expression in two different places, indicating that there may be more to it. As stated above, Psalms 9-10 do not include any material on drought in the other parts of the texts. From the perspective of the present study one may, however, note with some interest the reference to death and the netherworld in Ps 9:18, a verse which also includes the verb *škḥ*. But this is probably entirely coincidental, and the verb certainly means “forget” in this context.

God's absence is thus a deliberate one, similar in vein to what is found in Psalm 102 (see further section 3.3.2). The reason for the terrible drought does not seem to be so much the power of death (either under the rule of YHWH or outside of it) as divine wrath.<sup>342</sup> No one but the God of Israel can bring rain (v. 22), but YHWH has left the land, and it suffers without him. To be sure, death is present in Jeremiah 14, but it seems to be a sort of consequence of the drought rather than an integrated motif: "and there will be no one to bury them—they, their wives, their sons, and their daughters." (v. 16)

### 3.2.2.1 The "Leaving God" and the Tale of Telepinu—and the Different Traditions of Drought

This description of an enraged god leaving his land, hiding and thus creating drought probably reflects quite an ancient motif, which is not directly connected with the "drought-death" theology examined in other parts of this book. The *locus classicus* for this conception of drought as a result of divine anger and flight is the Hittite myth of Telepinu (originally a story inherited from the Hattic religious tradition). In that text, the reason for the drought and infertility is not the power or manifestation of personified Death but the simple fact of the young god Telepinu being very angry (the reason for his anger is not preserved in the text as we have it). He is so angry, indeed, that he puts his right shoe on his left foot and vice versa. His anger drives him into wandering off, so that all nature falls into disarray. The text describes this terrible affliction with the following words—note especially the two penultimate lines quoted here, which closely parallel Jer 14:5: "Even the doe in the field gives birth and forsakes her [newborn], because there is no grass".<sup>343</sup>

GIŠ<sub>1</sub>luttaus kammaras IŠBAT  
 É-er tuhhuis IŠBAT  
 INA GUNNI-ma kalmīsanis wisūriyantati  
 istananas anda DINGIR<sup>MES</sup> wisūriyantati  
 INA TÙR anda UDU<sup>HLA</sup> KI.MIN  
 INA È.GU<sub>4</sub> andan GU<sub>4</sub><sup>HLA</sup> wisūriyantati  
 UDU-us-za SILA<sub>4</sub>-ZU mimmas

<sup>342</sup> Hans Barstad (2002: 89) regards Jeremiah 14 as a possibly Deuteronomistically influenced account of a great drought and explicitly connects it to the theological idea that droughts were caused by divine displeasure and punishment. He also points to specific passages in Jeremiah (3:3, 5:24 and 14:22) that imply that YHWH rules rainfall (and lack thereof). V. 14:22 explicitly states that neither other gods nor the heavens themselves possess the ability to produce rain—only YHWH himself. This attitude is similar to that of the Carmel narrative.

<sup>343</sup> I have normalized the text in this and the following excerpts, based on *EIET* (Telepinu); my translation is also inspired by the one found there. Also edited in Laroche 1969: 29-50.

GU<sub>4</sub>-ma AMAR-ŠU mimmas

<sup>d</sup>Telepinus-a arha iyannis

Mist took the windows,  
 smoke took the house,  
 and in the hearth the logs were smothered.  
 At the altar tables the gods were smothered.  
 In the sheepfold the sheep were smothered.  
 In the cows' barn the cows were smothered.  
 The sheep rejected its lamb,  
 the cow rejected her calf—  
 but Telepinu had wandered away.

That not only famine but also drought is a central problem here is shown by the following sequence of lines:

ḪUR.SAG<sup>DIDL.ḪI.A</sup> hāter

GIŠ<sup>ḪI.A</sup>-ru hāzta

nasta parsdus ŪL wezzi

wēsaes hāter

TŪL<sup>ḪI.A</sup> hāzta

The mountains dried up,  
 the trees dried up,  
 and the leaves do not come.  
 The meadows dried up,  
 the springs dried up.

The way in which drought and famine are depicted in this text closely parallels the situation described in Jeremiah 14: the god on whose shoulders rests the responsibility for fertility and precipitation is missing due not to a manifestation of death but because of his own wrath. Given the great similarity of the descriptions of the female animals rejecting their young (combined with this theological similarity) one cannot help but think of a possible historical connection between the motifs. There is, of course, a vast gap in time between the texts, but (as has been seen in other places in this study) mythological motifs have a way of surviving for a long time sufficiently intact to be recognizable hundreds of years after their earlier attestation.<sup>344</sup> The distraught animals of Jeremiah 14 do have parallels in other drought texts of the Old Testament. One

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<sup>344</sup> This is demonstrably so in the case of Hittite mythology; as mentioned above (n. 190), there appear to be examples of motifs shared between the Hurro-Hittite *Epic of Liberation* and texts from the Hebrew Bible.



such is the first chapter of Joel (1:18), which talks of the results of drought in these very terms, showing the motif definitely to be a living one.

I would argue that this conception of drought is subtly different from the one connecting it to the power or figure of Death. Just as certain scholars (among them Mark S. Smith) have made a sharp distinction between the concepts of “dying” and merely “disappearing” gods (though, seemingly, not willing to accept the existence of the former category as a matter of religio-historical fact and instead subsuming it under the latter),<sup>345</sup> I believe the implications of these two ideas to be rather dissimilar. For one thing, the end of drought becomes a more “religious” affair if the reason for it is divine anger: the absent god must be appeased for the precipitation to return. In the case of the Telepinu text, this appeasement consists of a sacrificial meal made to him by the other gods, and in the Israelite setting of Jeremiah 14, one may speculate that an act of repentance on the part of the people is what the author has in mind, even though the text does not clearly state this. Indeed, God does not accept any pleas from Jeremiah on behalf of the people: he rejects them outright (v. 11). Still, scholars have regarded the parts of Jeremiah 14 as a “liturgy” against drought, thus implying either a cultic setting or the imitation of a cultic style in the case of this passage too.<sup>346</sup>

The proposed ritual propitiation of the enraged deity seems to be somewhat lacking in effect in the context of Jeremiah 14. YHWH does, after all, command the prophet not to pray for the people and makes it clear that their ritualistic worship will not help to end the current crisis. In the larger context of the Book, one could guess that this is a nod to the admonitions of the temple sermon in chapter 7, which clearly stipulates that various forms of righteous action is what YHWH wants and not offerings per se (this depends, of course, on the relative dating of the passages). If this is so, the simple motif of “storm god disappears, the other protagonists bring him back through ritual action” found in the Telepinu story would here be turned on its head, so to speak.

Concerning drought, this text thus seems to inherit a tradition of motifs differing from the Carmel text studied earlier. As we shall see further on, it

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<sup>345</sup> Smith (1994: 72-73 and 1998a: 290-296) believes that the concept of the “dying and rising” Baal should be abandoned in favor of a “disappearing” Baal, a category that he regards as essentially different. Although I disagree with his conclusion concerning Baal (see Mettinger 2001:76-80), I think that the terminological distinction is relevant, as is the difference between these two closely connected but somewhat distinct traditions. It is this very distinction, I would argue, that makes it possible to apply the “absence” imagery to YHWH in Jeremiah 14—the somewhat more extreme idea of the weather god actually dying or descending into the netherworld would be difficult to apply to YHWH, as no such theological construct is applied to him anywhere else in the Old Testament (or outside it, for that matter).

<sup>346</sup> Eissfeldt 1966: 356; Bright 1965: 102. Holladay (1986: 422) interprets the passage as a “counter-liturgy” that uses the form of the official cultic liturgy but turning it “upside down” to proclaim a message of doom.

alludes to the drought-death theology (mentioning lamentation and mourning, for example), but the question is not one of power over death—but one of will. The reason for the drought is that YHWH is “conspicuous by his absence,” not that the power of death is great (cf. the discussion of this difference in section 2.3.4, on the Aqhat and Kirta stories). The “liturgical” passages adjure YHWH to forgive and return, not to drive away personified Death or anything similar. God has left; he is not at home in his land. Here, one may speculate that the accusation leveled at YHWH is meant to parallel such as are hurled at Baal in the Carmel story (being away, asleep, etc.).<sup>347</sup>

The idea of YHWH leaving the petitioner to wander alone occurs in other passages in the Hebrew Bible. For example, one can think of Job 23:8-9:

<i>Hēn qedem ʿehēlōk wēʿēnennū</i>	If I walk to the east, he is not there,
<i>wēʿāhōr wēlōʾ-ʾābīn lō</i>	and to the west, I do not find him,
<i>šēmōl baʿāšōtō wēlōʾ-ʾāḥaz</i>	as he is hidden <sup>348</sup> in the north I do not
	see him,
<i>yāʿtōp yāmīn wēlōʾ-ʾerʾē</i>	he is concealed in the south, but I cannot
	behold him.

In Job 23 there is, of course, no drought to be seen, but it should be remembered that the wider context of the Book of Job includes a number of passages that allude to it quite clearly (cf. section 3.3.3), some of them indeed using the connection between drought and death to great effect. There is a definite similarity between Jeremiah 14 and Job 23 in the fact that the absence of God is made into an accusation or lament from the stricken human side.

In neither case is it actually clear whether God is *really* absent in some sort of “objective” sense (in Jer 14:9, this opposition is in fact used for rhetorical effect as YHWH is said really to be “in our midst” regardless of his apparent absence), but the lack of his presence is very pressing and real to the supplicants themselves.

This notion of YHWH’s absence leading to lack of fecundity can also be found in the Book of Hosea, when the deity withdraws in 5:6 and 9:12, with subsequent failure of fertility.<sup>349</sup> It is interesting to note that this instance of the “absence” motif occurs in a biblical book that also includes references to the directly death-induced drought in chapter 13, again showing that the two forms of imagery, though probably separate in origin, are very easily conflated and combined. As we have seen, both go back to earlier literary traditions, and it is certainly not surprising that the Old Testament authors used both and sometimes fused them together.

<sup>347</sup> Carroll 1986: 311.

<sup>348</sup> Taking *baʿāšōtō* as a derivation from the same root as Arabic *gaša* (“cover”)—see Gordis 1978: 261, and (following him) Habel 1985: 345.

<sup>349</sup> Eidevall 1996: 243.

## 3.2.2.2 Drought, Death and War

Despite the prominence of the idea of God's absence, there are definite reminiscences of the drought-death motif in Jeremiah 14, albeit in a very de-mythologized way. Besides drought, there is another motif that runs through the whole of Jeremiah 14, namely war.<sup>350</sup> The latter motif appears most clearly in vv. 12-13, 16 and 18 (and also at the beginning of the chapter following, 15:2-3), but as Carroll points out, it is difficult to separate the references to drought from those concerned with war. As he puts it, "[d]rought and the ravages of war were (and still are) common features of life in the areas which produced the tradition,"<sup>351</sup> and thus it would seem rather futile to search for any specific historical settings for the unhappy state shown by the text.

There have been attempts to fix the text more firmly in a specific historical milieu (Carroll, for example, views it as a lament over the situation of November/December 601, whereas Willis places it in the time of Zedekiah),<sup>352</sup> but such a historicist reading is hardly necessary for the present purposes, regardless of its merits or lack thereof. A possibly punning play by the author or redactor using the various conceptions of war, death and drought that appear here to be somehow connected with one another can be found in v. 15:9, in which a woman who has given birth to many children is suddenly "withering away" (the verb *'umlal*), an expression that could signify both physical frailty and the effects of heat. Note that this verse expressly refers to the sun as a metaphor for being weak (or dying), but not in its aspect of being hot but rather its setting during the day. Various different pieces of ancient imagery are here reemployed and transformed.<sup>353</sup>

The motif of people falling for the sword could be interpreted as a remnant of the drought-death connection, but in that case in a very limited sense. Drought and war appear rather as a sort of stock-motifs used to imply a great national catastrophe. Another reference to death can be found in the use in 14:2 of the verb *'ābal*, which carries with it the dual meaning of "mourn (as for the dying)" and "dry up."<sup>354</sup> This verb provides a perfect illustration of a situation in which both invading forces and lack of rain are plaguing the people.

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<sup>350</sup> Carroll 1986: 307.

<sup>351</sup> Carroll 1986: 307.

<sup>352</sup> Carroll 1986: 427; Willis 2002: 141.

<sup>353</sup> On this expressions and parallels to it, see section 3.2.4.5.

<sup>354</sup> The same verb (and similar imagery) can be found in Jer 12:4. Given the close connection between dying and drying up which is the very focus of this study it seems methodologically quite unnecessary to view these uses (mourning and drying up) as two different, homonymous verbs: nature "mourns" when the rain fails to come, and such is the case with Jerusalem in 14:2. This view (that there is only one verb *'ābal* with a general meaning "to mourn" which was then further specified as "to dry up" in certain cases) is also represented by Clines 1992 (esp. pp. 9-10). The association between the semantic spheres of mourning and heat is not limited to the Semitic language family: in Sanskrit, the verbal root *śuc*, which normally means "to mourn," can also have the

Holladay argues that the word *hā'āreš* in the third colon of 14:2 should here be interpreted as a reference to Sheol (as is the case in a number of places in the Hebrew Bible), and that the phrase *qāḏērû lā'āreš* (said of the gates of Jerusalem) thus does not necessarily mean that they are “dark to the ground” but that they are “dark to Sheol” or possibly that they “are dark in Sheol.” He suggests that the next verse, speaking of the cry of Jerusalem “rising” (root *ʿlh*) is meant as a counterpoint to the state of the city being (metaphorically) in the land of the dead.<sup>355</sup> This is an intriguing possibility, which would of course create yet another reference to the drought-death motif.<sup>356</sup> If this interpretation is correct, it creates a fascinating counterpoint to the version of the drought-death theology which at Ugarit is tied to the descent of Baal into the netherworld: here, the deity would not be the one gone down into the depths—but the city of Jerusalem itself! The tension between the traditions of the disappearing deity and the dying would be brought to the front, as the “descent” motif would be transposed from the deity himself, letting YHWH keep his freedom to act by keeping away. It should be noted, though, that Holladay’s suggestion (though appealing) is quite speculative, as a more prosaic reading (the gates having crashed down towards the ground) would also make sense in the context. One may of course argue that a *double entendre* was intended by the author.

### 3.2.2.3 A “Sleeping” God?

In 14:9 a strange expression occurs, the historical interpretation of which may shed some light on the manner in which the Jeremian drought passage was seen in antiquity. In its MT version, the verse runs like this:

<i>lāmmā tihye kē'îš nidhām</i>	Why are you like a powerless man,
<i>kēgibbôr lō'-yūkal lēhōšā'</i>	like a warrior who cannot save?
<i>wē'attā bēqirbēnū YHWH</i>	But you are in our midst, YHWH,
<i>wēšimkā 'alēnū niqrā'</i>	and your name is called over us—
<i>'al-tannīhēnū</i>	do not abandon us.

The problematic word in this verse is the verb *dhm*, which is a *hapax legomenon* in the Hebrew Bible. Based on comparison with Arabic, it is often translated “astonished, surprised,”<sup>357</sup> but it also appears in an ostrakon from Yavneh-Yam,

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meaning “to be subjected to heat” or “to burn,” a fact that clearly illustrates that these conceptions have been associated with each other in quite different linguistic cultures. I would like to thank Martin Gansten (p.c.) for pointing out this parallel.

<sup>355</sup> Holladay 1986: 430.

<sup>356</sup> Note how the verbs *qādar* and *'ābal* are used in close connection with one another in Jer 4:28, when the author speaks of the sky “growing dark” at the same time that the earth “mourns/runs dry.” The deathly connections of the expressions here appear in plain sight.

<sup>357</sup> HALOT (s.v. *dhm*) makes a comparison with Akkadian *da'āmu* (“to be dark”), but given the semantic sphere of astonishment and helplessness, one should perhaps not

apparently meaning “helpless to save” or “powerless,” a meaning quite fitting in the present context.<sup>358</sup> The rarity of this word of course made its interpretation difficult, which explains the counterpart of *ʾiš nidhām* appearing the LXX, ἄνθρωπος ὑπνῶν (“a man sleeping”). It is quite probable that the *Vorlage* of the Greek text had changed *nidhām* into *nirdām* (“slumbering”), the letters *dālet*, *rēš* and *hē* being very easy to confuse, especially in a case such as this, in which the actual word was probably very rare.<sup>359</sup> One might, of course, also speculate that *nirdām* could have been the original reading, even though it would be rather difficult, as *nidhām* is without doubt the *lectio difficilior*.

Yet rather than it being a mere mistranslation of a difficult word, I believe that the Greek rendering can tell us something about how this passage was interpreted by the tradition. The accusation that the LXX lets the people direct against YHWH—that he is powerless and asleep—strongly recalls the taunts that Elijah directs at the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18:27.

The very points that Elijah makes in the Carmel text are that Baal is unable to combat drought because of (a) absence or (b) sleep, which is exactly what the LXX version of Jer 14:9 accuses YHWH of—and to a lesser extent, the MT version does the same. It would thus seem that the accusations of the people echo or stand in the same rhetorical tradition as those in the Elijah narrative, but with a bitter, ironic twist: here it is YHWH himself who is absent, and the cries are not ones of mockery but of distressed pleading. And, as the text goes on to show, his absence is a conscious one.<sup>360</sup>

The (somehow intentionally) absent or sleeping deity whose lack of action lets in the power of drought and war brings to mind such phenomena as the so-called *evocatio* of Roman religion, the idea that gods could be “called out” of their cities by use of their secret names, leaving their inhabitations unprotected.<sup>361</sup> That phenomenon provides another and parallel idea of the

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discount a distant etymological connection with the roots *dwm*, *dmh* and *dmm* (“to be silent”). One might also, possibly, compare Akkadian *dāmu* (“to stagger”), but this etymon seems rather less convincing.

<sup>358</sup> Lundbom 1999: 702. For the Yavneh-Yam text, see the edition of Naveh (1960), especially pp. 134-135.

<sup>359</sup> Cf. BHSApp.

<sup>360</sup> On the idea of God’s “sleep” in relation to the Carmel narrative, see Mettinger 1988: 88-90. Jer 14:9 also includes an expression that invites comparison with the integration of the drought motif into a national complaint that one finds in Psalm 102. This is the wording *ʾal tannihēnū* (“do not abandon us”), which could be construed to mean “do not put us down.” This reminds me of the phrase *kī nēšāʾtani wattašlikēnī*, (“for you lifted me up and threw me away”) that occurs in Ps 102:11b. In that case, the expression seems to imply God leaving the psalmist to die, a subtext that may, perhaps, also be present in the context of Jeremiah 14.

<sup>361</sup> A list of the most well-known instances of *evocatio* can be found in Stek 2009: 30-31. Stek is rather sceptical of *evocatio* as an actual institutionalized ritual as opposed to a more incidental occurrence. A fuller study is Gustafsson 2000. I would like to thank Sten Hidal for suggesting the parallel with Roman *evocatio*.

divine power that provides protection for a city leaving it, and the city thereby being left open to attack and misfortune.<sup>362</sup>

### 3.2.2.4 Death, National Plight and “Untrue Streams”

The issues of national catastrophe continue into the beginning of chapter 15, and in 15:2, the idea of death is very much brought to the forefront, as YHWH declares his people to be at home in the power of death (*’āšer lammāwet lammāwet*, “whoever is to death—to death [with him]”). In the early verses of the fifteenth chapter, the main threat seems to have switched to war and death by the sword. But still, the confessional outburst in 15:15-18 ends in 18*b* with language taken from the drought-rain opposition:

<i>hāyô tihyê lî kēmô ’akzāb</i>	You have become unto me like an untrue
	[stream], <sup>363</sup>
<i>mayim lō’ ne’ ēmānû</i>	waters that are not faithful.

The Jeremian drought text thus shows an integration—and possibly a conscious opposition—between two differing but related *theologoumena*. God keeps away (as in the Telepinu text), but his voluntary absence carries with it consequences that are strongly reminiscent of the other motif, in which there is an actual struggle with the power of death. The author of Jeremiah 14-15 uses these motifs in order to transform an old theology of divine kingship and power over nature into a piece of Deuteronomistically (or proto-Deuteronomistically) oriented parenesis. The Deuteronomistic ideological slant is made apparent through what seems to be a parallel with the description of God’s judgement in Deuteronomy 28, which uses the combination of war, drought and stricken cows and lambs to much the same effect as the present passage—although lacking the reference to God’s absence (see the discussion of Deuteronomy 28 in section 3.1.1.3).<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> A sort of inversion of this phenomenon can be found in the latter part of Ps 78, where YHWH chooses to be absent (leaving his sanctuary in Shiloh, etc.) but finally wakes up as from a drunken sleep, bringing victory to his people. This idea of God’s waking up can be found, for example, in Ps 7:7, 35:23, 44:24 and Isa 51:9. One may also associate the idea of the leaving God with the narrative of the *kābôd* leaving the temple in Ezekiel 9-10.

<sup>363</sup> This imagery is quite reminiscent of that occurring in Job 6:15-20. The use of the word *’akzāb* to denote untrustful streams has a parallel in Mic 1:14, and the verb root *kzb* (“to deceive”) is used in a similar context in Isa 58:11.

<sup>364</sup> The drought is specifically mentioned in Deut 28:24. Note also the use of *šēhîn* (“boil” or “infection”) in vv. 27 and 35, a word that is derived from the root used for the burning of Shaphshu in the Ugaritic funerary text CAT 1.161 (see section 2.3.1.1).

The terrible plight of war and drought are, metaphorically, the opened jaws of Death into which the land and possibly the city itself (14:12) have fallen because of the judging absence of God. The threat of burning heat, however, comes neither from a power opposed to the weather deity (as in the Baal Cycle) nor from the solar, burning powers of the deity himself (as in Malachi 3). This drought is one of deliberately chosen absence. Possibly, one might here see a connection with the way that Baal stays away from the land after the murder of Aqhat, but such an interpretation hinges on one's choice of translation of the verb *ysrk* (see section 2.3.4.1), and even then there is a great difference between the lamenting of nature over the death of Aqhat and the conscious abandonment of Judah by YHWH in Jeremiah 14. Indeed, the Jeremiah passage seems to show drought as a mere prelude to a larger martial catastrophe, thus turning it into a sort of foreshadowing of the violent, deathly powers rather than a consequence of thereof. Jeremiah 14 does have a number of references to the drought-death motif, but it combines them with ideas that seem quite different, making the text a rather strange creature among the Ugaritic and Israelite descriptions of the burning sun and the killing heat.<sup>365</sup>

### 3.2.2.5 Other Passages from Jeremiah

Chapter 14 is not the only place in Jeremiah where motifs fitting this study have been found. It has been suggested that Jer 8:1-2 includes a reference to a terrible danger inherent in one's corpse being left unburied and exposed to the heat of the sun.<sup>366</sup> This would of course fit very nicely with the pattern studied in this book, but I remain skeptical as to whether this really is the main gist of the passage.

Jer 8:2 speaks of the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem being laid out not only before the sun but before "the moon and the entire host of the heavens" which they are alleged to have served. The sun and its heat are not especially at the forefront in the text but merely part of the enumeration of deities that the people ought not to have worshiped.

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<sup>365</sup> One may, however, note with some interest the occurrence in Jer 15:8 of the expression *šōdēd baššohrāyim* ("a devastator at mid-day"), a description of one of the horrors that YHWH will send against the people; this could possibly include a subtextual reference to the burning sun, although this is not certain. If so, the expression could represent an appropriation of the old drought weapon. A very similar collocation occurs in Ps 91:6, which mentions that the Psalmist need not be afraid *miqqeṭeb yāšūd šohrāyim* ("of the ravages/pestilence that devastates during midday"). However, one should note that Jer 15:8 could also simply be referring to military attacks at noontime (so Holladay 1986: 443, who simply sees the mid-day/noon as "the time of surprise attacks"). The idea of these passages somehow reference the destroying solar heat was suggested to me in Eskhult 2012: 222. The appearance of the word *qeṭeb* is interesting, given the parallel occurrence of *qoṭobkā* in the "drought-laden" text Hosea 13, the subject of the next sub-chapter.

<sup>366</sup> Lipiński in *TDOT*, vol. XV: 313 [s.v. *šemeš*].

Jer 23:10 speaks of the land “mourning/being dried up” (*’ābal*) because of “cursing” (*’ālā*).<sup>367</sup> The verse also uses *yābēš* for describing the dessicated fate of the “pasturelands of the wilderness” or “open pastures” (*nē’ôt hammidbār*).

In Jer 50:38 and 51:36, drought appears as a weapon of YHWH in his attacks on Babylon. Death is not mentioned outright in either text, but the context of war is of course very much present.<sup>368</sup>

### 3.2.2.6 Conclusions

To sum up, Jeremiah 14 partly seems to represent a different strand of tradition concerning drought than the Carmel narrative, for example. Death is not powerful in itself in this text. The idea of the leaving God is very much at the forefront, and the text shows parallels with passages from the story of Telepinu, in which a leaving god is the main issue. The drought/death pattern is woven into the Jeremiah text in the form of references to war and devastation, taking the form of national plight.

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<sup>367</sup> It is certainly interesting that the drought in Jer 23:10 is associated with “cursing”: one thinks of Danel’s cursing of (or praying to) the clouds in the Aqhat text, *CAT* 1.19 I 38–46 (see section 2.3.4.1). However, this connection rests on only one possible interpretation of the Ugaritic passage, and even if that is correct, the parallel may well be entirely coincidental.

<sup>368</sup> This type of war/drought imagery occurs in other texts of the Hebrew Bible as well—see, for example, Zeph 2:13 and Lam 4:4–9, the latter of which includes references to a tongue sticking to the palate (cf. Ps 22:16 and 137:6) in combination with mentions of dried out skin and people dying.



### 3.2.3 Hosea 13—Drying Eastern Wind, Fever and the Parched Land of Sheol

The thirteenth chapter of the Book of Hosea brings the association between drought and death right to the forefront.<sup>369</sup> In 13:14-15, this is stated in the most clear of terms:

<i>miyyad šē'ōl 'epdēm</i>	Would I redeem them from Sheol,
<i>mimmāwet 'eglā'ēm</i>	would I save them from Death?
<i>'ayyē<sup>370</sup> dēbārēkā māwet</i>	Where are your plagues, O Death,
<i>'ayyē qoṭobkā šē'ōl</i>	where are your ravages, O Sheol?
<i>nōḥam yissātēr mē'ēnāy</i>	Compassion is hidden from my eyes.
<i>kī hū' bēn 'aḥim yaprī'</i>	When he is blossoming among his brothers
<i>yābō' qādīm</i>	the east wind comes,
<i>rūaḥ YHWH</i>	the wind of YHWH
<i>mimmidbār 'ōlē</i>	rises from the desert.
<i>wēyābēs<sup>371</sup> mēqōrō</i>	And his well runs dry,
<i>wēyeḥērab ma'yānō<sup>372</sup></i>	and his spring is dried out. <sup>373</sup>

Note the use of the desert wind imagery to indicate the judging power of YHWH, a device shared with Isaiah 40. Here again, YHWH is both a controller of drought/death (the “where are your ...”-questions definitely seem to imply

<sup>369</sup> As Göran Eidevall notes (1996: 243-246), the binary opposition of fertility versus sterility is very prominent in Hosea 4-14 as a whole. Earlier on in the Book, however, the “absence” motif seems more to the forefront than does the drought-death one, as noted earlier in this volume (see section 3.2.2.1). The Hosean accusation of worshipping Baal is of course no coincidence in this context, and it occurs in chapter 13 as well (v. 1).

<sup>370</sup> Reading follows the LXX's ποῦ instead of the text of the MT, the very difficult 'ēhī (also in the following half-verse). For an overview of other (and rather less convincing) suggestions, see Andersen and Freedman 1980: 639-640.

<sup>371</sup> Instead of MT's ill-fitting and unparallelistic wēyēbōš (“and it is ashamed”), I follow the reading of the Qumran text 4QXII<sup>c</sup>, fragment 9.1 of which includes the reading ybš for Hos 13:15, instead of the consonantal writing ybwš represented by the MT (see Fuller 1992: 248; Andersen and Freedman 1980: 641). A similar understanding is implicit in the rendering of the LXX, καὶ ἀναζηρανεῖ.

<sup>372</sup> I have left out the final words of the chapter, as they deal with quite a different subject (robbing of riches) than the main passage.

<sup>373</sup> The use of the verbal root *ḥrb* may point to another subtle connection between the drought here described and the devastating forces of death, as the verb in question carries the dual meaning of “being laid to waste” and “drying up”—and it may also have included a punning reference to the other root *ḥrb*, “to massacre, fight” (cf. Arabic *ḥarb*, “war”); this root has a different Proto-Semitic background (the cognates of the “drought” root has *ḥ* while the “war” root has *h*), but they may still have been synchronically associated with each other as a form of word play. This would bring to mind passages such as Jeremiah 14, where drought and war are clearly connected. Cf. also the discussion concerning the correct textual reading (*ḥereb* or *ḥōreb*) in Deut 28:22 (see above, n. 326).

God calling up Death to do his bidding) and a weather deity, but here one that uses the “evil wind” for his own purposes. One is reminded here of Marduk’s use of the “evil wind” (*imḥullu*) and the “dust storm” (*ašamšūtu*) as weapons against Tiamat in lines 45-46 and 96 of tablet IV of the *Enuma Elish*. An even more salient parallel to the storm deity using these destroying drought-giving tempests against his enemies can be found in an Assyrian royal inscription of Adad-Nirari I: *Adad ina riḥiṣ lemutti lirḥissu, abūbu imḥullu saḥmaštu tēšū ašamšūtu sunqu bubūtu arurtu ḥušaḥḥu ina mātišu lū kayyān* (“May Adad devastate him with a terrible devastation, and may there always be flood, evil wind, revolt, confusion, dust storm, famine, hunger, drought and lack in his land”).<sup>374</sup> Here, the destruction is outright described in terms of both wind and drought phenomena. The destroying and burning eastern wind sent by YHWH is found in many places. Some examples are Jonah 4:8, which associates it with the hot sun and with death (which Jonah wishes for himself), and Ezek 19:12-13, verses that do not explicitly associate the wind with YHWH but that use clear agricultural and drought-related imagery and speak of “the land of drought and thirst” (*ʿereṣ ṣīyyā wēšammāʿ*).

### 3.2.3.1 *Is Death an Independent Character?*

The expressions in Hosea 13 seem to imply that the drought is to be a punishment for religious disobedience, yet Death is here implied to be an at least semi-autonomous being, albeit under the executive control of the Israelite God. Thus, the passage appears to be more “mythological” in this respect than for example the Carmel narrative, where death is not personified in the same sense. Hosea 13 seems to stand on the threshold between the old conflict myth and the subsuming of the deathlike drought into the hands of YHWH.

This “threshold”-status is reinforced by the dual account of the damning powers of drought and death. In the first lines of the “micro-poem,” the Israelite God seems to address Death/Māwet, almost inciting him to exercise his doom on the victims. But—and this is probably an important point—YHWH appears to mock or taunt Māwet, or at least treat him as some sort of less powerful being who may not be able to cause destruction by his own power. In Hosea generally, the condemnation of Baal worship and threat of drought are important ingredients. Given that the Book attacks worship of Baal, it is especially conspicuous how the passage here quoted almost appears to treat Māwet/Mot, Baal’s great enemy, as a character whose influence YHWH could use for his own purposes. The old adversary is nothing to the Israelite God, the text appears to say, and thus further denigrates Baal by implication.

The weapons ascribed to Māwet in this passage are familiar considering what we have previously seen in this book. The two words *deber* and *qeṭeb/qōṭeb* can both denote illness—the latter is parallel to *rešep* in Deut

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<sup>374</sup> Text published in Ebeling, Meissner and Weidner 1926, 66. Cf. *CAD*, vol A 2: 412 (s.v. *ašamšūtu*).

32:24.<sup>375</sup> This means that Hosea 13 is yet another textual entity that associates drought in nature with the fever and illness that are connected with personified Death. Also, as pointed out by Johannes de Moor, it is highly probable that *qeṭeb/qōṭeb* is really the name of a demon in Death's retinue. He makes the important point that this being seems often to be associated with especially hot weather, which of course is highly interesting given our line of enquiry.<sup>376</sup> Note specifically that Ps 91:6 associates *qeṭeb* with the heat of the mid-day.

After a dividing line ("compassion is hidden from my eyes"), the tone shifts to an actual description of the drought-based evils that will befall the unrighteous—but that account differs in one crucial detail from what has been stated or at least insinuated earlier: the figure of Māwet is nowhere to be seen. Rather, it is YHWH himself who sends the burning eastern wind, causing the wells of the condemned to dry up. One should also note how earlier in the text

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<sup>375</sup> Pointed out in *HALOT* (s.v. *qeṭeb*). A further discussion of this verse can be found in section 4.2.2.

<sup>376</sup> de Moor 1988a, especially pp. 103-104. He also (p. 104) appears to accept a view of this being as connected to illness (besides being associated with heat), as he quotes with favor an idea proposed by the Count of Landberg (*non vidi*), that the word should be etymologically connected to the Modern South Arabian word *qaṭīb*, meaning "smallpox." However, de Moor maintains (pp. 103-105) his position that the main manifestation of the "heat" in question is the sirocco, which is also his view of the relevant passages from the Baal Cycle. In the case of Hosea 13, I agree with him (as seen above), but it should be remembered that I do not regard the relevant passages on Mot at Ugarit as necessarily involving a sirocco. It would be possible to ascribe this imagery of the hot wind to an inner-Israelite development, combining the idea of the southerly, desert God from Sinai and the storm god imagery associated with such deities as Baal and Adad, to which was added powers associated with Mot that YHWH "inherited" during his gradual rise to power among Israelite divinities. Johannes de Moor also quotes (pp. 103-104) a tantalizing snippet of Ugaritic text from the Baal Cycle, *CAT* 1.5 II 20-24 (part of the passage where Mot exults over the defeat of Baal), and points out that these lines mention a word *qzb*, which he regards as a cognate of *qeṭeb/qōṭeb* and as further evidence that this is the name of a demon under the sway of Mot (even, in de Moor's interpretation, sired by him). This suggestion is extremely alluring (de Moor points out that the idea of a demonic "son" of Mot would form a highly interesting background to the talk of *bēkôr māwet* in Job 18:13, a text discussed in this volume also, section 3.3.3.3). But the lines in question are extremely badly preserved, and de Moor has to apply an extensive process of textual reconstruction in order to make this interpretation work: the word for "beget, sire" (*šl*) is missing the first letter, for example. He also reconstructs the name of Rashpu/Resheph in line 24 with a reference to Deut 32:24 (see de Moor's n. 21), which is not self-evident to me. Thus, I find it safest to be agnostic on the issue of Ugaritic *qzb*. One may, however, also note that if it is correct to see in Ps 91:6 (which mentions *qeṭeb yāšūd baššōrāyim*, "ravages/perstilence that devastates at mid-day") a veiled reference to the destructive sun of Death, then that passage and the one in Hos 13:14-15 probably reflect the same greater, mythological construct, which would lend further credence to de Moor's idea. These passages certainly merit further research. See above, n. 365, for more on Ps 91:6.

(Hos 13:7-8), the author lets YHWH talk of himself as a lion threatening to swallow his victim, as Mot does at Ugarit (*CAT* 1.5 I 14-15).

### 3.2.3.2 *The Role of the Hot Wind in YHWH's Relationship to Drought*

The destructive hot winds of YHWH that are in evidence in Hosea (and, in a very “watered down” fashion in Isaiah 40) would be quite a natural part of the theophany of a deity sometimes regarded as having his origin as a desert god from the Sinai/Midianite/Kenite area. But such an idea need not be in opposition to the notion of YHWH appropriating the old drought-imagery once applied to Mot; it is quite possible to imagine a situation in which the “desert-God” characteristics of YHWH served as a catalyst for applying this sort of imagery to what was in other respects a divinity to which the characteristics of Baal and El were ascribed (cf. YHWH’s oft-attested role as storm- and weather god, which would seem rather counterintuitive when juxtaposed to the control of drought that it appears he was thought to have).

If the destructive wind from the desert was already thought of as being part of YHWH’s arsenal, the “transposition” of the Mot-like drought may have met less of an ideological resistance than might otherwise have been the case. But, as seen in the above quote from the Adad-Nirari inscription, dust storms and similar phenomena could be ascribed to storm deities of many kinds (in that case, the Mesopotamian Adad); what I am suggesting is merely that YHWH’s possible connection to desert imagery may have played a part in the artful theological fusion that made a deity standing in the tradition of drought-conquering battle imagery (such as may have been the case in the early layers behind the Carmel story) become a master and sender of drought himself.

### 3.2.3.3 *Sheol as a Dry Land*

The word Sheol itself may carry within it an etymological connection to the idea of dry barrenness. Even though one must be aware that nothing certain is known on this subject, one of the most common etymological explanations of the word *šē’ōl* is to regard it as a derivation from the verb *šā’ā* (“be desolate”) with a suffixed *lāmed*, as in the case of *karmel* and similar words.<sup>377</sup> This verb is usually translated “to be laid waste,” “be devastated,” “lie desolate” or similar, evoking an image of an uninhabited land. But in a number of cognate languages, the root seems to carry with it an idea of dryness very amenable to the picture of death studied in this volume.<sup>378</sup> Thus, the Mandaic verb *šha* means no less than

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<sup>377</sup> This is the view taken by *HALOT* (s.v. *šē’ōl*), based on the suggestion by Koehler (1946).

<sup>378</sup> Another popular idea is to connect the name Sheol with that of the goddess Šuwala, occurring at Emar. See Arnaud 1986: no 385:23; 388:6, 57, de Moor 1990b: 239 and the discussion in Hess 2007.

“wither away, dry out,”<sup>379</sup> and in Syriac, the derivation *šahawātā*<sup>380</sup> means “desert.”

One clear indication that Sheol was thought of as a dry land and connected to these concepts can be found in a text I have already mentioned, Isa 5:13-14, verses which first mention parching thirst as a symbol of exile and destruction and then talk of how Sheol widens its mouth to swallow:

<i>lākēn gālā ʿammī</i>	Therefore my people goes into exile
<i>mibbēlī-dāʿat</i>	because of lack of understanding.
<i>ūkēbōdō mētē rāʿāb</i>	And its nobles die of famine,
<i>wahāmōnō šihē šāmāʿ</i>	and its multitudes are parched with thirst.
<i>lākēn hirhībā šēʿōl napšāh</i>	Therefore Sheol makes its gullet wide
<i>ūpāʿārā pihā liblī-hōq</i>	and opens its mouth without bounds,
<i>wēyārad hādārāh wahāmōnā</i>	so that its nobles and multitudes descend,
<i>ūšēʿōnāh wēʿālēz bāh</i>	and its noise, and those who exult in it.

As seen earlier in this book, in the discussion of the Ugaritic text CAT 1.12, the verbal root here discussed occurs in an account of the wilderness (*mdbr*) in which the fall of Baal occurs, thereby causing drought. In Hosea 13, this word occurs together with Sheol.<sup>381</sup>

### 3.2.3.4 The Exodus and the Land of Feverish Heat

What is remarkable about Hosea 13 is how the drought-death motif is grounded in the Exodus tradition in a way that is not very common in other texts. Thus, 13:5 expresses the arid and desolate climate of the desert of the Exodus in the following way:

<i>ʾānī rēʿītikā<sup>382</sup> bammidbār</i>	I shepherded you in the desert,
<i>bēʿereš talʿūbōt</i>	in the land of dryness (?).

The word *talʿūbōt* is a *hapax legomenon*, the exact meaning of which is highly unclear. Among the ancient versions, it is often interpreted as meaning something like “uninhabited” (LXX ἐν γῇ ἀοικήτω, Vulgate *in terra solitudinis*). It is quite clear that the ancient translators had no real idea what the word meant, and there is no etymological way of defending a translation along those lines.

<sup>379</sup> Drower and Macuch (1963: 450 [s.v. ŠHA I]) define the verb as “to fade, wither, languish, dry up by heat.”

<sup>380</sup> The connection with the Syriac word is made in Koehler 1946: 73.

<sup>381</sup> The view here propounded of Sheol as a land of drought and thirst is to a large extent consonant with that of Breytenbach (1971), who gives a number of examples of biblical passages that illustrate this imagery.

<sup>382</sup> Reading with the suggestion in BHSApp, based on the LXX reading ἐποίμαινόν σε, which makes more sense in the context than the MT’s *yēdaʿ tīkā*.

In modern studies and translations, it is common to regard the word as a term for some sort of aridity, dryness, drought, or something of that sort. Such an interpretation is also congruent with one of the traditional exegeses, as can be seen from the fact that Yehuda ibn Quraysh (9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> century AC) in his *Risala* translates the word with an Arabic term derived from the root *lwb*, “to be dry, arid.”<sup>383</sup>

Such an interpretation would fit well with the parallelism with the “desert” (apparently the Exodus desert is meant). But the question of the etymological origin and explanation of the word remains. Ibn Quraysh apparently took it as derivative of *lwb*. Others have suggested a connection e.g. to Akkadian *la’ābu* or *le’ēbu* (approximately “take a lot of” or “put strain on,” and, especially in the D stem, “to infect”),<sup>384</sup> to the Hebrew root *lhb* (“to burn,” “to blaze”),<sup>385</sup> or a number of others. Regarding *tal’ūbôt* as related to *lhb* is difficult (although not impossible) as the change in the middle radical would be hard to explain—one would then have to regard the present vocable as some sort of dialect word.<sup>386</sup>

The Akkadian derivation (*la’ābu*) is probably to be preferred, but that root is in itself etymologically difficult.<sup>387</sup> If the Hebrew word is indeed related to

<sup>383</sup> HALOT, s.v. *tal’ūbôt*.

<sup>384</sup> HALOT, s.v. *tal’ūbôt*. Cf. also CAD, vol. I: 6 (s.v. *la’ābu*).

<sup>385</sup> So, e.g., Gesenius and Buhl 1915, s.v. *tal’ūbôt*.

<sup>386</sup> An interesting but very audacious proposal is put forth by Szabó (1975:524), who connects *tal’ūbôt* to the root *l’h* or *l’y* (which in various Semitic languages means “to be strong” or, in its inverted sense, “to be weak, tired”), pointing out that this verb may be in evidence in the exceedingly difficult verse 11:7. This interpretation would create a fascinating connection to what appears to be the Ugaritic use of this root to describe killing aridity in the Refrain of the Burning Sun and other places (see section 2.2.1.4). However, the suggestion is quite philologically suspect: the appearance of the *b* is very hard to account for. One (not altogether convincing) possibility could be to regard it some form of intrusive labial glide, inserted after the labial vowel *u*, but this would be a phonological process without parallel in the Hebrew language, and even if one accepts this, one would rather expect the true labial glide *w* and not an occlusive.

<sup>387</sup> The connection made by von Soden (AHw: 521 [s.v. *la’ābu*]) with Arabic *lağaba/lağiba* (“to be tired, exhausted”) would probably defeat the connection with Hosea’s word, as it is very difficult to imagine a *ğayn* appearing as an *’ālep* in Hebrew. One possibility is that the Akkadian verb is really a conflation of two different roots, corresponding to *lhb* (“to blaze”) and *lgb* (“to be tired”), respectively, thus explaining both the dual meanings of the verb (“take a lot of, put strain on” and “infect”) and the dual vocalizations of the Akkadian root, one of which (*le’ēbu*) implies one of the “stronger” gutturals as second radical. One may possibly imagine a loan from this combined root as the basis of *tal’ūbôt*. Albright (1927: 222) proposed that *la’ābu* be a cognate of the Arabic root *lhb*, whose meanings he translates as “to leave a mark on, impress” and (with different vocalization) “become lean (marked) with age.” He apparently saw the “pressing” or “marking” as the central meaning of the root. It would hardly explain the feverish and infectious connotation of the Akkadian verb, however, and I have not found any other reference to this etymology, which, to me, appears rather

the root of Akkadian *la'ābul/le'ēbu*, this may be yet another instance of the connection between the concepts of dryness/drought/aridity and disease, as this root is used to indicate infection. Exactly what infection the Akkadian word refers to is uncertain—its corresponding nominal formation *li'bu* is only translated as “(a disease)” by the *CAD*, but one common interpretation is to view the word as a term for a type of fever.<sup>388</sup>

Especially interesting in the current context is the fact that some texts associate the *l' b*-fever with a condition known as *šētu*, which is associated with the heat of the sun—in fact, the word *šētu* is often written using the Sumerogram UD.DA (“of the sun”).<sup>389</sup> Thus, the medical text *BAM* 2 146 states in lines 44-46:

... *el-i-u-na* UZU.MEŠ-*šu* ŠED<sub>7</sub> [*šap*]*lānu* eš[e]*ntašu* *šarpa* NA.BI  
[UD.D]A TAB.BA-*ma* l[i]'*ba* TUKU

[If ...] his flesh above is cold and his bones below are burning, that man is burned by sun-heat and has *li'bu*.<sup>390</sup>

Thus, this is yet another instance where fever is associated with the powers of the sun. A loan from this doubly nuanced root into the dialect of Hosea would

*ad hoc*, being informed by Albright's wish (p. 221) to use it as an explanation of the Egyptian word *nḥp*, meaning “to mould” (as on a potter's wheel).

<sup>388</sup> It is identified outright with *ummu* and *ḥunṭu*—words meaning “fever”—in various Akkadian synonym lists (see Scurlock and Andersen 2005: 29). The disease *li'bul/la'bu* was common enough that a paragraph from the Code of Hammurapi (§148) deals with the legal results of a man wanting to remarry because his wife has been affected by that illness: *šumma awilum aššatam ṭhuzma, la'bum iššabassi* ... (text according to Richardson 2000). One should note that there is also a variant of the text which uses the vocalization with *i*—see *CAD*, vol. I: 34-35 [s.v. *la'bu*], which interprets the word as a description of a skin disease (see next note on this matter).

<sup>389</sup> For an exhaustive discussion of the word in question, see Stol 2007: 11-15. Stol explicitly notes the connection to the “sun-heat” disease. He additionally notes (p. 11) that there is also a skin disease whose name is derived from the same root called *la'bu*. The “sun-heat” (*šētu*) disease is discussed in great detail in Stol 2007: 22-39; he notes (p. 23) that it is clearly connected to the heat of the afternoon sun in a letter from Mari and mentions that its etymological meaning “coming out” (from the verb *wašūm*) came to refer, by extension, to the shining and heat of the sun. Scurlock and Andersen (2005: 52-53) believe the word medically refers to enteric fevers of various sorts (typhoid etc.). Howsoever that may be, the ancient connection to the heat of the sun is what is important for the present context.

<sup>390</sup> Transcription based on Scurlock and Andersen 2005: 30 (text number 3.17) and on the cuneiform text in *BAM* vol. 2. My translation is also informed by Scurlock and Andersen; I do not, however, follow their explicit identification of *šētu* as enteric fever but prefer the generic expression “sun-heat” used by Stol (2007: 12), who gives a translation of the same text.

create quite a multifaceted reference to the arid lands of the Exodus, including a possible etymological subtext connected with the role of the solar heat as related to feverish illness.

In Hosea 13, the desert of the Exodus and its aridity thus occur in rather close proximity to an almost programmatic declaration of the connectedness between dryness and the powers of death (even, it seems, a personified Death in 13:14). Hosea has YHWH first declare that he has led the Exodus group through an arid land (*ʿereṣ talʿūbōt*), and then later in the same chapter threaten with the drying south wind and the plagues of Death. The two instances of dry tribulation must have been meant to resonate with each other: the ancient dryness of the Exodus desert and the coming dryness of the deathlike judgment. In fact, there may be further biblical evidence of the Exodus desert being thought of in these death-like terms: in Jer 2:6, the land that the Exodus group was thought to have travelled through is portrayed not only as a dry land (*ʿereṣ ʿārābā*, *ʿereṣ ṣīyyā*) but also as a land of pits (*šūhā*) and *šalmāwet*. The relationship between the latter word and the sphere of death is, of course, very much an open question, but the fact remains that this verse paints the Exodus desert in very death-like colors. Note the mention of darkness/shadow of death, remarkable in the context of a description of a dry land—a combination to which I will be returning.

The author of Hosea 13 has thus integrated two different strands of tradition concerning drought: the imagery associated with the Northwest Semitic figure of personified Death is wed to the mytho-historical narrative of the Exodus, and the two traditions are made to illustrate each other by means of their close textual proximity. This is a pattern that will recur in other texts analyzed here, and this fusion of traditions constitutes one of the clearest examples of how the Israelite writers reinterpreted what they had received from their cultural and linguistic background and applied it to their own national narrative. It is, indeed, a most telling instance of both continuity and discontinuity between the greater cultural milieu and the thought of the Old Testament; the particular ethnic and political recasting of the shared ideas concerning death and drought forms a fitting *Gegenstück* to the way the Ugaritic texts apply them to their own royal ideology, as seen in the case of Shapshu's appearance in CAT 1.161, where she seems to play a vital part of the Ugaritic royal funerary/necromantic liturgy, connecting the worlds of the living and the dead kings by means of her heat.

### 3.2.3.5 *A Note on the Word midbār*

The constant talk of the “wilderness/desert” (*midbār*) in this death-laden context possibly highlights yet another connection between the ideas of the blasted, arid regions outside of the cultivated land and the death-like powers: the form of the very word *midbār* itself. The linguistic origin of this word is normally regarded as highly unclear, but its shades of meaning often imply an idea of an arid,



waterless, uninhabited and uncultured land, a home of chaos, so to speak.<sup>391</sup> Given this association with chaotic, unlivable conditions, a possible frame of interpretation presents itself. Notwithstanding the etymological complications besetting *midbār*, one might look to the root behind *deber* (“plague”) and Arabic *dabr* (“death”) for its ancient associations. I do not mean to suggest that this root constitutes the actual historical etymon for *midbār*, but it may very well have been synchronically associated with it through folk-etymology at some point in history, given the many connections between the word and the ideas of death and uncultivated wilderness. The Ugaritic cognates *dbr* and *mdbr*, occur, as has been shown, in connection with the death of Baal, enforcing the link: in *CAT* 1.5 V 17-19, the *dbr* is the place where Baal has sex with a heifer in preparation for his descent into the netherworld, and it is directly paralleled by the poetic expression *šhlmt* (something like “coast plain of death”).<sup>392</sup> In 1.5 VI 5-7, it is the place where Baal is found dead. In the Hebrew Bible, there are a number of places in which the *midbār* is used together with the root *mwt* (“to die”). A number of these places occur in the Pentateuch, a collection of writings not otherwise known for their association between dryness and death.<sup>393</sup>

The (*m*)*dbr* may thus have been associatively thought of as the uncultivated, chaotic land where the powers of death reign, and YHWH sending his destroying east wind from that location shows the extension of his power into the very domains of death itself. As pointed out above, it is quite possible that such a connection might have been made synchronically at some point of the transmission even if this etymological connection is secondary. This would give the “desert wind” a subtext not only on the metaphorical level, but on a linguistic one as well. Again, I would like to point to Ez 19:12-13, in which the east wind, the *midbār* and drought and thirst are expressly associated with one another.<sup>394</sup>

### 3.2.3.6 Other Passages from Hosea

There are of course other places in Hosea where drying or withering plays a large part. One finds it in 2:3, where death is invoked in the form of dying of

<sup>391</sup> Talmon in *TDOT* vol. VIII: 90-91 (s.v. *midbār*). This is precisely the type of land in which Yatpan, the agent of death in the Aqhat story, has his residence.

<sup>392</sup> It should be noted that a translation of the phrase *ars dbr* as “land of plague” or something of that sort has been proposed before. Such was the stand taken by Hvidberg (1962: 27, esp. n. 2) and earlier by Driver (1956: 107).

<sup>393</sup> For the pairing of desert/wilderness and the verb “to die”, see Illman 1979: 28-29, where a number of textual examples are enumerated, among them Ex 14:11-12 and Deut 9:28. As pointed out by Illman, the context here is often one of people being taken out into the desert and dying there.

<sup>394</sup> Similar imagery also occurs earlier in the book, in Ezek 17:9-10. Other passages in which the destructive, hot and eastern wind is alluded to (often with YHWH as its origin) include Isa 27:8, Jer 18:17, Ps 48:7-8 and Ps 78:26. I would like to thank Marjo Korpel (p.c.) for pointing these passages out to me.

thirst. In that verse, the drought is also connected to YHWH himself, as he threatens to subject Israel (given the imagery of an unfaithful woman) to the sufferings of aridity. In 4:3 it is said that the land will dry out/mourn (*ʿābal*) and that its inhabitants will be withered (*ʿumlal*). Hos 9:16 talks of Ephraim being subjected to drought, and 13:3 (part of the same chapter discussed above) uses dried up morning mist as a metaphor for the transience of the lives of the unfaithful. The latter imagery returns in texts I shall discuss from the Wisdom of Solomon (see section 3.4.1).

### *3.2.3.7 Conclusions*

As I have tried to demonstrate, the Book of Hosea contains a number of quite archaic references to the drought-death motif. In Hosea 13, it appears that Death is a semi-independent character, who in some way cooperates with YHWH in sending the destroying drought. This text thus seems to represent a midpoint in the development of drought power from being the prerogative of an autonomous power into becoming a weapon of the Israelite God. YHWH's hot desert wind is syncretized with the old "Mot"-type drought in order to make this "cooperation" work conceptually.

### 3.2.4 Joel—the Mourning of the Land and the Virgin

One of the most conspicuous drought accounts in the Hebrew Bible occurs in the Book of Joel. In that text, the case of drought seemingly cooccurs with an attack of locusts (and possibly a real army too), and a scholarly discussion has ensued as to whether these two disruptive natural phenomena (the drought and the locusts) could originally have been part of the text together, as locusts would not normally attack a land devoid of greenery,<sup>395</sup> a line of reasoning that might lead to various layers being adduced in the text, based on this agricultural discrepancy. Howsoever this may be (and I personally think that a division based on the diet of—possibly metaphorical—locusts would be a case of blatant hypercriticism), the text as it now stands seems to use drought as one example amongst several of great agricultural calamities, which are tied to the imminent coming of the fiery “day of YHWH” (which is explicitly connected to the destroying ruler-sun of the Israelite God in Mal 3:19-21).

#### 3.2.4.1 Comparative Perspectives on Joel 1:8

The question is whether the drought referred to in Joel has any clear connections in its motifs to the earlier Northwest Semitic accounts studied earlier in this book. It so happens that a very explicit such connection was made by Flemming Friis Hvidberg,<sup>396</sup> an idea taken up and popularized by Miloš Bič, who in his commentary on the Book contended that the “virgin” (*bētûlâ*) who cries over the death of the *baʿal* of her youth in 1:8 represents a reminiscence of Anat’s lament over the dead Baal, as exemplified by the Ugaritic Baal Cycle.<sup>397</sup> The lines from Joel are the following:

<p>ʿēlî kibētûlâ ḥăgûrat-śaq          ʿal-baʿal nēʾûrêhâ</p>	<p>Lament like a virgin clad in sackcloth          over the <i>baʿal</i> of her youth.</p>
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The comparandum occurs specifically in the following famous passage, which occurs after Baal has died; Anat removes her normal clothing and puts on a loin cloth, the sign of mourning:

<p>ġr . b ab&lt;n&gt; . td .          psltm [. b yʿr]          thdy . lhm . w dqn .          t[t]l[t] qn . drʿh .          thrt . km . gn ap lb .</p>	<p>[Anat] scrapes her skin with a stone,          with a piece of flint as a razor.          She cuts her cheeks and chin,          She thrice-plows the bones in her arm,          she plows her chest like a garden,</p>
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<sup>395</sup> One scholar who takes this view is Deist (1988: 64), who argues that the text can hardly talk both of literal locusts and a literal drought at the same time, but that both these catastrophes are rather to be regarded as purely metaphorical for this very reason. See also the discussion and further references in Barton 2001: 45-48.

<sup>396</sup> Hvidberg 1962: 141-142.

<sup>397</sup> Bič 1960: 22-24. See also Kapelrud 1948: 32-33.

<i>k<sup>ˁ</sup>mq . tlt . bmt .</i>	like a valley she thrice-plows her back.
<i>b<sup>ˁ</sup>l . mt . my . lim .</i>	“Baal is dead—what of the peoples,
<i>bn dgn my . hmlt .</i>	the Son of Dagan—what of the multitudes?
<i>atr . b<sup>ˁ</sup>l . nrd b arṣ .</i>	After Baal we will descend into the netherworld.”
<i>ˁmh . trd . nrt ilm špš .</i>	To her descends Shapshu, the divine lamp.
<i>ˁd . tšb<sup>ˁ</sup> . bk</i>	Until she is satiated with crying
<i>tšt . kyn . udm<sup>ˁ</sup> t .</i>	she drinks tears like wine.

(CAT 1.6 I 2-10)

Bič’s argument rests partly on the difficulty inherent in interpreting the couple alluded to as two unmarried youths, the male having expired during the terrible drought. According to him, this meaning—a bridegroom—is not possible for the word *ba<sup>ˁ</sup>al*, which is supposed to refer exclusively to an actual married man, which would fit rather badly in the context. Thus, Bič argues, we should take *ba<sup>ˁ</sup>al* as the proper name of a deity.<sup>398</sup>

This means that Bič took a very clear stance in associating the Joel passage with earlier Northwest Semitic religious history, and specifically with the mourning over the dead storm god as recounted in the Baal Cycle. Such an interpretation may today be criticized as an instance of “pan-Ugariticism.” However, the argument concerning the meaning of *ba<sup>ˁ</sup>al* seems to me to be convincing in its main parts: the word is not usually used to denote a bridegroom or betrothed man. There have been attempts to overcome this problem by assuming some form of prenuptial arrangement to be implied here, but I cannot help but feel that this is stretching the evidence somewhat.<sup>399</sup> Also, the use of the word *bētûlâ* would create a very nice echo from the *bltt*-terminology applied to Anat.

The idea that Anat and Baal might be a point of reference in this verse is in itself not hard to believe: Baal was, of course, well known in Israelite society, and a widespread acquaintance with the figure of Anat is proven by the existence of Anat as (part of) a personal name in the Old Testament (*šamgar ben-‘ānāt* in Judg 3:31 and 5:6), by its occurrence in biblical toponyms (*bēt-‘ānāt* in Josh 19:38 and Judg 1:33, and possibly *‘ānātôt* in 1 Kings 2:26, etc.) and by the presence of a female deity known as Anat-Yahu in the Elephantine

<sup>398</sup> Bič’s skepticism about an unmarried *ba<sup>ˁ</sup>al* has found favor in the eyes of Nogalski (1993: 19), who does, however, not necessarily accept that the virgin in question is meant to be Anat.

<sup>399</sup> The LXX translator seems to have had some similar interpretation in mind, using the expression ἐπὶ τὸν ἄνδρα αὐτῆς τὸν παρθενικόν (“for her ‘maiden-man’”). This is not a common Greek expression; in Plutarch’s *Pompeius*, chap. 74, the similar collocation παρθένιος ἀνὴρ occurs (in the sense of “husband of maidenhood” or “first husband”), but the expression is definitely somewhat odd and probably shows the difficulty the translator must have felt in conveying the sense of the original (or, indeed, understanding it).

Papyri (also displaying the possibility of using Anat in an otherwise Yahwist context). A reference to the goddess Anat has also been suggested in Ex 32:18, when Moses hears the *‘ānôt*.<sup>400</sup> This seems less compelling to me, though not impossible. Still, with or without this attestation, knowledge of Anat is well secured for ancient Israelite religion. A reference to Anat and Baal together would thus not be overly strange. One should, however, note that such a reference must not necessarily be taken as evidence that Joel is to be regarded as an exceptionally ancient text; as seen in a number of places in this study (cf. the chapter on Malachi) it is quite possible for old mythological material to be present in late texts as well, possibly having been preserved for centuries in the popular consciousness.<sup>401</sup>

One might object to the interpretation of 1:8 as an implicit reference to Anat and Baal on the grounds that the use of the words *ba‘al* and *bētûlâ* would be the first go-to choice if the author were inclined simply to paint a picture of a dead young man being mourned by his young wife (or, possibly, wife to be). Could these words not, one may ask, be the most natural way of expressing this quite non-mythological notion?

To this I would answer that the use of these words are not quite as self-evident as it may seem. It would have been quite as easy to refer to the young woman with some other word, such as *‘almâ* or *na‘ārâ*, had the author intended a totally unidentified female. The combination of the terms *bētûlâ* and *ba‘al* has a specific religio-historical coloring, which would probably have been felt by the readers/hearers of the text.

### 3.2.4.2 Other Relevant Co-Motifs and the Question of Genre

Just prior to the passage on the mourning girl, the text mentions a vine and a fig tree being destroyed and compares the attack of the enemy to the maws of a great lion. The motifs of ruined symbols of agricultural fertility and enormous, mawling jaws—followed by the death of a *ba‘al* and the subsequent mourning over the same—recall the effects of Mot’s rule in the land, his great mouth that swallows all and the mourning rites over Baal known from the Ugaritic texts.<sup>402</sup> These old motifs create a fitting backdrop for the lament over drought—even though it is here used in a Yahwistic context. Whether or not the virgin really “is” Anat or not is not the material point—but the terminology used to denote

<sup>400</sup> Delcor 1982.

<sup>401</sup> As noted in the Introduction (section 1.4.3) classical example of this is Isa 27:1, which contains an almost verbatim repetition of the first lines of CAT 1.5, including one word—*‘āqallātôn*—which is otherwise a *hapax legomenon* in the Hebrew Bible and must therefore be part of an inherited poetic formula. Isa 27 is part of the Isaiah Apocalypse and is generally viewed as a late composition.

<sup>402</sup> Note especially CAT 1.5 I 15, where Mot compares his appetite to precisely that of a “lion” (*lbu*) of the “wilderness” or “chaos” (*thw*). YHWH is also depicted as a raging and swallowing lion in Hos 13:7-8, in the middle of a chapter dealing expressly with drought and death. A further reference to this motif may be intended in Amos 1:2.

her and the object of her mourning is used to bring Anat and Baal to mind.<sup>403</sup> The context of the verse makes this comparison even more poignant: the daughter of Zion is called upon to cry like the “virgin.” The artful transformation of the old religious ideology concerning the battle between Baal and Mot turns it into a question of divine retribution, as the fiery day of YHWH is later mentioned. The one causing the young *baʿal* of the virgin to die is, implicitly, none other than YHWH, who sends out the terrible “day” and its calamitous effects, but is also the lord of rain and fertility. The text thus takes on a character similar to the Carmel story in 1 Kings 18, where a transposition of the battle between Baal and Mot into the character of YHWH also appears to occur. Note also how there might be an implicit mocking of Baal in Joel 1:8, in a way similar to the taunts of Elijah in the Carmel text.

The interpretation of Joel 1:8 is to some extent dependent upon one’s view of the genre of the Book as a whole. Viewed as a prophetic text in the classical sense of the word, it is perhaps less likely that it should contain this sort of mythological reference as a metaphorical device, but rather straight, political discourse. However, a perusal of the text of Joel shows no clear reference to political reality at all. If the attack of locusts refers to the onslaught of an army, there is no indication at all as to which army this might be—and at which point in history this might be happening.

The book does, however, abound in metaphorical language and has a distinctly eschatological point of view—the “day of YHWH” is much at the forefront. Thus, the ties to apocalyptic are not to be disregarded. In such a context, mythological references are almost to be expected. As a subgenre, the passages in chapter 1 are in many ways akin to a lament (paralleling the many well-known examples of city-laments in the Ancient Near East), and, indeed, verse 1:8 has a distinctly mournful character. The view of Kapelrud,<sup>404</sup> that the Book ought to be interpreted as some sort of liturgical piece is not compelling in my mind—one need not think of the First Temple for there to be references to mythological material.

### 3.2.4.3 *An Alleged Ugaritic Parallel to Joel 2:9*

There is another instance in which Bič believed that the text of Joel references the myth of Baal and Mot.<sup>405</sup> This is the verse 2:9, where the text describes how

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<sup>403</sup> Thompson (1974: 454) finds the view that the prophecy of Joel is a polemic against Baalism to be unconvincing, as there are no clear references in the Book to Baal, non-Yahwistic worship, cult heights etc, and believes that this invalidates any claim to a mythological background for the “virgin” and her *baʿal*. This is a valid piece of criticism of that specific interpretation (an overtly “polemical” one) of the idea, but not of the concept of Baal and Anat being (indirectly) referred to in 1:8—such a reference could simply be a matter of religio-historical survival or “quotation” from well known mythological material: it need not be a matter of polemics.

<sup>404</sup> Kapelrud 1948: 191.

<sup>405</sup> Bič 1960: 55.

the enemies enter the city by “coming in through the windows like a thief.” Bič compared this expression to a passage in the Baal Cycle where, allegedly, there seems to be a risk of Mot entering through the windows.<sup>406</sup>

However, this old interpretation of the Ugaritic text in question is probably not correct; the text seems instead to warn of some risk to Baal’s daughters (the idea that Mot is the threat in this case is based on a false analogy with Jer 9:20, where Death entering windows is clearly described). This purported reference to Mot in Joel is thus the result of a sort of comparativist circular reasoning: a passage in the Baal Cycle was (erroneously) explained by reference to a biblical text, and the result of this explanation was then re-read into another biblical passage.

### 3.2.4.4 Locusts and Groaning Animals

Going back to chapter 1, we find later on an account of the effects of drought borrowing from the same sphere of motifs as that found in Jeremiah 14. Verse 18 talks of the groaning laments of the animals in a way which is clearly reminiscent of the Jeremiah passage and the tradition possibly going back to stories such as the Hittite Telepinu story (see my analysis in section 3.2.2.1). Also, Joel 1:19-20 state very clearly the connection between the idea of “fire” and drought that appears at many points of the present study:

<i>ʿēlēkā YHWH ʿeqrāʾ</i>	To you, o YHWH, I cry,
<i>kī ʿēš ʾākēlā nēʾōt midbār</i>	for fire has swallowed the open pastures,
<i>wēlehābā lihāṭā</i>	and a flame has burned
<i>kol-ʿāṣē haššādē</i>	all the trees of the field.
<i>gam-bahāmōt šādē</i>	The animals of the field also
<i>taʿārōg ʿēlēkā</i>	pant to you,
<i>kī yābēšū ʾāpīqē-māyim</i>	for the brooks of water have dried,
<i>wē ʿēš ʾākēlā nēʾōt hammidbār</i>	fire has swallowed the open pastures.

At the beginning of this passage, it could appear that the “fire” is solely connected to the devastating effects of war and invasion, but the last two lines clearly show that the fire and the drought are associated with each other, that they are part of the same problem complex. They are, so to speak, different instances of the same destroying heat. Thus the association with destroying fire discussed at many points in this study appears here as well. Note also the

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<sup>406</sup> The relevant passage (CAT 1.4 VI 1-15) forms part of the discussion between Kothar and Baal on whether or not a window ought to be installed in Baal’s temple. Due to this discussion being followed a while later by Mot’s attack, the idea has been proposed—originally by Cassuto (1975: 135, although the original article was published in 1938)—that the window would be the path he used and that Jer 9:20 showed an old reminiscence of this. There is, however, no direct evidence of this in the text whatsoever. See Pitard and Smith 2009: 602-604 for a thorough discussion of this problem, with ample references.

association between “open pastures” or “pasturelands of the wilderness” (*nē’ōt hammidbār*) being destroyed, together with references to drought; this recalls Jer 23:10, mentioned obliquely in section 3.2.2.5.

Read in the context of survivals from the common Northwest Semitic poetic background, the locusts themselves (and their association with drought) could possibly also reflect a piece of ancient tradition. If it is correct—As Kapelrud surmises<sup>407</sup>—that the strange monsters that kill Baal in the Ugaritic text *CAT* 1.12 are to be identified as locusts, another interesting connection suggests itself. As I have argued in section 2.3.2.2, those monsters are to be interpreted as representatives of death, and their attack on Baal causes drought to ensue. If they are, indeed, locusts, both texts would show the combination between locusts and the death of the land, including references to the mourning over Baal.<sup>408</sup> This connection is quite speculative, but nevertheless, it is my opinion that the first chapter of Joel draws on very old material concerning drought and the theologies surrounding it, using those ideas to paint its own eschatological view of the day of YHWH.

### 3.2.4.5 Terminology of Drought in Joel 1—and a Discussion of the Verbs *’ābal* and *’umlal*

As if to reaffirm the centrality of drought to the first chapter of Joel—and to further associate it with the motif of death—a number of specific words stand out which are related to these two semantic spheres, and serve to connect them on a linguistic level. One of these is the verb *’ābal*, which, as has been seen earlier, carries with it the suggestive dual meaning “to mourn” and “to dry up,” both of which are used to great effect in the present context (v. 1:10).<sup>409</sup> This combined significance is of course very important as part of the poetic “toolbox” used to invoke the images in question. One might also note that this verbal root occurs in the Ugaritic Aqhat text in the (symbolic) name of one of the towns near which the hero was slain, *qrt ablm*. The mourning in that case is of course directly related to Aqhat’s death, but the double meaning may be inherent there, too, as a drought is, after all, the direct result of the death in question.

Generally, the account of the collapse of nature in Joel 1 is painted in dark, funeral colors, by way of the terminology used. For example, the mourning singing of the priests as occasioned by the lack of verdure is referred to in 1:13

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<sup>407</sup> Kapelrud 1969: 324-325.

<sup>408</sup> If the imagery of the invading locust swarms in Joel is symbolic of an attacking army, one might very well be led to think of a connection to the parallel account of the great army of king Kirta, which is, indeed, compared to a multitude of locusts (*CAT* 1.14 II 50-III 1, also noted in Ahlström 1971: 56-57); and, as has been discussed, the Kirta text does seem to include a brief passage concerning drought, but this is in the later parts of the epic, that show little relation to the passage describing the army. Thus any such connection to drought must probably be rejected.

<sup>409</sup> Also noted, for example, by Kapelrud (1948: 37).



using the verb *sāpad* (“to sing a funeral dirge”). The mourners wear sack—the classical dress of those who mourn the dead.

Another important verb occurring in v. 1:12 is *ʾumlal* (which, together with *ʾābal*, also occurs in Jeremiah 14, another text studied in this book). The word means “to wither” or “dwindle,” but the root *ʾml* can also carry with it a reference to feverish heat; this meaning occurs in Ez 16:30, when the author talks of how the personified Jerusalem has burned with the passion of a harlot. Such a semantic association is quite interesting to the present study, as it has been shown earlier in the book that there are a number of combined instances of feverish sickness and drought in nature—for a most explicit example of this, see the section on the above-mentioned Ugaritic text *CAT* 1.12, in which Baal is first inflicted with such a burning bodily ailment and then collapses (seemingly dead), leading to failure of verdure and vegetation in the land. Fever is the domain of Resheph/Rashpu, who has been shown to be associated with Shapshu, the giver of drought in the Baal Cycle. The use of a verb which may imply such a feverish malaise could—given the probable reference to Anat’s mourning over Baal in Joel 1:8—be taken as a veiled allusion to the concept of the burning, killing sickness that brings death both to the weather god himself and to the land.

There are other instances in which *ʾumlal* appears to be associated with the sphere of death and dying. One such is 1 Sam 2:5-6, verses that speak of the “withering” of a mother of many children, a conception which is clearly connected to dying in v. 6.<sup>410</sup> A parallel expression exists in Jer 15:9, close to the “drought” section in chapter 14 (see further section 3.2.2.2).<sup>411</sup> One highly salient instance is Isa 24:4, which includes the verbs *ʾābal*, *nābēl* and *yābēš* in close combination; this verse does not explicitly mention death, but its sphere of associations is certainly not far away.

If the monsters bringing on the feverish sickness in *CAT* 1.12 are interpreted (with Kapelrud) as locusts, the combined parallels between that text and Joel 1 would be quite striking:

- \* Locusts
- \* A dead “Baal”
- \* Drought
- \* Possible references to feverish hotness in connection with the drought

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<sup>410</sup> One may also note the reference in v. 4 to the “bow of heroes” (*qešet gibbōrīm*) being broken, a piece of imagery recalling the story of Aqhat, in which a bow is broken and a hero killed, whereupon a great drought ensues.

<sup>411</sup> One may note again that Jer 15:9 also includes a reference to the sun, but here the imagery is one of the sun setting during the day, illustrating a terrible, death-like fate. This common Near Eastern image, perhaps related to the idea of the chthonic sun, has no drought associations whatsoever in this text (even more interesting, as the verse speaks of “withering”). This is again a sign of the sun not being very conspicuous in Old Testament drought imagery (see further section 4.1).

However, it must be understood that such a close correlation of motifs rests heavily upon quite uncertain conclusions, both regarding who the *ba'al* of Joel 1:8 really is and about the interpretation of the Ugaritic text. However, it is hard not to note the possibilities.

If, for the sake of argument, one accepts the above line of reasoning, seeing a stream of tradition which includes both a rather obscure text from Ras Shamra and the first chapter of the biblical Book of Joel—how is one then to account for the parallel? It can probably not be any matter of the author of the biblical account having somehow read a version of the older tale—the texts are quite far removed from each other both in time and perspective (genre, etc.). Rather, it must in such a case be a question of common inherited motifs, shared by a larger Levantine cultural milieu, a common symbolical universe in which both Ugaritic and Israelite culture took part. Such must be the case when Isa 27:1 “quotes” the beginning of the fifth tablet of the Baal Cycle—it is not a matter of a literal quotation from an earlier text but of dipping into a great, shared pool of mythological and poetic material which must, so to speak, have been there for the taking. If Joel 1:8 does indeed allude to the death of Baal in connection with the drought, one need ascribe to that passage neither pre-Israelite “paganism” nor anti-Baal rhetoric: it may simply be a matter of using known, common imagery and motifs for greater effect.

#### *3.2.4.6 The Relationship to the “Day of YHWH”*

Later on in the Book of Joel, the Day of YHWH comes more and more to the forefront. It is a burning day of wrath, which destroys those who are wicked in the eyes of the Israelite God. At first glance, the connection between the drought episode of chapter one and this majestic eschatological sequel may seem ephemeral and difficult to grasp, but if one compares with the depiction given of YHWH’s judgment at the end of the Book of Malachi (see my analysis in section 3.2.5) the common element stands out in full color: the common motif is that of burning, of heat (in various guises)—in Mal 3:19-21, this is, as will be shown, stated straight out, with the sun as the chosen medium of YHWH’s judgment. In Joel, this ancient symbolism is not as clearly articulated, but the motifs of death and burning heat are still very much center stage, and the solar imagery inherited from the common Northwest Semitic background can be detected in the background. The burning judgment of YHWH is a central message of the Book as a whole, and it apparently draws on a number of quite ancient mythological references to drive its message home.

#### *3.2.4.7 Conclusions*

The book of Joel is one in which drought is quite central. The first chapter of the book is filled with references to it, and it speaks of that drought in terms clearly connected to the semantic sphere of death (using verbs such as *’ābal* and *sāpad*). Verse 1:8 includes a possible reference to Anat’s mourning of Baal, and the text moves forward towards the burning, eschatological finale in the later

part of the Book. The ancient motifs contained in the Book are not necessarily arguments in the question of its dating.

### 3.2.5 Mal 3:19-21 and the Burning Sun of Righteousness

There are not too many places in the Hebrew Bible where one finds the “drought theology” expressly stated using the figure of the sun. The one which to my mind most clearly does this is Mal 3:19-21. Here we find the following interesting juxtaposition:

*Kî-hinnê hayyôm bā' bō'ēr kattannûr wêhâyû kol-zēdîm wêkol-ôšê riš'â qaš wêliha' 'ôtām hayyôm habbā' 'āmar YHWH šēbā'ôt 'āšer lō' ya'āzōb lāhem šōreš wē'anāp / wēzārēhā lākem yir'ê šēmî šemeš šēdāqā ûmarpē bikēnāpēhā wîšā'tem kē'eglê marbēq / wē'assōtem rēšā'im kî-yihyû ēper taḥat kappôt raglêkem bayyôm 'āšer 'ānî 'ôšê 'āmar YHWH šēbā'ôt*

For behold, the day will come, burning like an oven, when all the insolent ones and all doers of evil will be stubble; the coming day will burn them, says YHWH of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But it will rise for you who fear my name—the sun of righteousness, and healing will be in its wings. You will come out leaping like fattened calves. And you will trample the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says YHWH of hosts.

In this text one finds an interesting fusion between the sun used as an image of justice and rulership—the “judging” sun of the Mesopotamian Shamash-type—and a vestige of the old, burning “drought sun” occurring in the Ugaritic texts. The sun is both a terrible danger and a source of salvation: on one hand, the “day” (i.e. the sun) burns the evildoers up with its heat (the author even uses the openly agricultural metaphor of the “root and branch,” which further reinforces the imagery), but on the other the “sun of righteousness” (*šemeš šēdāqā*) will rise and bring healing. We have an opposition between the juridical ruler sun and the “sun of death” which is apparent also in the Ugaritic texts (cf. Shapshu’s rebuke against Mot, see section 2.2.6.1), and not only that: the reference to “healing” (root *rp*) is a possible parallel to the Ugaritic role of sun as healer of snake-bites etc.<sup>412</sup> Thus this passage constitutes a very clear example of the survival into the OT age and literature of the different versions of the solar imagery of the common Northwest Semitic Bronze Age. The killing drought (the “Mot type” sun) and the “sun of righteousness” are here integrated into the character of YHWH, and we see also in this instance how the death of the land, which in the Baal Cycle is a sign of the weakness of the divine king, is transformed into an act of judgment by a divinity who is by definition never “in the hands of Death.” But the “tool” both of YHWH’s judgment and his righteousness is the sun, which therefore serves as a narratological marker in

<sup>412</sup> The parallel between Mal 3:19-21 and the Ugaritic snake-bite texts was pointed out in Levine and de Tarragon 1988: 507-508.

much the same way that it does in the Ugaritic texts. The two ideas of drought and *ṣedāqā* are united through the medium of the solar imagery, just as in the case of the Ugaritic use of Shapshu as a symbol both of killing drought and righteous rule. The “sun of righteousness” is here expressly described as the Near Eastern winged solar disk<sup>413</sup> (found also at Ugarit)—an explicitly royal symbol—but its devastating effects on the evildoers is described using the old Northwest Semitic imagery of the burning sun. The fact that roots and branches are mentioned seems almost to be meant to ensure that this drought metaphor is not lost on the reader. But precisely as in the story of Elijah and the great drought, the old motif is used with a monotheist Yahwist twist: the deciding factor as to who is to be “burned” and who is to be “healed” is some sort of internalized moral or religious principle. No longer is an outside cosmic battle the source of the distinction.

Using the burning drought sun to illustrate the common prophetic idea of the “day of YHWH” constitutes an impressive combination of old and recent theological imagery.<sup>414</sup> The use of the description of the burnt “stubble” (*qaš*) connects the passage to similar imagery used of the “day of YHWH” for example in Joel 2:5. The image of stubble being burned is one often found in the Hebrew Bible (Isa 5:24, 33:11, 47:14; Obad 18 and by implication Ex 15:7 and Nah 1:10),<sup>415</sup> but here, the use of the sun as a vehicle brings another layer of metaphor and intertextuality into the text by combining this with the drought sun of Ugarit and the judging sun of Mesopotamia. The fact that this very passage has continued into Christian imagery concerning Jesus creates a very interesting piece of survival of Bronze Age ideological material into a much later age.<sup>416</sup>

The present piece of text is yet another example of a fact that becomes apparent at many places in this study: the motifs of death and drought, which are often considered to be very archaic in nature, sometimes occur in rather late texts. In a clearly post-exilic text such as Malachi, the old mytheme appears again very clearly, even using a completely overt agricultural reference.

### 3.2.5.1 Drought as Obstacle or as Divine Weapon?

There is, however, a few crucial differences between the drought/“burning sun” imagery as it is here portrayed and what can be found for example in the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal. In the Carmel episode, the drought is something to be overcome. Even through the drought which Elijah faces is

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<sup>413</sup> Deissler 1988: 336; Gray 1974: 5, n. 1. However, it should be noted that Gray (p. 1) attributes the imagery of the destroying day combined with the “sun of righteousness” to late, Zoroastrian influence, rather than viewing it as a Northwest Semitic remnant.

<sup>414</sup> The connection between the Day of YHWH and the destroying drought is also made in Joel 1:15-17.

<sup>415</sup> Hill 1998: 347.

<sup>416</sup> The use of the “sun of righteousness”-imagery by Ephraem of Edessa is an example of this (cf. Tubach 1986: 92).

definitely under the control of the Israelite God, it is still a problem to be defeated (in the case of the canonically transmitted Elijah story, through correct sacrifice and belief in the right god). The drought in the Carmel story is a test case to determine which of the old storm/fertility god figures is the real God with capital G.

In Malachi 3, matters are quite different. Here, the drought is no obstacle to be defeated, by battling storm gods or by intercessionary rituals by prophets. Whereas the Carmel story retains some reminiscences of the old “conflict story” of the battle between fertility and drought, the passage in Malachi 3 shows a drought (complete with “burning sun”) as an unequivocal weapon of the Israelite God against the unrighteous.<sup>417</sup> The drought and burning have been internalized in the figure of YHWH himself: they are his tools, rather than part of a mythological drama. The manifestations of what in the Ugaritic epics were the powers of Baal and Mot here are subsumed into the power of the Israelite God. In the words of Hvidberg: “Yahweh came to stand outside and above the forces of Nature, he is *Lord* of them, he is the *Giver* of growth of the soil, and he is the one who opens and closes wombs.”<sup>418</sup> And what applies to “growth of the soil” the present passage shows to be quite as relevant to burning drought, *nota bene* in a text as comparatively late as Malachi. At earlier times the “subsuming” process does not seem to have gone as far as seen here.

### 3.2.5.2 *The Sun and the Day of YHWH*

The other obvious difference is the one mentioned above: the fact that the Malachi text actually mentions the burning sun. In the Carmel story, the sun seemed almost conspicuous by its absence, but in Malachi 3 it is one of the most central symbols, in the guise of the “day of YHWH.” But the old “drought sun” still shines clearly through: even though the sun is only mentioned by name as the “sun of righteousness,” the fate of the evildoers is very clearly described using solar references reminiscent of those found in the Baal Cycle.

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<sup>417</sup> If it is correct that the original literary layer of the Carmel story is the short passage at the end of 1 Kings 18, as argued elsewhere (3.1.1.2), and that the original pre-Deuteronomistic story was simply one of a prophet defeating a terrible drought, the dichotomy becomes even clearer. In that case, the “proto-Carmel” story was indeed one concerning the battle against drought by means which might almost be described as “magical”: a prophet using ritual means to tap the power of the storm god YHWH to defeat the “death of the land”. The Malachi 3 passage, on the other hand, has the Israelite God as the cause of the drought and the burning sun from the very beginning. One can here see a possible progression from the early “micropolytheist” stage with drought as an enemy to be defeated by the “man of God” Elijah, to the Deuteronomistic ideological reinterpretation as a conflict not only against drought itself but also against the rather caricatured “Baal” of the Carmel story, whose worshipers try but fail to call forth the rain and fertility which ought to be his hallmarks, and finally to the theological stance of Malachi 3, where drought and burning sun are mere theologized tools of YHWH himself.

<sup>418</sup> Hvidberg 1962: 136.

The combination between the solar imagery and the description of the “day of YHWH” fuses two rather different strands of Israelite theology into a coherent whole, into a means of expressing theophany. The “day” is one of eschatological hope, and it is often interpreted in quite a bellicose manner as referring to a great battle.<sup>419</sup> There are no clear references to war in the present passage from Malachi: the one concept that could possibly be interpreted in that way is the “treading down” or “trampling” of the unrighteous mentioned in verse 3:21.

As was noted above, there are still parallels between the present passage and one of the more warlike descriptions of the Day of YHWH, viz. Joel 2. In that chapter one finds a combination between very clear references to war and fire metaphors. The burning flames of the fighting people are described in 2:3 with the words *lēpānāyw ʾākēlā ʿēš / wēʾahārāyw tēlahēṭ lehābā* (“in front fire devours / and behind burns a flame”). The imagery of “burning” which is associated with the day of YHWH in our Malachi passage is here given a clear expression, albeit not one having a solar reference. It seems that the author of the book of Malachi combines different motifs or strands of tradition: the burning flame connected to the day of YHWH and its connotations of war and destruction, the old pre-Israelite “burning sun”-theology and the “solarized,” ruling YHWH with *šēdāqā* as his main attribute. This combined reference seems to be very apparent to the author himself, as he mentions the solar disk in connection with the burning but describes the result of this incineration by talking of the wicked as being turned not only to “stubble” but to “ashes” (*ʿēper*), something that seems more typical of war-time fires than of an ever-so-hot sun. The combination between solar heat and wartime burning evokes imagery almost reminiscent of a nuclear bomb!

In fact, the situation which the Malachi text describes fits quite well with what is described in other passages discussed in this book. Especially salient is the parallel with the passages in Psalm 102 (see section 2.2.4), which also use metaphors of agricultural drought as well as the image of the burning furnace (in Psalm 102 the probable word is *môqēd* while the Malachi text uses *tannûr*, but the underlying imagery seems to be the same).

The idea—apparent in the present passage—that the burning sun could provide both destroying heat and healing seems to be congruent with the interpretation offered in this study of Ps 84:12 (see section 3.3.1). I there discuss YHWH’s burning *kābôd* as a somewhat dangerous and possibly destructive force with solar ingredients, but one which could still entail protection towards those humans faithful to God. In this context, I would like to draw attention to Ex 24:17, which describes the *kābôd* of the Israelite God as a burning fire, the same sort of force that fights on the Day of YHWH in Joel (both use the verb *ʾākal*, “to devour”) and seems vaguely implied in the Malachi passage here discussed, but with a clear solar “twist.” The fact that the burning heat of the

<sup>419</sup> So, for example, von Rad 1959: 99.

“day” and the sun also provide healing is not strange, considering the protective elements apparent in these passages as pertains to the group of people which Malachi views as “fearing the name of YHWH.” A similar dual view of the burning sun can perhaps be found in Isa 30:26, which says that the glow of the hot sun (*ḥammâ*) will be sevenfold on the day when YHWH heals the wounds of his people.<sup>420</sup>

As noted above, the sun that has “healing on its wings” may very well imply a reminiscence of the medicinal roles of Shapshu in the Ugaritic texts, but the dualistic effects of the solar *kābôd*-power constitutes an equally valid explanation. In the Malachi passage, the moral content of those subjected to that power also determines its result: deadly heat or shining health. The different images of the sun (the sun of rulership and divinity and the sun of death) are here reserved for people of different moral orientation, a very clear and systematic way of making use of the sometimes quite incompatible ideas about solar power which Israelite religion seems to have inherited from various sources (North West Semitic/Canaanite legacy, Egypt, Anatolia, Mesopotamia).

### 3.2.5.3 Mythological Metaphorics and Conclusions

As noticed many times in the present study, Mal 3:19-21 makes use of clear vegetational references without there having to be a seasonal implication. The fact that “roots” and “branches” are mentioned does not mean that the text describes a seasonal cycle *as such*: what it does, however, imply is that such imagery (and possibly mythology) was alive in the cultural backdrop of the original recipients of the text. The killing summer drought is not the object of the description, but its *means*.

The drought which in the Ugaritic texts appears to have been regarded as a mythological reality is here used as something of a metaphor—although we cannot, of course, be sure that the description of the burning day of YHWH was not meant to be taken literally by the author. Such considerations are epistemologically risky, and it must suffice to note that a metaphorical interpretation is a possibility. In any case, the passage remains a clear example of how late Israelite theology could use the ancient drought motifs to reinforce its own ideas, using an intricate combination of other theological ideas, such as the Day of YHWH.

The conflation of the fire-imagery inherent in the “bellicose” descriptions of the Day and the burning heat generated by the sun creates a new theological whole, in which the concept of heat is at the center of both and thus serves to connect them. The “heat” creates a sort of family resemblance, which can unite such seemingly disparate notions as a “sun of righteousness” and a warlike flame—and further combine them with references to vegetation and summer heat, all in the interest of expressing the sovereign power of the Israelite God. For the author of Malachi, YHWH uses the sun to provide both life (“healing

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<sup>420</sup> The word *ḥammâ* is further discussed on pp. 222-223.



will be in its wings”) and death (through the burning flames), and through this means expresses an eschatological vision of the vanquishing of the wicked.

Mal 3:19-21 thus splits the old myth of the vanquishing of the drought into two, so to speak. The moral and/or religious merit of the recipients is the medium through which the results of the solar manifestation are decided. It is also notable that the “good” side of the manifestation is not rain, as in the older and more explicitly mythological compositions such as the Carmel story or the Baal Cycle, but the more abstract theological concept of *šēdāqā*. But these two were apparently sometimes linked to each other: one example of this can be found in a passage from Deutero-Isaiah, Isa 45:8, which directly connects the divine *šēdāqā* to the life-giving rains:

<i>har'ipū šāmayim mimma'al</i>	Let fall, O heavens, from on high,
<i>ūšēhāqīm yizzēlū-šedeq</i>	and may the clouds <sup>421</sup> let righteousness flow;
<i>tiptah-<sup>3</sup>ereš</i>	may the earth open
<i>wēyiprū-yeša'</i>	and salvation be fruitful,
<i>ūšēdāqā tašmīah yaḥad</i>	and may it let righteousness to sprout up with it;
<i>'ānī YHWH bēra' tīw</i>	I, YHWH, have created it.

This passage shows how rains and righteousness (here represented both by *šedeq* and *šēdāqā*) could be closely associated concepts. This metaphorical coupling also occurs in Amos 5:24 (*wēyiggāl kammāyim mišpāt / ūšēdāqā kēnaḥal 'etān*—“and may justice tumble down like water / and righteousness like an eternal stream”). Another example of this is to be found in Joel 2:23, which includes the difficult clause *wēnātan lākem 'et-hammôrê lišdāqā*, which probably means something like “and he will give you the early rain at the correct time.”<sup>422</sup> The *šēdāqā* here seems to be a general word for the natural order of things. As in Mal 3:19-21, the authors of these passages have chosen the feminine word in preference to the masculine *šedeq*; there is a view that *šēdāqā* bears within itself a more active meaning, a carrying out of the underlying principle or abstract idea designated by *šedeq*.<sup>423</sup> When applied to Mal 3:19-21, this means that YHWH offers those who “fear his name” an active manifestation of his righteousness and of the correct workings of the world. The word chosen carries with it an association to the rains falling at the appointed

<sup>421</sup> Note the use of *šēhāqīm* (“[dust]-clouds”) to designate the sources of the rain, the same word used for the clouds that are cleared up so that the *kābôd*-like sun of YHWH may shine in Job 37:21-22.

<sup>422</sup> On this problem, see e.g. S. Wagner in *TDOT*, vol. VI: 338 (s.v. *yārā*). The interpretation of *môrê* as “early rain” or “autumn rain” rests upon the parallel with *gešem* in the phrase immediately following and on the existence of the etymologically connected word *yôrê*, which definitely has this meaning. Yet another example of “raining righteousness” can be found in Hos 10:12.

<sup>423</sup> See Johnson 1978.

time, given just as Baal gives his rains when not under the power of Death—the *locus classicus* is the great storm theophany after Baal's house-building (*CAT* 1.4 VII 25-31), when the storm god opens a "rift in the clouds" and lets his thunder-voice shake the earth. But in Malachi, YHWH provides his *šēdāqâ* by means of the sun, the very medium of the great drought. Through the solar-royal imagery (the winged sun disk), the sometimes drought-giving sun becomes associated even with the rain itself—albeit on a metaphorical level.<sup>424</sup>

But for the wicked, those who do not fear the name of YHWH, the old drought sun is still ready: the sun of Death is now under the power of the Israelite God as much as the fertile "sun of righteousness," and the old weapon of Mot can now be used by YHWH to burn his enemies to stubble. Israelite monotheism has given its God the powers both of Baal and of his greatest adversary.

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<sup>424</sup> Another example of the connection between *šedeq* and storm theophany can be found in Ps 97 (especially v. 2).

### 3.3 Poetic Old Testament literature

#### 3.3.1 Psalm 84—YHWH as Burning Sun of Glory and Protecting Shield of Grace (with Comparanda from Isaiah, etc.)

An internalization into the figure of YHWH and synthesis of the burning sun of drought and the sun that symbolizes kingship and glory can be found in the twelfth verse of Psalm 84. Here, I believe, is another of the (rather few) places where we can actually find a sort of “drought sun” imagery applied to YHWH himself.

The psalm describes the passage of celebrants to the temple, and the joy this brings. It shows the fertility of the land as they walk through the valley of weeping/Baka, describing it as becoming like a spring of water, and speaks of the autumn rain that blesses it. In verse 10, the psalmist asks God to “see” (root *r’y*) the shield (*māgēn*) of the people, a character that at the end of the line is clearly identified with the anointed king (*mēšīḥekā*). The psalm thus contains royal ideology (the king/shield), references to fertility/precipitation and a ritual setting of going up to the temple of Jerusalem. The references both to royal symbolism and to agricultural fertility clearly touch on issues that may be associated with solar imagery. These references set the contextual stage for what is to come, and form an interpretive framework for the theology of the Psalm.

Ps 84:12 begins with the following words:

*Kī šemeš ūmāgēn YHWH ʾēlōhīm* For YHWH God is a sun and a shield,  
*hēn wēkābōd yittēn YHWH* YHWH gives grace and glory.

This bicolon constitutes the only case in the Psalm in which YHWH is “defined,” so to speak: it seems to be the theological highpoint towards which the text is leading. Just as the pilgrims travel through valleys and gates to reach the Temple and worship their God, the text leads forward towards this theological statement of YHWH’s essence. I will argue that the beginning of these lines represent a case of chiasmic parallelism, which can shed light on the theological assumptions underlying the words. The poetic structure appears to entail the following parallelistic equations:

Sun=glory                      shield=grace

One of the things that YHWH “is” or “gives” in each line is something protective (“shield” and “grace”). These two words fit each other well, and they stand in what appears to be a chiasmic relationship with each other. This suggests a relationship between the two other words, “sun” and *kābōd*. I shall here argue that this is exactly the case: that two of the words describe protection and the other two describe something potentially dangerous: the burning “glory” of the Israelite God, which is likened to a burning sun. I will also provide a number of other biblical passages that may reinforce such a reading.

Such an analysis would show that the sun here carries the connotations of power and rulership, of the very essence contained in the concept of *kābôd*. In view of the reference to the anointed king earlier in the text, this identification with the sun probably has a royal significance, as does the expression “shield,” which earlier was explicitly employed as a description of the royal ruler.<sup>425</sup>

There is another possible poetic reading of Ps 84:12 that would make the chiasmic structure of the lines even more impressive. The lines quoted above are followed by the words *lō' yimna' -tôb lahōlēkîm bêtāmîm* (“he does not deny goodness to those who walk in righteousness”). If one separates the words *yittēn YHWH* from the lines and splits up the title *YHWH 'ēlōhîm* between them, one ends up with the following reading:

<i>Kî šemeš ûmāgēn YHWH</i>	For YHWH is a sun and a shield,
<i>'ēlōhîm hēn wēkābôd</i>	grace and glory is God.
<i>yittēn YHWH lō' yimna' -tôb</i>	YHWH gives; he does not deny goodness
<i>lahōlēkîm bêtāmîm</i>	to those who walk in righteousness. <sup>426</sup>

With such a stichometrical analysis, the chiasmus in the lines about sun, shield, grace and glory becomes even more profound, as it would in fact be a double one: the divine names *YHWH* and *'ēlōhîm* would themselves be placed chiasmatically at the end of each line, and within this chiasmus, there would be a second one, involving sun/glory and shield/grace.

### 3.3.1.1 Sun, shield and *kābôd*

The description of YHWH as a “sun” in this bicolon is often interpreted as an example of the solar imagery which was connected to the image of the deity.<sup>427</sup> The dual description as “sun and shield” is explained by Hossfeld and Zenger as an expression of God’s being (a) a dispenser of “royal glory,” (b) a source of life and justice (here we would then find the juridical role of the sun) and (c) a protection against “hostile, deadly threats,” presumably from human enemies and the like.<sup>428</sup> This interpretation would, of course, make sense of the words as attested, but it makes scant use of the poetic structure of the verse. I would

<sup>425</sup> This poetic structure would be substantially weakened, were one to accept the emendation proposed by McCarter (1984: 484), changing the *māgēn* of verse 12 to *māgān* (meaning something like “sovereign”). The resulting “for a sun and a sovereign is YHWH” would not create the same beautiful chiasmus with the next line, and given the fact that *māgēn* is used as a title of the anointed king earlier in the text, the change seems hardly necessary: the royal connotation is already there.

<sup>426</sup> This type of stichometric analysis can also be found, e.g., in Körting 2006: 90 (though differing in analysis of the forms of *nātan* and *māna'*). Among popular translations, one can find it in Zimmerman *et al.* 1993: 22 (translation work done by Jean-Pierre Prévost).

<sup>427</sup> See, for example, Kutter 2008: 406-407.

<sup>428</sup> Hossfeld and Zenger 2005: 356.

instead prefer to see the two half-lines as containing two cases of antithetical parallelism within themselves. Although YHWH is characterized by his solar *kābôd*, he also provides the protection humans need in order to survive this potentially devastating force, and (given the references to rain and precipitation earlier in the psalm) it is not difficult to imagine that the image of the drought-giving sun is actually brought into focus here.<sup>429</sup> Thus, YHWH is likened both to the shining and burning sun in his (potentially destructive) “glory” and to the “shield” which guards his people against its devastating effects. This line of interpretation gives the verse an internal coherence and refrains from “splitting up” the epithets into different semantic spheres as the one advocated by Hossfeld and Zenger. Specifically, this interpretation has the advantage of integrating the fertility imagery used in the description of the Baka valley with the royal references. It is also interesting to note how the psalmist makes use of two differing referents to the word *māgēn*, namely the king and God.

Interestingly, the LXX (numbering the Psalm 83) has entirely eliminated the line about God being “sun and shield” and has replaced it with an expression of God’s love for “mercy” (ἔλεος) and “truth” (ἀλήθεια). Perhaps the solar imagery was thought at some point in the chain of transmission leading to the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the LXX (or perhaps by the Greek translators themselves) to be too concrete and “unspiritual,” leading to the change of expressions.<sup>430</sup>

### 3.3.1.2 Special study: Is YHWH’s *kābôd* solar, destructive and netherworldly? Some comparanda<sup>431</sup>

A parallel to the view of the *kābôd* of the Israelite God presented here can be found in Ex 24:17, which describes it as a burning fire: *ûmar’ē kēbôd YHWH kē’ēš ’ōkelet bēro’s hāhār lē’ēnē bēnē yiśrā’ēl* (“and the *kābôd* of YHWH looked to the children of Israel like a devouring fire atop the mountain.”). Similar solar images of God’s splendor are given e.g. in Job 37:21-22 (which uses the word *hôd* and associates it with the brightness of the sun) and Isa 58:8. Another *locus classicus* for YHWH’s burning/solar *kābôd* is of course the throne-vision of Ezekiel 1. In Isa 60:1-3, the image is similar:

<sup>429</sup> See Lipiński in *DDD*: 766 (s.v. “shemesh”), who also notes the protection against sunlight. Goldingay (2007: 598) does not view the sun as a reference to a potentially destructive force in this passage (as I do), but one may note that he especially states in his commentary on the words here discussed that some texts portray the sun as something dangerous (he points to Ps 121:6).

<sup>430</sup> Cf. the unwillingness of the LXX to retain the image of YHWH as “rock,” replacing this image with more abstract concepts such as “refuge,” etc. Regarding this problem, see Olofsson 1990.

<sup>431</sup> There is of course an entire *Forschungsgeschichte* concerning *kābôd*. See Weinfeld in *TDOT* (vol. VII): 23-38 (s.v. *kābôd*). A recent study is Wagner 2012. For an important study discussing the concept in terms of YHWH’s “shining garment,” see the work by Thomas Podella (1996).

*Qûmî 'ôrî kî bā' 'ôrēk*  
*ûkēbôd YHWH 'ālayik zārāḥ*  
*kî hinnē haḥōšek yēkasse-'ereṣ*  
*wa'ārāpel lē'ummîm*  
*wē'ālayik yizrah YHWH*  
*ûkēbôdô 'ālayik yērā'ê*  
*wēhālēkû gôyîm lē'ôrēk*  
*ûmēlākîm lēnōgah zarḥēk*

Arise, shine, your light has come,  
 and the *kābôd* of YHWH shines on you,  
 for lo, the darkness is covering the earth  
 and gloom the peoples,  
 but upon you YHWH shall shine  
 and his *kābôd* will be seen upon you.  
 Peoples shall walk in your light  
 and kings in the radiance of your  
 sunrise.

Note the use of the root *zrh* to indicate the shining of God's *kābôd*: this verb is regularly employed to express the rising of the sun over the horizon, reinforcing the imagery.

Another very indicative piece of evidence for the solar and potentially dangerous nature of YHWH's *kābôd* in the context of the Temple can be found in Solomon's dedication speech in 1 Kings 8. As Taylor has pointed out, that text contains a distinct association between the sun (which YHWH "set up/made known in the heavens," according to the LXX reading preserved in v. 53,<sup>432</sup> while himself choosing to "live in the gloomy darkness" of the Temple) and the *kābôd* which was dangerous enough to stop the ministrants from serving their God ("because the *kābôd* of YHWH filled the house of YHWH," v. 11).<sup>433</sup>

The juxtaposition of sun and darkness in that text need not indicate a disjunction between the deity and the sun: rather, it indicates two forms of manifestation of the divine power (the "darkened" one being described using the word *'ānān*, "a cloud"). The combined facts of (a) the Israelite God being himself inferentially compared with the sun in the heavens and (b) the danger apparently associated with his *kābôd* make one think yet again of the destructive solar gleaming that appears to be at the forefront in Ps 84:12. This imagery is made even more striking as the earthly dwelling and "cloud" of

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<sup>432</sup> The standard LXX text has ἐγνώρισεν ("made known"), whereas the Lucianic recension has ἔστησεν ("set up"). The expression ἐγνώρισεν was explained as early as by Wellhausen (1899: 261) as the result of a misreading of an original *hēkîn* ("he set up") as *hēbîn* ("he explained"). There have been many attempts to reconstruct the Hebrew text underlying the LXX version, often contradicting one another. A survey of the various suggestions, with references to relevant literature, can be found in Rösel 2009. Rösel concludes that it is no longer possible to reconstruct the Hebrew *Vorlage* in its details. He is also sceptical towards attempts to reconstruct early religious history (solar cult) based on this passage. Another recent study of the dedication speech is Gerhards 2010. Gerhards not only reconstructs a possible reading based on MT and LXX (preferring a hiphil form of *yā'* as background for the greek ἐγνώρισεν), but also subjects it to an extensive religio-historical analysis, ending in the possibility of a pre-Davidic solar cult in Jerusalem based on Indo-Aryan influences. He does not discuss a solar *kābôd*.

<sup>433</sup> Taylor 1993: 142-143.

YHWH in the Temple is defined as *ʿārāpel* (“gloomy, theophanic darkness”), while his *kābôd* is clearly anything but gloomy.

Taylor’s insight, that the poetic passage on the sun (restored using the LXX) is employed by the author to show a functional analogy between the seemingly contradictory ideas of a sun shining in the heavens and a God dwelling in darkness, is (to use an apt expression) most illuminating. The use of this sort of (on the surface) antithetical juxtaposition forms an interesting parallel to the chiasmic construction of Ps 84:12. In both cases, YHWH is implied to be both a destroying sun and its absolute opposite.

The point made in Solomon’s poetic speech of YHWH having decided to live in the *ʿārāpel* can be given a further frame of reference based in the Ugaritic texts. In *CAT* 1.107, one of the texts invoking Shapshu in the healing of a snake-bite, Shapshu is called upon to collect (root *ʿsp*) the fog (*grpl*) from the mountains, thereby rendering the snake’s venom powerless (I also discussed this text in the section on the Refrain of the Burning Sun, subsection 2.2.1.4). The Ugaritic word *grpl* is the cognate of the Hebrew *ʿārāpel*, and this may mean that the opposition between the powerful presence of the solar glare and the “fog” or “darkness” is an old one. Of course, I do not mean to suggest that the author of Solomon’s speech thought that the darkness of the Temple was in any way analogous to a snake’s venom—that would indeed be ridiculous. Rather, I think that such an ancient poetic opposition between sun and “fog,” and the ability of the sun to dry away that “fog,” appears again in 1 Kings 8 as a frame of reference for the inability of YHWH’s shining *kābôd* to be held back by the gloom of the Temple. It is, after all, said that the priests were unable to enter and serve YHWH because his *kābôd* had filled it up (v. 11). The dark fog that Solomon speaks of has been conquered by the burning power of the God of Israel.

Yet another place in which one can find evidence of this “destructive” view of the *kābôd* of the Israelite God—and its connection to the burning power of the sun—is Isa 4:3-6. There, the prophet says that YHWH will create a covering (*huppā*) over all *kābôd* and a tabernacle (*sukkā*) that will serve to shade the righteous from the burning heat during the day (burning is said to be part of YHWH’s judging power in this pericope—note the conflation of the “burning” and “judging” images of the sun here!). This *sukkā* will also provide shelter from rain and storms, which goes to show that normally beneficent powers such as that of the precipitation could sometimes be regarded as dangerous. Such, I propose, was also the conception of YHWH’s solar *kābôd*.

An idea similar to this (though not mentioning the word *kābôd*) is found in Ps 121:5-6, which speaks of walking in the shade (*šēl*) of YHWH, which will protect one from the destructive powers of the sun and moon. A verse in which YHWH’s *kābôd* seems both to be associated with and to be the opposite of the presence of the moon and the burning sun is Isa 24:23, which talks of the “white moon” (*lēbānā*) and the “hot sun” (*hammā*) becoming “ashamed” (roots *hpr* and *bwš*) and of YHWH’s *kābôd* being before “his elders” (*zēqēnāyw*):

<i>wēhāpērā hallēbānā</i>	And the white moon will be ashamed
<i>ūbōšā haḥammā</i>	and the hot sun will be put to shame,
<i>kī mālak YHWH šēbā'ōt</i>	for YHWH of hosts reigns
<i>bēhar šiyyōn ūbīrūšālayim</i>	on mount Zion and in Jerusalem,
<i>wēneged zēqēnāyw kābōd</i>	and [his] <i>kābōd</i> is before his elders.

This verse can be read as suggesting an opposition and difference between the burning sun and the *kābōd*, but it could equally well imply that the *kābōd* is *even stronger* than the power of the heavenly bodies, thus making it, in a way, part of the same associative sphere or category. It burns or shines like they do, but is even more powerful, thereby putting them to shame.<sup>434</sup> Another instance of YHWH being said to provide “shade” from heat is found shortly after this, in Isa 25:4.

YHWH's solar *kābōd* is also associatively referred to in an interesting way later in the previously mentioned chapter Isaiah 60, in vv. 19-20, which speak of YHWH being an “eternal light” (*’ōr ’ōlām*) and say that this solar God will be the “radiance” (*tip’artēk*) of Jerusalem, to which the speech is addressed. This “radiance” can scarcely be anything other than the burning *kābōd*, and the text specifically points out in 19a that it will replace the sun (which of course implies a comparison with it).

An especially interesting expression in this context is *’ōr ’ōlām* (“eternal light”), which may possibly have an earlier history. It is reminiscent of the “sun of eternity,” (*šmš ’lm*) of Phoenician provenience, which has been related by a number of scholars to the netherworldly conception of the solar deities.<sup>435</sup> In his study of the background of Iamblichus's references to an alleged “solar theology” of the Phoenicians, Joseph Azize introduces a distinction between the sun as a symbol of life (as in expressions of the type “under the sun,” known from various sources such as Phoenician funerary inscriptions and, of course, Ecclesiastes) and the “eternal sun” or “sun of eternity” (*šmš ’lm*) that supposedly referred to the sun connected with the netherworld. Azize makes the point that these represent differing conceptions of the sun, one representing ephemeral earthly life and the other the eternal state of the dead. He then connects this notion with the much later ideas of Iamblichus.<sup>436</sup> These

<sup>434</sup> The use of the root *bwš* here is interesting, given its phonetic similarity to *ybs* (“to ry out”). Yet again, wordplay may be in evidence here—compared with YHWH's glory, the hot sun cannot even burn, only be ashamed. For more on the word *ḥammā*, see the discussion on pp. 222-223.

<sup>435</sup> A parallel also noted by Kutter (2008: 383, n. 134), although one should be aware that her interpretation of this phrase is not one related to chthonic characteristics but rather one of the sun representing “Beständigkeit.” Note that Isa 60:20 speaks of the solar YHWH ending the “sorrow” (root *’bl*) of Zion.

<sup>436</sup> Azize 2005: 163-165. Azize derives this distinction from texts such as the Phoenician Tabnit (*KAI* 13), Eshmunazor (*KAI* 14) and “son of Shipitbaal” (*KAI* 9)



suggestions are tenuous, but they would, if true, give further context to the talk of YHWH's solar radiance in Isa 60:19-20, tying in with the motif of the burning netherworld sun, and such a connection could of course be illustrative of the whole complex of YHWH's solar *kābôd*, including Psalm 84.<sup>437</sup>

### 3.3.1.3 The "Grace" that Protects against the Burning Sun

In Psalm 84, the parallelistic equation of or association between *māgēn* and *hēn* makes the interpretation offered above even more probable. The Hebrew concept of *hēn* mostly describes a benevolent attitude on the part of the actor. As in the famous and common phrase *māṣā' hēn*, the question is one of goodwill, mercy or kindness shown by the one giving "grace," the opposite of anger (rather than, for example, protection from threats coming from a third

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inscriptions, that is, from texts that are themselves funerary in character and would thus make the opposition especially interesting. In Tabnit, the warning against opening the grave includes the phrase *ʿl y[k]n l[k] zr' bḥym tḥt šmš* ("for you there may not be a seed among those alive under the sun"), while Eshmunazor has a similar expression concerning fruit among those who live under the sun. *KAI* 9, however, appears to speak of *[šm]š ʿlm* (Krahmalkov 2000: 59, *non vidi*). The two aspects of the sun suggested by Azize could imply a parallel to the dual role of the sun seen in the present study—the one on the side of life and the one on the side of death. However, the textual evidence is quite weak: in *KAI* 9, most of the alleged phrase *šmš ʿlm* is reconstructed and should therefore not be used as a basis for far-reaching theological conclusions. Actual, undoubted attestations of the expression can be found in two places. The first is the Phoenician version of the Phoenicio-Luwian bilingual Azatiwada inscription from Karatepe in Anatolia (*KAI* 26), which speaks of *šmš ʿlm* in line A III 19, and the second is a Ugaritic testimonium from a letter (*CAT* 2.42, line 7). The exact meaning of the expression *šmš/špš ʿlm* has been extensively discussed—see the survey in Kutter 2008: 227-236. Kutter prefers to translate the phrase as "Sonne der Beständigkeit" (p. 235) and not to see any chthonic characteristics in the expression. The view that it specifically refer to a chthonic solar deity is found in Niehr 1997: 298 (Niehr mistakenly quotes the Karatepe testimonium in the Ugaritic form *špš* instead of the actual Phoenician form *šmš* found in the inscription). One possible problem with such an interpretation is the fact that the Luwian version of the text specifically refers to a "celestial sun god" (the Luwian Hieroglyphic signs are CAELUM(DEUS)-SOL-*za-sá*; see Hawkins 2000: 58 [§ LXXIII] for the Luwian text). According to Niehr, this discrepancy can be explained "mit der jeweiligen Eigenständigkeit der phönizischen und der hieroglyphenluwischen Götteraufzählung [...]" One may note with some interest that the expression *šmš ʿlm* may have a further history. Frank Moore Cross (1973: 18, n. 33) points out (based on a suggestion by Arthur Darby Nock) that a name *Semesilam* occurs in the Greek magical papyri (otherwise known for including various names based on Near Eastern mythology).

<sup>437</sup> The solar *kābôd* of the Israelite God has a clear parallel in the Mesopotamian noun pair *pulḫu melammu* (to be translated something like "awesome radiance"), the terrible and radiant aura surrounding both kings and gods in official Mesopotamian ideology.

party).<sup>438</sup> The word thus signifies the will to maintain peace and the like, which would favor the idea that the “shield” is at least partly directed against the devastating power of the solar *kābôd* itself. J.F.D. Creach points out that the word *māgēn* does not occur in descriptions of YHWH as a protector in scenes of battle or against flying arrows, and he argues that the word was a “dead metaphor” in the Psalter, not carrying much of its original meaning anymore. Rather, Creach says, the image of the “shield” is a more general expression of protection or help in Psalms, not an expression of protection against physical attackers.<sup>439</sup> This means that the use of the word here need not suggest an implied external threat.<sup>440</sup> The “grace” and “shield” expressions rather refer to the preserving, saving power shown by God, needed to counter his “sun” and “glory” which could otherwise prove unsurvivable. The people of YHWH, it is presumed, need not fear the burning glory of their God, as he also acts as a “shield” towards them.

One piece of circumstantial evidence for this interpretation of Ps 84:12 being correct may perhaps be found in the Book of Ben Sira. This is, of course, a late text, but it contains a reference that may be important in this context, as it illustrates the relationship between certain terms in the verse from Psalm 84. In verse 34:19 of Ben Sira (34:16 according to the verse numbering of Rahlfs-Hanhart), God is said to be a “shield” (ὕπερασπισμός) against the heat of the day, most specifically against the glare of high noon (μεσημβρία).<sup>441</sup> This can be interpreted as suggesting that the image of God as a “shield” and references to the sun could be thought of as related to each other, and that the shield could be regarded as a protection against the heat of the sun. Just as the LXX version removed the apparently too concrete references to God as sun and shield in Ps 84:12, the Peshitta has rewritten the Ben Sira passage substantially, so as to remove references to God as dead matter.<sup>442</sup> Unfortunately, Sir 34:19 is not preserved in its Hebrew version, but it is quite likely that the *Vorlage* included

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<sup>438</sup> On the concept of *hēn*, see Freedman and Lundbom in *TDOT*, vol. V: 24-25 (s.v. *hānan*). They state, however, on p. 25 that *hēn* and *kābôd* in Ps 84:12 are “like” each other, rather the opposite point to what I argue.

<sup>439</sup> Creach 1996: 29.

<sup>440</sup> Creach’s line of reasoning also provides an argument against a possible objection to my analysis of Ps 84:12. One could object to the image of a “shield” guarding against solar heat—don’t shields mostly guard against weapons, not natural phenomena (metaphorical or not)? If, as Creach argues, the word *māgēn* in Psalms was a “dead metaphor” that no longer carried much of its original and literal meaning, this point is moot: the word simply means “protection” in general, and this could be directed at the sun just as well as towards an enemy (note Creach’s point that arrows and suchlike are *never* what it protects from in Psalms!).

<sup>441</sup> Interestingly, μεσημβρία also happens to be the very word used in the Greek version of Sir 43:3 when talking of the destructive heat of the sun; this passage is discussed in section 3.4.2.

<sup>442</sup> For an analysis of the the Peshitta version of Sir 34:19, see van Peursen 2007: 45.

an expression using the word *māgēn*.<sup>443</sup> This verse from Ben Sira shows that the Israelite God could very well be thought of as being a shield against the heat of the sun, and that these two concepts could be integrated and associated with each other in referring to God.<sup>444</sup>

### 3.3.1.4 Transformations of Motifs and Conclusions

Ps 84:12 thus shows an artful fusion between the sun as a metaphor for rulership and as an instrument of burning heat. The fact that YHWH is also described as a “shield” against this destructive, albeit majestic, force constitutes (I believe) yet another instance of the proto-monotheist/monolatrist reinterpretation of the drought-motif, rather similar to that found in the story of Elijah and the drought. Here again, the God of Israel is described as both the dispenser of “solar destruction” and the means of protection against it, and not only that: the burning solar heat, which was at Ugarit the weapon of the god of death himself, here appears as a manifestation of YHWH’s *kābôd*. The glaring difference between the present text and the Carmel story is that the sun is here explicitly named, whereas the Carmel story does not mention it.

As the reader will no doubt have noticed, this entire argument has rested upon a poetical analysis of the first half of Ps 84:12, that is, of Ps 84:12*a*. One might object that any such analysis would be lacking without taking into account the contents of the half-verse following, 12*b*. The half-verse studied here is in my mind perfectly sound as a discrete unit, but the interpretation offered here is, I think, not substantially weakened by the context of the next hemistich. 12*b* speaks of God distributing his “goodness” (*tôbîm*) to those who “walk in righteousness” (*hōlēkîm bêtāmîm*). At first glance, this could be interpreted as gainsaying the decidedly “ambivalent” reading I have proposed for 12*a* (God both as a potentially destructive force and as a giver of shelter)—the second half-verse does, after all, speak only of good effects. But—and this is, I think, an important point—the text itself adds a qualification to the general distribution of goodness: it is only those who walk in righteousness that are to partake of its blessings. What is to happen to others is not stated in the text, but one may plausibly surmise that what they would receive would be something less palatable. 12*b*, therefore, does not counterindicate the interpretation here given of 12*a*, but rather reinforces it: YHWH will grant his faithful both the power of his *kābôd* and the necessary defence against its potential destructiveness, but no such protection is, one may conclude, given to those not walking in righteousness.

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<sup>443</sup> Note that the LXX uses ὑπερασπισμός as translation of *māgēn* in Ps 18:36 (LXX 17:36).

<sup>444</sup> It is also significant that Ben Sira later (42:16) uses an explicitly solar reference to God’s *kābôd*, which yet again links the ideas of the solar radiance and the protective shield. See further section 3.4.2.

Psalm 84 makes explicit reference to the Jerusalem temple, the pilgrimage to that select place, and the cultic idea of “seeing God,” and thus provides an official religious context for the solar language.<sup>445</sup> The solar *kābôd* thus becomes a description of the presence of the deity in his temple, linking the “burning-sun”-motif to the very center of Israelite cultic worship (or at least to the Psalmist’s interpretation or view thereof). Psalm 84 seems to show a combination between the image of the sun that has been inherited from the motifs of drought/burning and the sun of rulership and monarchy, thus creating a way of the integrating these two *theologoumena* into a larger whole, which in the context of the Psalm signifies not only the solar rulership of YHWH (of course comparable to the solar titulature of the kings of Hatti and Egypt) but also his potentially destructive power against his foes: the pilgrims travel through the vale, and it turns into a running spring, with the autumn rain blessing it (showing the deity in his role as rain-giver), but YHWH is then described as a *kābôd*-sun himself, implying the possibility of devastating burning force directed at his enemies. The chiasmic opposition of sun/glory and shield/grace thus makes a theological whole of these differing traditions.<sup>446</sup>

To sum up, Ps 84:12 and the comparanda adduced above paint a vivid picture of one of the possible avenues of transformation taken by the motif of the “burning sun” as it was incorporated into the Yahwist faith. The *kābôd* of the deity created a means that could express both kingship and the destructive solarly that could no longer be ascribed to outside powers such as Death. However, certain expressions (such as the *’ôr ‘ôlām* of Isa 60:19) may possibly still hint at the old netherworld connections of the concept. YHWH appears as the sender both of destructive heat and the protection from it, which shows the monolatrist/monotheist transformation of the motif quite clearly.

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<sup>445</sup> Cf. Smith 1990: 30.

<sup>446</sup> A similar dichotomy may perhaps be found in 2 Sam 23:3-4, in which the king (and/or his rulership) seems to be described using a superficially self-contradictory language of both sun and rain, once again integrating the image of the monarchic sun with the agricultural theology of Northwest Semitic religious history.

### 3.3.2 Psalm 102: Drought as Symptom of a Death-Like State in a Complaint Psalm; Psalms 22 and 39 (and Others)

The present text of Psalm 102 consists of three readily identifiable segments. Two of these (verses 2-12 and 24-25*ab*), are evidently fragments of earlier individual complaint psalms, which were later expanded and incorporated into a larger, nationalist supplication which concerns hopes for the end of the Babylonian Exile and shows strong parallels to material from Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah.<sup>447</sup> The individual sections of the psalm make clear use of the drought-death imagery investigated in this study. Verses 4-6 use the language of drought (partly inherited from the common Northwest Semitic vocabulary for this sphere of motifs, as shown by the use of terms such as *ḥārā*,<sup>448</sup> *tkḥ/škḥ*, *yābēš* and mention of parched grass, occurring again in verse 12). It should be noted that this section of the study presupposes the conclusions on the meaning of the verb *tkḥ/škḥ* presented in section 2.2.4 and builds on the analysis offered there.

The second individual passage (24-25*ab*) seems directly to tie the drought imagery occurring earlier in the text to the concepts of (actual or metaphorical) death: *qīṣṣar yāmāy* (v. 24*b*): “He [YHWH] shortened my days), *’ōmar ’ēlī ’al ta’alēnī baḥāšī yāmāy* (v. 25*a*): “I say: my God, do not take me away at the middle of my days.”).

Fitting in with the segmentation of Psalm 102 into individual and collective segments stands the complete absence of references to drought in the “nationalist/collective” parts of the text, while they abound in the textual entity formed by verses 2-12. The later individual fragment (24-25*ab*) is not long enough to contain any references to drought, but it reinforces the motif of death or a death-like state. One might therefore hypothesize that these two individual segments are really from the same source, a single complaint psalm in which the psalmist describes his affliction (resulting from divine wrath, v. 11) in terms of the connection between burning drought and dying.<sup>449</sup> The later individual segment serves as the concluding half of the metaphorical image: as the earlier fragment talks of drought, so the latter talks of death. The two segments reinforce each other.

When the psalmist is left to the anger of his God, he is like an owl in the wasteland, left to the mercy of the destructive forces of nature. He is the victim

<sup>447</sup> Cf. Marttila 2006: 127-128. This analysis is to some extent shared by Lindström (1994: 221, 237), who, however, views the individualizing passages as also having their origin in the national complaint liturgy (p. 226), despite their differing contents and form.

<sup>448</sup> On the probable intertextual connection with Job 30:30, see section 3.3.3.6.

<sup>449</sup> Lindström (1994: 226) attempts to separate the two individual segments into two original psalms based on metrical considerations. Martilla (2006: 128-129) does not agree. The contents of the two parts do reinforce one another enough for one to treat them as part of a whole (at least as an interpretive possibility). The use of terminology (specifically the term *yāmāy*) also connect the two individualizing segments into a greater whole.

of death, but it might be possible to regard this “death” as coming from the hand of the very God to whom he directs his supplication. The very metaphorical and unspecific description of the supplicant’s suffering probably helped make the connection with the national-collectivist parts easier to effect: there is really nothing in the individual segments to show what the concrete problem of the psalmist is, and this made the nationalist interpretation fit rather well.

The individual sufferer is under siege by the powers of death. The question remains whether or not this is a result of God’s action or of his absence, that is: is the metaphorical “death” in essence a matter of God using his power against the supplicant, or merely one of keeping himself away and allowing the powers of death to attack him?<sup>450</sup> One may well argue for the latter position, basing oneself on v. 3, where the supplicant asks God not to “hide his face” (*‘al-tastēr pānekā bēyôm šar-lī*, “Do not hide your face from me in the day of my hardship”). Here, the issue definitely seems to be one of divine absence: the drought and the chaotic circumstances of the supplicant are shown to be the result of YHWH’s non-presence. One is here reminded of the imagery of Jeremiah 14 (see section 3.2.2), where God has left his people open to the powers of drought, chaos and war. But, as to some extent in that text, one finds in Psalm 102 that this “hiding of the face” is more than a passive failure on behalf of the deity—it appears to be quite a deliberate act: *kī nēšā’ tani wattašlikēnī* (“for you lifted me and threw me away,” v. 11b). The use of the verb *nāšā’* (“to lift”) in this context is strongly reminiscent of the later occurring cry of *‘al ta’alēnī baḥāšī yāmāy* in v. 25a: both *nāšā’* and the hip’īl of *‘ālā* mean approximately “to take up” or “to lift up,” and as the latter is expressly connected to the bringing on of death or a death-like state, it is hard not to read the former in the same light. It seems, therefore, that YHWH is an active agent in the suffering of the psalmist. The powers of death and drought are not described as being under his control (as they are e.g. in Mal 3:19-21, see section 3.2.5), but he appears to choose whether or not to offer his protection against them. God’s absence is a deliberate one. The situation is in some respect similar to that of the Aqhat Epic (*CAT* 1.19 I 38-46, discussed in sections 2.3.4.1 and 2.3.4.2): the storm god is absent, and cannot/will not protect against the powers of death, but in Psalm 102, it is clearly stated that it is God himself who has chosen this separation between God and supplicant by “taking him up” and “throwing him away,” the former of which terms seems clearly allude to a (metaphorical) killing. YHWH appears to be handing the supplicant over to Death without himself having to the dirty-work.<sup>451</sup>

This is a sort of mid-point between the old conflict pattern involving Storm God vs. drought-death and the complete integration found in Mal 3:19-21. It is much akin to Jeremiah 14, as the absence of God seems to be deliberate, but in

<sup>450</sup> Cf. Lindström 1994: 228-229, who clearly sees God’s absence as the central problem and even refers to the psalm as “dualistic.”

<sup>451</sup> A similar conception occurs in Job 30:22-23.

Psalm 102 the powers of death are more clearly mentioned and described, thus lending credence to the idea that these forces are conceived of as more “independent” here than in Jeremiah 14, where the absence alone seems to be enough to cause the drought.

Another parallel between Jeremiah 14 and the extant, redacted text of Psalm 102 is the use of the drought motif to illustrate national plight. In the Psalm, this was apparently a later redactional development of an exilic date. It is not impossible that texts such as Jeremiah 14 formed a pattern for this development, which is actually rather unexpected at the outset. The use of drought imagery may then have been the metaphorical catalyst, being a description of catastrophe equally well suited for a national context and an individual one.

Psalm 102 shows us that the description of drought need not extend to an entire territory or population. It works equally well when applied to a single individual—which is even more striking in this case, as the drought passages occur only in those parts of the Psalm that seem originally to have been parts of an individual complaint. In the Ugaritic texts, drought is the manifestation in nature of the demise of some important individual; here it is an internal and presumably metaphorical description of a death-like state. The drought has, so to speak, been internalized and personalized. There are a number of other instances of complaint psalms using this type of rhetoric. One may, for example, note Psalm 39, which speaks of the suppliant’s heart burning hot in v. 4. This is then followed by an explicit reference to death (vv. 5-7), in which humanity is compared to a gust of wind or a fleeting image in a way almost reminiscent of Pindar.

Again, I would also like to point to verses 14-16 of Psalm 22 as an illustrative example of how an individual complaint psalm could use the drought-death motif in order to paint a vivid image of the plight of the suppliant:

<i>pāṣû ʿālay pîhem</i>	They open their mouths wide against me,
<i>ʾaryê ʾtôrēp wēšōʿēg</i>	[like] a tearing and roaring lion.
<i>kammāyim nišpaktî</i>	Like water I am poured out,
<i>wēhitpārēdû kol-ʿašmôtāy</i>	and all my bones are dislocated.
<i>hāyâ libbî kaddônāg</i>	My heart has become like wax,
<i>nāmēs bētōk mēʿāy</i>	it is melted in my innards.
<i>yābēš kaḥereš kōhî</i>	My strength is dried like a potsherd,
<i>ûlēšōnî mudbāq malqôḥāy</i>	and my tongue sticks to my gums,
<i>wēlaʿāpar-māwet tišpētēnî</i>	and you put me in the dust of death.

Here, one can see not only the identification between having a mouth that is dried up and being laid in one’s grave—a clear enough reference in itself—but also the general context of being hunted by metaphorical, ravenous beasts that open their jaws to swallow their victim, yet again a return of the old Mot imagery. The life of the suppliant is compared to water being poured out, again

implying that death is the same as dryness. His heart is like melted wax, another image that uses heat as an expression of Death's power. But who is it that puts the supplicant into the dust of Death? It is "you," none other than the Israelite God himself.

One should note that this internalized and individualized understanding of the drought is not really changed by the collective reinterpretation created when the individual complaint parts of Psalm 102 are combined with the nationalist portions. The question is still not one of nature mourning some important person or other, but rather of a single individual and his plight standing in for (vicariously, so to speak) and being an example of the plight of an entire community. The old motif of "all for one" drought has been reversed or put on its head. The dried up and wasted state of the single individual (itself a metaphor for a death-like state) is used as a bigger metaphor for the state of the whole people.

All in all, the Psalms show a significant amount of references to the drought-death motif. One can mention further examples such as 58:8-9 and 90:3-6, in which drought seems to be reduced to little more than a stock metaphor of death. More spectacular is perhaps Psalm 37, which speaks of destructive drought in v. 2 and then actually mentions the sun as a positive symbol in v. 6. This "double image" of the sun reminds one of what was seen concerning Mal 3:19-21 (see section 3.2.5), and I shall return to this passage in section 4.1, where I further discuss the conceptual movement from "drought sun" to sun of rulership.<sup>452</sup> As has been pointed out earlier (section 3.2.3.1), another interesting

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<sup>452</sup> Speaking of this type of double image of sun, light and heat in the Psalms, one could also mention the hymnic Psalm 97, which contains an interesting conflation of the images of the destroying heat, the Northwest Semitic storm deity, a view of YHWH's *kābôd* as destructive and dangerous (see section 3.3.1.2), and a positive reference to "light":

<i>ʿēš lēpānāyw tēlēk</i>	Fire goes before him
<i>ūtēlāhēt sābīb šārāyw</i>	and burns his enemies around [him].
<i>hēʾirū bēraqāyw tēbēl</i>	His lightning-bolts illumine the world—
<i>rāʾātā wattāhēl hāʾāreš</i>	the earth sees it and trembles.
<i>hārīm kaddōnāg nāmāssū</i>	Mountains melt like wax
<i>millipnē YHWH</i>	before YHWH,
<i>millipnē ʾādōn kol-hāʾāreš</i>	before the lord of all the earth.
<i>higgidū haššāmayim šidqō</i>	The heavens tell of his righteousness,
<i>wērāʾū kol-hāʾammīm kēbôdō</i>	and all peoples see his <i>kābôd</i> .
[...]	
<i>ʾôr zārah (BHSAp!) laššādīq</i>	Light breaks forth for the righteous one,
<i>ūlēyīsrē-lēb šimhā</i>	and happiness for those of rightness of heart.



verse is Ps 91:6, which associates the heat of mid-day with *qeṭeb*, the illness demon (?) appearing in Hos 13:14 and Deut 32:24 (discussed in section 4.2.2.).

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Here, the imagery is clearly that of the weather deity; however, burning heat is perhaps to be included in his destructive arsenal, shown by the melting of the mountains. Yet, the “light” at the end is definitely a positive one.

### 3.3.3 Drought, Death and the Righteous Sufferer: the Book of Job

The Book of Job does not contain a description of a great drought as such, but the connection between dryness and death is clearly referenced in a number of places, as is the imagery of the swallowing jaws of the chthonic deity.

#### 3.3.3.1 Death and Dried up Waters: Job 14:11-12a and 24:19

One of these instances is 14:11-12a, which is quite outspoken in its comparison of human death to the drying up of waters:

<i>ʾāzēlū-mayim minnī-yām</i>	The water goes away from the sea,
<i>wēnāhār yehērab wēyābēš</i>	and a river runs dry and waterless,
<i>wēʾiš šākab wēlōʾ yāqūm</i>	and a man lies down and does not rise. <sup>453</sup>

A clearer example could hardly be asked for. The centrality of the drought-death connection in this context is underscored by the occurrence a little earlier (14:2a) of a wilting tree as a metaphor for the death of a human.

Another quite similar example is verse 24:19, where the fate of the sinners is shown using a wording that without a doubt recalls the old drought-death motif:

<i>šiyṣā gam-ḥōm yigzēlū</i>	Drought and heat devour [lit.: “rob”]
<i>mēmē-šeleg</i>	the snow-waters,
<i>šēʾōl ḥātāʾū</i>	Sheol [those who] sin.

The original placing of these lines (and the ones surrounding them) in the Book of Job is quite unclear; it has been suggested that they originally did not belong in chapter 24, which contains one of Job’s speeches, as they seem to give voice to a sort of theology of moral retribution more congruent with the ideas of Job’s friends.<sup>454</sup> However, the exact original placement of the lines within the narrative structure of the book is not really what concerns us: rather it is the use of the drought motif that will be discussed here.

Job 24:19 uses parallelism to create the link between drought and death. Both parts of the complex “drought and heat” are used as subjects of the verb *gāzal*, “to rob, catch, consume, devour” etc. In the second half-verse, it is hard

<sup>453</sup> While also linguistically possible, I find it highly improbable that these lines should be read in an adversative manner (something like “even if the water would go away from the sea ... a man who has lain down will not rise again”). Such a reading (found, e.g. in the Swedish *Bibel 2000*) would make scant sense of the very specific metaphor used by the poet and just interpret it as a generic expression of something that will probably never happen.

<sup>454</sup> So, for example, Pope 1973: 195. Pope himself redistributed these lines to the end of chapter 27, where Zophar describes the fate of the godless in terms reminiscent of the retributive moral philosophy noted in the lines here discussed.

not to see a reference to the gaping maws of Mot described in the Baal Cycle. But at the same time, this is metaphorically connected to heat “devouring” snow-water.

The realm of death is explicitly identified with its drought metaphor using parallelism: drought and heat is the direct and clear image used to convey the message of Sheol, which might at first glance seem strange, as the Hebrew underworld is often characterized as a dark and desolate place.<sup>455</sup> But here the very word Sheol is used in conjunction with the drought imagery: no dark and dreary thing is the image chosen, but the destroying power of the drought sun itself (although the sun is not mentioned outright). In these two elegant lines, the author reaches back all the way into the shared Northwest Semitic background, to the same blasted state associated with the destroying heat of the sun that is in the hands of death that the Refrain of the Burning Sun tells us about—and this is even more startling, as the main “chaos enemy” of YHWH in the Book of Job is not Death at all, but various sea monsters. Also, only a few lines earlier (vv. 13-17), the light of the sun is clearly a positive image that wrongdoers seek to escape, highlighting the archaism inherent in the present expression. But the existence of a reminiscence of the old chaos-dichotomy between drought/death and the destroying waters is articulated in 12:15, a verse that describes both the lack and rushing excess of water as terrible calamities.

If one reads 24:13-20 together, one will find that the poet has creatively fused different views of the sun and its light (and its applicability as attributes of God) from different parts of the common Northwest Semitic religious background. On one hand, he has used the idea of the sun as juridical principle and judge (the criminals enumerated all go into action when the sun is gone). But on the other hand, these attributions of juridical rectitude to the sun are then followed by the above-mentioned verse 24:19, in which the destructive powers of the heavenly object appear to be alluded to in quite an outspoken manner. This juxtaposition of the “all-seeing ruling and judging sun” and the drying powers connected to Sheol lets the poet recombine these ideas into a novel concept: the sun as a judging representative of deathly power, with the parching rays striking the lives of the unrighteous. That the passage references ancient Northwest Semitic mythological and theological material can be seen in the reference to worms eating the body of the (metaphorically?) dead criminal in 24:20: the combination between scorching heat and worms calls to mind the account of the ravenous children of *CAT* 1.12 and their effect on their mothers while still in their wombs (“they consume our breasts like worms”). The reference to wilting as an image of death in 24:24 reinforces the motifs.

To be sure, Job 24:19 does not mention the sun explicitly, but when reading of the “drought and heat” being compared to the netherworld, Sheol itself, it is hard not to be reminded of how the Baal Cycle and *CAT* 1.161 connect the glowing orb with the celestial object that seems to physically descend beneath

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<sup>455</sup> Korpel 1990: 353.

the horizon into the land of the dead. Sheol is, after all, not only a symbol of death: it is a place, a place with a perceived location below the inhabitable earth, and the only thing connecting such a place with “drought and heat” is the burning, yet each day descending, sun—as described at Ugarit.

The verb *gāzal* used in Job 24:19 to denote the “robbing” action when the drying heat swallows the melting snow and the gates of Sheol engulf the sinners is surely not chosen by the poet by coincidence: the same verb occurs twice before in the same chapter, in vv. 24:2 and 24:9. The two earlier attestations talk of people robbing the flocks of the poor and robbing babies from the breasts of their mother, respectively, and the poet here reiterates this simile to describe what happens to those who die like in a drought.<sup>456</sup>

In a wider comparative perspective, this verb has a special connection to the sphere of death and dying, as seen from its use in the Phoenician funerary inscription of Eshmunazor II of Sidon, in which the king speaks post mortem, twice saying (lines 2-3 and 12-13): “I was robbed away (*ngzlt*) before my time.” As Jonas Greenfield has pointed out, this root may have distant (and phonologically mutated) relatives (or punning “sound-alikes”) in the roots *grz* and *gZR* found in Ps 31:23 (*nigratzl*) and Ps 88:6 (*nigzārū*), both in contexts implying danger from the powers of death.<sup>457</sup> This usage of *gāzar* also occurs in Isa 53:8 (“for he was cut away from the land of the living”, a clear reference to death) and Ez 37:11 (in which the dry bones of Ezekiel’s vision are revealed to symbolize the people of Israel; the verb *nigrāznū* is here used to express destitution: “we are lost!” Note also the use of the verb *yābēš* in the same verse!). The use of *gāzar* in the sense “to devour” or “to snatch for eating” in Isa 9:19 (in a context involving burning from YHWH) is also highly interesting.

Applying this death-themed verb not only to the devouring maws of Sheol but to the metaphor of the drying snow-water itself is testament to the conceptual closeness of the two ideas in the mind of the poet. Given the use of this not altogether common verb two times previously in the same chapter, one is led to wonder if v. 24:19 is not in some sense a highpoint toward which these earlier references are leading. The centrality of the death motif is apparent if one also reads v. 24:20, which invokes the imagery of worms consuming a dead body.

There are a number of other references to drought in the chapter: see for example v. 24:24, which uses the common simile of wilting greenery. However, even more striking is the use of the sun in the chapter—in a way that seems in the first place to be somewhat different than the drought imagery later employed. The sun and its light are mentioned (vv. 13-17) as a symbol of righteousness and justice, in the absence of which murders and other criminals can go about their shady business. V. 13 talks about people who “rebel against the light.” When one reads these expressions in combination with the references

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<sup>456</sup> For the connection, see Habel 1985: 362

<sup>457</sup> Greenfield 2001: 710-711.

to sinners being swallowed by Sheol and dried up like water, it seems to me tempting to think of the combined roles of the sun as a warden of justice and all-seeing judgment and the “death-sun” seen at Ugarit. Those who rebel against the light of the sun and try to hide from its gaze are, as punishment, subjected to its destroying, drying heat, a conception quite parallel to what has been found in this study concerning Malachi 3.

A similar type of destructive, drying sun is mentioned in chapter 8. Job 8:11-19 speaks of the one who forgets God as a tree that becomes parched by the rays of the sun, comparing it to wilting papyrus or reeds.

### 3.3.3.2 An Eye-Burning Sun: Job 37:21

This destroying solarify is used as a description of YHWH himself in Job 37:21, where conversing with the deity is said to be as foolish as staring straight into the blazing flames of the sun when the wind has cleared the skies from clouds.<sup>458</sup> The next verse states outright that a destroying solar glare is what comes from the divine mountain. Taken together, the verses run:

<i>Wē‘attā lō’ rā’ ū’ ōr</i>	Now one cannot look at the light
<i>bāhîr hū’ baššēhāqîm</i>	[when] it is bright among the (dust)clouds
<i>wērûah ‘ābērā</i>	and the wind has passed through
<i>wattētahārēm</i>	and cleared them.

Here, the wind of YHWH and the awful glare of the sun are both parts of the power of the Israelite God. They even appear to work together: the wind is used to remove any obstacle from the rays of the sun. YHWH is presented as the lord of nature in all of its aspects, even those that would seem the most contradictory from a religio-historical perspective. This type of juxtaposition of clearing wind and burning sun fits quite well with the main thrust of the book as it is stated soon afterwards in the divine speeches: the powers of chaos (especially Leviathan) are presented as mere toys of YHWH’s power, a perspective resonating well with the idea that the destroying glare of the sun can be used as a metaphor for God himself (and, in all probability, his *kābôd*).

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<sup>458</sup> The reference to the wind may be an attempt to invoke the image of YHWH as a powerful weather deity, which is, after all, quite prominent in the Book of Job. In that case, Job 37:21 would be an example of the storm and “blazing sun” metaphors coexisting and reinforcing each other! This image of the cleared up sky with its destroying sun is quite the opposite to the “dust color” interpretation of the Refrain of the Burning Sun. The wind has not brought any dust-color to the flaming sun but instead has made it blaze even more excruciatingly when it has cleared the clouds away. Note the use of the word *šēhāqîm*, which often seems to mean something like “clouds of dust” (see the use of the word to denote bits of dust in Isa 40:15).

## 3.3.3.3 Drying, Swallowing Death, and a Crux: Job 18:12-17

The ideas of heat, the character of personified Death, (possibly) sickness and dried up withering occur together in a most telling but very philologically complicated fashion in Job 18:12-17, when Bildad argues the fate of the godless in the following difficult passage, which is full of textual problems:

<i>Yēhī-rā'ēb 'ōnô</i>	The Hungerer will be his disaster/power <sup>459</sup>
<i>wē'ēd nākôn lēšal'ô</i>	and Danger is ready at his side.
<i>yō'kal bidway 'ôrô</i>	He eats his skin with sickness—
<i>yō'kal baddāyw</i>	he eats [him] with both his hands:
<i>bēkôr māwet</i>	Death, the firstborn. <sup>460</sup>
<i>yinnātēq mē'ohōlô mibṭahô</i>	He is dragged away from his safe tent
<i>wētaš'īdūhū</i>	and is marched <sup>461</sup>
<i>lēmek ballāhôt</i>	before the King of Horrors.
<i>tiškôn bē'ohōlô mabbēl'<sup>462</sup></i>	Burning heat dwells in his tent,

<sup>459</sup> With Habel (1985: 281), I understand the noun *rā'ēb* as a reference to Death in his “gaping maws” aspect and the word *'ōnô* as a deliberate and sarcastic pun on the two possible derivations from *'ōn* (“power,” “strength”) and *'āwen* (“disaster,” or as Habel translates it, “sorrow”). The interpretation of *rā'ēb* as a reference to Māwet goes back to Dahood (1965: 203), who saw the same expression in Ps 33:19, and was also followed by Pope (1973: 135). Mathewson (2006: 29) regards the association as quite possible.

<sup>460</sup> The interpretation of *baddāyw* as “with both (his) hands” follows Sarna 1963: 317. Sarna sees the phrase as a version of the same idea found concerning Mot at CAT 1.5 I 19-20, where he says *b klat ydy ilhm* (“with both my hands I will eat”). The suggestion was followed by Pope (1973: 135) and Habel (1985: 280-281). Given the central role taken by personified Death in this passage I find the suggestion quite believable. However, in the parallel line preceeding, I have preferred the proposition mentioned by BHSApp, to emend *baddē* to *bidway* (“with sickness”), rather than seeing this too as a reference to Death’s “two hands” as is done by Sarna; his view would create a strange iteration (“with two hands”/“with his two hands”). However, I see no reason to change the first *yō'kal* to a passive *yē'ākēl* with BHSApp, as the subject of the “eating” is clearly stated in the following line; the *bidway* would be quite understandable as an instrument rather than as an agent of a passive sentence (“is eaten by sickness”). The text given above creates a punning play on “sickness” and “two hands” that nicely echoes the ambiguity of *'ōnô* in 18:12.

<sup>461</sup> As I mention in the main text, the word given in the MT as *taš'īdēhū* may well represent an old 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural form referring to an unidentified “they” (and therefore most easily translated using a passive construction), an idea suggested by Moran (1964: 82, n. 1), who proposes a revocalization to an original *taš'īdūhū*.

<sup>462</sup> This reading was suggested by Dahood (1957: 312-313) as a replacement for the nonsensical text of the MT, *mibbēli-lô*. He related it to the Ugaritic *nblat* (“flames”) and Akkadian *nablu* (“fire”). I discuss further ramifications of this interpretation in the main text. Other suggestions are changing the text to *lilit* (the female demon Lilith), a view propounded already by Ball (1922: 266), who derived this reading from the LXX version (ἐν πυρὶ αὐτοῦ), which he retranslated into Hebrew as *blylw* and then emended to *lylw*.

<i>yězōrē ʿal-nāwēhū goprīt</i>	sulphur is spread over his dwelling.
<i>mittaḥat šorāšāyw yibšū</i>	Below his roots dry up,
<i>ūmimma ʿal yimmaḥ qēšīrō</i>	and above his branch withers.
<i>zīkrō-ʾābad minnī-ʾereš</i>	His remembrance vanishes from the earth,
<i>wēlō-šēm lō ʿal-pēnē-ḥūš</i>	and he has no name out in the street.

Note how the imagery of “swallowing” is yet again very much at the forefront, as the dangers awaiting an evil man are recounted. That the reference in the first line of this passage is to the gaping jaws of Death is rendered all the more probable by the expression *bēkōr māwet*, “firstborn Māwet,” or “the firstborn of Māwet.” In this much-discussed simile, the poet reaches back to ancient Northwest Semitic phraseology and almost seems to evoke Death as an independent character. The former of the interpretations of this epithet, with “firstborn” as a description of Māwet rather than as a construct, was suggested by W. L. Michel in his unpublished doctoral thesis.<sup>463</sup> This interpretation was also argued by Nicolas Wyatt,<sup>464</sup> and it was further developed by him. One of his suggestions in explaining the expression was that Māwet/Mot was thought of as the “firstborn” of El, basing himself on Mot’s Ugaritic epithet *bn il*, which is discussed elsewhere in this volume.<sup>465</sup> I cautiously agree with this interpretation, and I would like to add something more to it. It is in my mind probable that Māwet would be referred to as a “firstborn” of El, as El is the very divinity responsible for “sponsoring” the beings on the side of death in a number of instances in the Ugaritic texts: I am thinking here of El’s role as sponsor and namer of the killing and fever-inducing monsters in *CAT* 1.12 (discussed in section 2.3.2) and his connection to heat-themed beings in the demon list in *CAT*

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This emendation was followed by Fohrer (1963: 298). The solution opted for by Hartley (1988: 277), to keep the MT as it is and translate “Nothing of his dwells in his tent,” makes very little sense and also completely destroys the parallelism. Given the great extent of very well fitting parallelisms in the passage, reading completely unparallelistic words seems unwarranted.

<sup>463</sup> Michel 1970 (*non vidi*). Reference in Pope 1973: 135.

<sup>464</sup> Wyatt 1990: 208. Wyatt does not mention Michel but attributes the idea to Habel, who does mention it in 1985: 287-288. One may also note the analysis of Burns (1987), who *does* read the title as a construct relationship, “First-Born of Death.” He finds the identity of that character in the Mesopotamian deity Namtar. He also mentions Resheph as a possible candidate (p. 363), but does not seem quite convinced by that possibility. Anyway, the modern trend not to regard Resheph as a chthonic deity may render that question moot. Interestingly, Burns also brings Nergal into the discussion (p. 364), and contends that he is the “King of Terrors” before whom the unrighteous one is marched in Job 18:14 (Burns here uses an underworld vision text from Ashur as his *comparandum*). If this is so, it would fit very well with my interpretation (following Michael B. Dick) that Nergal appears in Job 28:4 (see further below, section 3.3.3.4). But, as mentioned above, I think that Mot/Māwet himself is a good candidate both for the first-born and for the king.

<sup>465</sup> Wyatt 1990: 210.

1.3 III 38-46 (see further section 4.3.2). This ancient mytheme may be in evidence also in Job 18.

The calamity that threatens the godless person is metaphorically (and perhaps theologically?) identified with the dangers of being swallowed whole by Mot so eloquently delineated in the Baal Cycle. And, just as might be expected given what has been seen in this volume concerning how such influence was often depicted, the drought soon appears in the words of the Job poet (18:16), when both root and branch of the evildoer fall prey to the terrible heat. Thus, the triad appears again: Death, (possibly) feverish sickness, drought. If one is eaten by the “King of Horrors” (*melek ballāhôt*), one becomes dried up.<sup>466</sup> This, a poetic device though it may be, is startlingly similar to the mythological interpretation of reality at Ugarit. The great antiquity of the ideas of this passage is further underscored by the occurrence in it of what appears originally to have been a Ugaritic-style 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural in *t-* (*taṣ‘īdūhū*). The possible reference to Māwet eating “with both his hands” may also represent an ancient Northwest Semitic formula (see footnote 460 on the connection with *CAT* 1.5 I 19-20). As seen above, the expression *bēkôr māwet* makes the most sense when seen against a Northwest Semitic background, and the reconstruction of the word *mabbēl* is only possible in such a context and creates intelligibility in a text which would otherwise be utterly inscrutable. Thus, I believe that this passage can only be properly understood when viewed in a comparative perspective, and this should then inform not only the linguistic analysis but also the understanding of the contents.

What Job 18:12-17 presents, then, is an image of desperation that seems to be built almost wholesale on motifs known to us from Ugarit, especially in the “threats of Mot” passage discussed in section 2.2.3, which forms a very salient parallel to the present text. Death opens his jaws to swallow, and this brings terrible heat (even “sulphur”). But the passage also points ahead: the reference to the remembrance of the godless one disappearing also occurs together with deathly drought in Job 24 and is later taken up by the author of the Wisdom of Solomon (v. 2:4, discussed in section 3.4.1).

This is yet another case where the old motif of death and drought in the Hebrew Bible occurs without the mediating factor of the sun. Indeed, v. 18:13 states that the dead, dried out and forgotten ungodly one will be thrown “from light into darkness,” a simile which appears to be quite discordant with the idea of the sun as bringer of deathly drought. Again, though, one may think of the passage as a part of the almost dialectic relationship that appears to exist between the ideas of the dark netherworld as the home of death and the burning light necessary for drought to manifest (cf. the discussion of this opposition in

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<sup>466</sup> One should also not discount the possibility that the word *ballāhôt* is meant punningly to remind the audience of the verb *bāla‘*, “to swallow,” which would again reinforce the imagery of the gaping jaws of Death. One may note John Day’s (1989: 55) suggestion that the terrible being here called *melek ballāhôt* could be a reminiscence of the god Molech.



the Appendix). Another similar example of the author applying drought imagery to the unrighteous while still speaking of “darkness” can be found in Job 15:30-33. Those verses speak of the “shoot” of unrighteous one being dried up (*yḇš*, *piʿel*) by a *šalhebet* (“flame”), applying overtly agricultural and viticultural imagery in a way reminiscent of CAT 1.23, yet it still refers to the danger awaiting the criminal as “darkness” (*hōšek*).

The present passage from Job 18 is a very illustrative example of how the Old Testament authors use this sort of material. Quite ancient philosophical material and mythological references are used to make a moralistic point, in this case, that the ungodly get what they deserve. Note that this view is then refuted as part of the main argument of the Book itself! The old Northwest Semitic ideas form a repository of material from which the poet can pick and choose, even when representing views not really his own. The same phenomenon occurs in the passage from the Wisdom of Solomon discussed later in this book (section 3.4.1).

### 3.3.3.4 Another Crux, and a Proposed Interpretation: Nergal and Fever in Job 28:4

Another possible allusion to the motifs studied in this book may be hidden in a textual conundrum within one of the Job poems (one that I have earlier mentioned in passing in a footnote). The relevant verse in this case is Job 28:4, which is a well-known *crux interpretum*. The Masoretic reading *pāraš naḥal mēʿim-gār / hanniškāhīm minnī-rāgel / dallū mēʿənōš nāʿû* makes very little sense, and the various attempts at translation have often staggered. The verse is found in the middle of a soliloquy by Job on the subject on the difficulty of finding true wisdom; he talks at some length of the great work performed in mining various precious metals and juxtaposes these mighty acts to how hard it is to find wisdom.

The difficulty of the verse means that the reading I shall here outline is, at best, an educated guess or an interesting possibility, as it rests upon a particular proposed textual interpretation of the verse in question, with which one may or may not agree. However, I shall follow this trajectory of thought to its conclusion and leave it to the reader to accept or reject.

The analysis of Job 28:4 that I am basing myself on is the one propounded by Michael B. Dick, who tries to understand the enigmatic (and virtually certainly textually corrupt) verse by seeing in it a reference to Nergal, the Mesopotamian god of plague and netherworld, who, as noted earlier, was identified with Erra and with the West Semitic Rashpu/Resheph.<sup>467</sup> According to that interpretation, the verse is talking of the awful plight of those laboring in deep mines of the earth, quite fitting considering the context comparing the search for wisdom to the mining of precious metals. Dick’s interpretation keeps with this general view but portrays the fate of the metaphorical miners in quite a

<sup>467</sup> The proposal is made in Dick 1979.

special way. The part of his analysis important here is his audacious revocalization of the nonsensical phrase *hanniškāhīm minnī-rāgel* to something like *hanniškāhīm minnērgal*, with the latter word consisting of the preposition *min* (“from”) and a Hebrew representation of the divine name Nergal.<sup>468</sup> Dick interprets the word *niškāhīm* as a participle not of the usual root *škḥ* (“to forget”) but as an instance of the verb *tkḥ/škḥ* encountered at a number of places of this study. When Dick wrote his article, he opted for the translation “stoop” or “bend over,” here interpreted as a description of the unfortunate state of the miners, who would be “stooped over by disease/Nergal.”<sup>469</sup>

However, as I hope to have shown on the basis of work by many other scholars (see the special study in section 2.2.4), the meaning of *tkḥ/škḥ* is not “to stoop” or “to bend” but “to be (exceedingly) hot.” Given such an understanding, the words (as interpreted by Dick) take on a much wider significance than just talking of the miners bending under the weight of disease. This is because of (a) the much more specific semantic sphere of *tkḥ/škḥ* and the quite overt connection between this verbal root and the motifs of feverish illness and its relation to killing heat and burning drought in general encountered at many places in this study, (b) the role of Nergal as a god of the netherworld and thus as a figure very fittingly evoked in the context of dangerous subterranean labor and (c) the religio-historical link that exists between Nergal and Erra and Resheph/Rashpu, three divinities that are sometimes equated with one another and appear to be intimately associated with the deathly heat-power that is the focus of this volume. The putative expression *hanniškāhīm minnērgal* may signify not merely that the people in the mines are pressed down by the might of Nergal but by the heat that I have tried to show to be a direct sign of the influence of the deathly powers in the Northwest Semitic cultural sphere. They are “burning” by the power of Nergal—the forces of death and the netherworld manifest their influence by fever and a heat similar to that which is channeled by Shapshu in the Refrain of the Burning Sun. The fact that the scene takes place literally under the earth, in the chthonic realms, and possibly under the aegis of the netherworld god Nergal, underscores this interpretation. One thinks of the warning given by Baal to his servants before they are sent on their embassy to Mot: when they travel into the netherworld, they must take care not to be swallowed by the god of death, as he would then make the sun burn red with heat (CAT 1.4 VIII 14-24). Such, I propose, may be the metaphorical

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<sup>468</sup> Dick 1979: 218. It should be noted that, as pointed out by Dick himself, the name *Nērgal* is previously and unequivocally attested in the Hebrew Bible, in 2 Kings 17:30. Another reference to the divine name occurs in the personal name *Nērgal-šar-ešer* of Jer 39:3 and 39:13.

<sup>469</sup> Dick 1979: 217-219. The equally strange expression *mē’ēnōš* (“from a man”) beginning the next colon is revocalized by Dick into *mē’ānūš* (“from illness”), thus creating a beautiful parallelism. Dick translates the entire verse as “An excavation is carved out by the foreign work-force, / Stooped over by disease/ Nergal, / Weakened from illness, they stagger about.”

plight of those working in the deathly mines of Job 28:4. Their suffering may stand in close relation to the burning of the sun in the Baal Cycle, to the feverish influence of Resheph, and to the terrible, glowing furnace of Ps 102:4-5.

### 3.3.3.5 Gnawing the Dry Wilderness: Job 30:3

Job 30:3 is also a difficult verse. The context is Job's oration on how he is now disdained by men far below his level and his lengthy description of the same. Marvin H. Pope translated the verse in question in the following way (I have added the Hebrew text for comparison):<sup>470</sup>

<i>bēheser ūbēkāpān galmūd</i>	With want and famine gaunt
<i>ha'ōrēqīm šīyyā</i>	Gnawing the dry ground
<i>'emeš šō'ā ūmēšō'ā</i>	By night in desolated waste [...]

Among the greatest difficulties of the verse is the expression *ha'ōrēqīm šīyyā*. The main question here is the identity of the verb *'āraq*: is it the verb “to flee” (common in Aramaic) or a rare word meaning “to gnaw” (based on Arabic *'araqā*)?<sup>471</sup> Kevin J. Cathcart convincingly points out that the etymology suggesting “to flee” is not very likely: the Aramaic verb *'ēraq* (“to flee”) is attested in an earlier, Old Aramaic form in the Sefire inscriptions (III:4) as *qrq*, with the initial *q* representing later *'ayin*, as in well-known cases such as *'arqā* (attested in the Bible in Jer 10:11) being the older form of *'ar'ā* (“the earth”)—but this Aramaic “*'ayin* from *qoph*” phoneme represents Proto-Semitic \**q* (which was probably realized as an emphatic lateral fricative), a phoneme which is always shifted to *š* in Hebrew.<sup>472</sup> Thus one would have expected a Hebrew cognate meaning “flee” to appear as *šrq* rather than *'rq*.<sup>473</sup>

As the context of the lines is one of people being driven out to the liminal outskirts of society, one may associate the “gnawing” with descriptions of the domain of death (the “coastplain of death” etc.), and similar conceptions of the territories outside the normal world of the living. As the deathly powers are so often associated with swallowing, the “gnawing” fits well here, as does the root

<sup>470</sup> The translation is found in Pope 1973: 217.

<sup>471</sup> Discussed by Pope (1973: 219) and Cathcart (2005: 10-11).

<sup>472</sup> Cathcart 2005: 10-11.

<sup>473</sup> However, if one were intent on defending the meaning “flee,” one could always interpret the present Hebrew verb as an interdialectal borrowing from later Aramaic, thus obviating the need to respect the sound laws. Such a stance is taken by Greenstein (2003: 657). This is hardly the most parsimonious option, though. Noegel (1996: 103-104) suggests that a double entendre between the two roots may have been in effect; Greenstein also cites this suggestion in his n. 33. Habel (1985: 413) simply translates “flee” without comment; one may surmise that the Targum and LXX versions have been an influence.

šā'ā, possibly connected to the name of Sheol.<sup>474</sup> However, Job 30:3 turns the imagery upside down, making the victims the ones who gnaw (the participle 'ōrēqīm as after all a plural *status absolutus*) and the dry ground (šīyyā) the object. Yet the motif of the swallowing character of Death is probably visible in the background. The poet uses the inherited material and the connection drought-outskirts-Death-gnawing for his own, innovative purposes.

### 3.3.3.6 Heat of Skin and Fever: Job 30:30

In Job 30:30, the image of feverish burning returns. As noted in the special study in section 2.2.2, the verse makes use of old and possibly etymologically connected linguistic material (the roots *hārar* and *šāhar*) to express the heat of affliction that has beset Job. It is also highly probable that an intertextual reference to traditions of the same kind as those apparent in Ps 102:4 (*wē' ašmōtay kēmôqēd niḥārū*, “and my bones burn like a furnace”) can be found in it, in view of the bones that burn with fever (in both cases expressed using the verb *hārar*) and, if one follows Dahood, because the text may have behind it an expression containing the word 'ēlī (“cauldron,” “crucible”), which would nicely parallel the mention of the furnace in Ps 102:4.<sup>475</sup>

### 3.3.3.7 Light and East Wind: Job 38:24

An allusion to the “drought sun” motif may possibly be in evidence in Job 38:24, despite the sun not being mentioned outright as the sender of drought in the other Job passages (and rarely in the Hebrew Bible generally). The verse, in its MT version, runs:

'ê-zē hadderek yēhāleq 'ôr	What is the way on which light is spread out,
yāpēš qādīm 'ālê-'āreš	that the east wind is dispersed over the earth?

This verse occurs as part of YHWH's speech from the whirlwind and his declaration of all the natural phenomena that he rules. It has been the subject of discussion, as the two central nouns it mentions, “light” and “east wind,” do not

<sup>474</sup> Another possible (though rather tenuous) allusion to the drought-death motif can be found later in the same passage, in Job 30:8, where the disdained men are called *bēnē-nābāl* (“fools,” literally “sons of foolishness”). A paronomasic reference to the verb *nābēl* could be intended here.

<sup>475</sup> For this suggestion, see Dahood 1965: 74. See also Ceresko 1980: 97. A possible case of the burning sun (*hammā*) being associated not with death and heat but with life and hope perhaps occurs close to this passage, in the verse 30:28, in which Job complains that he walks “in darkness” or “mourning” (*qōdēr*) without any sun (*bēlō' hammā*). However, this reading has been questioned, and the emendation *bēlō' nehāmā* (“without consolation”) has been proposed (see e.g. Duhm 1897: 144, Fohrer 1963: 414; mentioned in BHSAp and accepted as the correct reading in *HALOT* [s.v. *hammā*]). Hartley (1988: 404-405) takes a middle view, translating “I go about blackened, but not by the sun,” an interpretation which still ascribes scorching power to the sun.

seem to fit with each other parallelistically (the other natural phenomena mentioned in the verses following display good parallelistic structure). This has led to a number of attempts to change either the interpretation or the reading of *ʾôr* in order to solve the problem, at least one of which sees a reference to destructive heat in the underlying word.<sup>476</sup> However, I believe that one should not discount the possibility of keeping the MT as it stands and seeing the “light” as an allusion to the burning sun. The verse would then use parallelism to underline the two most obvious ways in which YHWH could send blasting heat (the sun and the hot east wind), thereby helping to combine them. This would create a fascinating, and seemingly almost conscious, conflation of the two traditions (cf. section 3.2.3.2, which deals with the east wind as a method of integrating the Mot-like drought power into the figure of YHWH). If the present verse really does contain a reference to the burning drought sun (and the combined evidence of the MT and the parallelism does seem to imply this), the combination of the old drought-weapon (“inherited” from Mot) and the “desert god” characteristics of YHWH is given a very succinct expression. In the context of the Book of Job, such an image of God would perhaps seem at odds with the ascribing of drying powers to Death and (possibly) Nergal that we have studied here; however, it is perhaps no coincidence that this possible reference to YHWH as lord of the drought sun occurs in the divine speeches from the whirlwind, in which he is portrayed as being master of the *whole* of the world, even the chaos powers, such as the Leviathan (Job 40:20). One must, however, concede that the interpretation of the verse is not certain, and the one presented here must be regarded as an interesting possibility. On the importance of the “devaluation” of the chaotic powers of both sea and drought/death, see further in section 4.3.2.

### 3.3.3.8 Conclusions

To sum up, the Book of Job includes a number of instances in which the drought motif appears to be used with the reference to death as a clear background. In a some places, these occurrences entail difficult textual conundra and what seems to be old or archaizing poetic material. The Job passages ascribe the heat and

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<sup>476</sup> Driver (1955: 91-92) sees the word as a reference to “heat,” based on the Arabic *ʾuwārun*, and thus also emphasizes the drought/heat aspect, translating the Arabic word as “heat (of sun or fire)”. Gordis (1978: 448-449) interprets the word as meaning “air, air currents” (based on Greek ἀήρ). Tur-Sinai (1957: 529) and, following him, Hartley (1988: 498) connect it with Akkadian *amurru* and interpret it as an expression for the west wind. Fohrer (1963: 492) prefers an emendation to *rûah*, “wind,” as do many others. Pope (1973: 289, 297), following a number of earlier scholars, reconstructs the word as *ʾēd* and translates it as “the flood,” but also mentions that the *New English Bible* keeps the MT’s word and translates it as “heat,” as a parallel to the east wind (similar to my analysis above). Habel (1985: 522) and Mathewson (2006: 151, n. 71) keep the MT and regard the word as a reference to lightning. There are other suggestions as well; see the commentaries and Mathewson’s n. 151 for references to further literature.

drought mainly to powers outside of YHWH's domain: Death and Sheol are mentioned outright (and maybe even Nergal). This retention of the drought/heat motif as being something alien to the character of YHWH fits well with the general theological outlook of the Book: the killing heat becomes part of the chaotic world that God keeps at bay, rather than a weapon of his judgment. It is quite possible that the view of theodicy propounded by the Job poet influenced him in his decision to keep the "Ugaritic" vision of heat and death as enemies of YHWH's order, just as he did with the power of the Sea (cf. Job 38:8-11, in which the Sea is an enemy, though one subdued due to YHWH's mastery over the world). This illustrates the dialectic interplay between inherited poetic motifs and phraseology and the ideology of the individual poet. It is also quite striking how the imagery of devouring, gaping jaws appears again and again in the drought passages in Job. The physical, swallowing action of the netherworld, combined with its burning influence, is powerfully conveyed. In 38:24, it is possible that the "Baal Cycle" style burning sun is referred to as part of YHWH's own arsenal (as opposed to belonging to "alien" powers). This verse appears, interestingly enough, as part of the divine speeches as the end of the Book, wherein YHWH's mastery of the whole world (including the powers of chaos) is recounted.

### 3.4 The Deuterocanonical literature

As a telling illustration of the fact that the motif of the burning drought sun is not only represented in the older layers of the Israelite writings, I would now like to draw attention to two interesting attestations from quite late sources, namely from the Deuterocanonical wisdom literature.

#### 3.4.1 *Wisdom 2:4*

In verse 2:4 of the Wisdom of Solomon, the author uses the heat of the sun as a metaphor for the *indomita mors* that awaits all humans, although these views are represented as those of the ungodly, who speak the following words:

καὶ τὸ ὄνομα ἡμῶν ἐπιλησθήσεται ἐν χρόνῳ,  
καὶ οὐθεὶς μνημονεύσει τῶν ἔργων ἡμῶν·  
καὶ παρελεύσεται ὁ βίος ἡμῶν ὡς ἵχνη νεφέλης  
καὶ ὡς ὁμίχλη διασκεδασθήσεται  
διωχθεῖσα ὑπὸ ἀκτίνων ἡλίου  
καὶ ὑπὸ θερμότητος αὐτοῦ βαρυνθεῖσα.

And our name will be forgotten in time,  
and no one will remember our works;  
and our life will pass away like the trace of a cloud  
and it will be dispersed like a fog  
that has been pursued by the rays of the sun  
and oppressed by its heat.

The verses surrounding this one speak of man being turned into ashes, and of his time being similar to a fleeting shadow, all in all a very pessimistic view of human existence, one in which the metaphor of the killing sun is given an important place. In the text, this is said to be the view of those who do not understand that God intended for man to be immortal (v. 2:23), thus (it may be assumed) letting the righteous avoid being “dispersed like a fog that has been pursued by the rays of the sun and oppressed by its heat.” Here one finds a fascinating new piece in the history of the reinterpretation of the drought/death motif: it is made into a simile put into the mouths of those who do not really understand the workings of God and the world, of those who even are morally reprehensible in the eyes of the author. To the author of the Sapiientia, the image of the destructive sun of death might even have been regarded as a “pagan” conception linked to a general sense of nihilism quite unacceptable to the theistic outlook of the Book. The motif has thus gone all the way from internal Northwest Semitic theology to a poetic expression of a reprehensible lack of the fear of God.

In this passage, the power of the death-bringing sun is not applied metaphorically to God, as is the case in a few biblical texts studied in this volume (cf. the discussion of Mal 3:19-21), but is instead portrayed as an

autonomous and undirected process of material reality, which is of course quite fitting, as the words are intended to be a poetic codification of ungodly views. Indeed, at the end of the chapter, when the previously defined godless position is criticized, the text states (v. 2:24) that the existence of death in the world is a result of the “envy” or “malice” (φθόρος) of the Devil. Both at the beginning of the chapter (where the ungodly speak) and at the end (where their views are refuted), death (in all its drying danger) is portrayed as unconnected, and indeed contrary, to the nature of God.

#### *3.4.1.1 The Ungodly and the Drought as Metaphor for Life’s Inconstancy*

The views of the infidels who are maligned by the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* appear to represent some form of Epicurean, or perhaps rather Hedonist philosophy, advocating temporal wish-fulfillment as the only object of life (esp. vv. 6-11).<sup>477</sup> Given such an outspokenly materialist outlook, it is quite fitting that these prototypically ungodly people are said to describe life as something as fleeting and inconstant as a cloud (νεφέλη), lacking any spiritual grounding, and its destruction as comparable to natural processes, such as the sun drying up a vapor or a mist. However, when seen in the perspective of the texts studied in this book, the alleged view of the Hedonists is quite remarkable in its retention of what may well be a reminiscence of a very ancient motif, at times attested in earlier biblical writings. Whether this was done consciously or not, the author has appropriated the solar imagery of death, represented as early as in the Ugaritic texts, and applied it to the views of Hellenized unbelievers—a startling transformation indeed of ancient poetic material. The burning sun in this text is neither a weapon of an autonomous deathly power nor of a sovereign God but rather a simple metaphor for material dissolution, yet the Jewish author of the *Sapientia* cannot quite exorcize the ancient, inherited poetical motif even when its ontological underpinnings are nowhere to be found in the context.<sup>478</sup>

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<sup>477</sup> Grabbe (1997: 50-51) mentions the Epicureans (or rather a caricatured version of them) as a possible target of the passage, but then somewhat hesitantly states that “[t]here is no evidence that the writer of the *Wisdom of Solomon* had the Epicureans specifically in mind—indeed, it is unlikely they were the main target of the author, but it is their system which fits most closely the views expressed here.” (p. 51). Clarke (1973: 23) also associates the present passage with Greek materialist/atomist philosophy. It should be noted that although it is quite possible that a distorted “straw man” view of Epicureanism may be alluded to here, the actual stated positions of the ungodly in this passage seem to be closer to the purely Hedonist schools of the Cyrenaics or the Indian Cārvākas (sensual gratification appears to be a goal of life in a way not representative of “orthodox” Epicureanism). Hare (2009: 255) thinks that the passage may be directed towards the Saducees, because of their lack of belief in the afterlife.

<sup>478</sup> The line promising that the names of the dead will be forgotten with time resonates beautifully with a very similar one in Bildad’s soliloquy on the ungodly in Job 18:17, which, as I have discussed in section 3.3.3.3, is also a part of a “death-drought”-connected passage—hardly a coincidence.



One might object that the appearance of the motif of death as a drying sun could be just a coincidentally identical simile compared to what we find at Ugarit, but, as I hope to have shown in earlier chapters, the destructive, and death-themed, solar/drying imagery is sometimes a part of Israelite religious and/or poetic culture, as reflected in the Hebrew Bible. Note how the author of the *Sapientia* uses the image of the fleeting cloud that is chased away by the terrible heat, a depiction also occurring in Hos 13:3—as has been seen earlier, Hosea 13 is a chapter replete with ancient drought-death imagery. Thus, the appearance of the motif even in a text as late as the *Wisdom of Solomon* should not be attributed to coincidence but ought rather to be seen as a specimen of inherited material that has its beginnings as early as the Ugaritic texts at least. Yet this specimen has been radically de-mythologized, and even made into a vehicle for presenting a purportedly unspiritual, possibly nontheist, way of thinking. This very fact may actually be a marker and function of this derogatory and caricatured version of “non-God fearing” philosophy being set up by a pious Jewish author and not by a representative of those philosophies: the author using such an ancient piece of poetic material is testament to his own religious background. This is even more apparent and stands out in even greater contrast when one considers the fact that the *Wisdom of Solomon* is a text originally composed in Greek, in which such ancient, Levantine imagery becomes even more conspicuous.

In any case, the text as it appears in the *Wisdom of Solomon* gives the metaphorical destroying rays of the sun as an example of the type of death that would await, had God not specifically intended for the human being to be immortal. Thus, the old power of Mot/Māwet is strangely removed from the sphere of YHWH’s power, into which it had previously had been incorporated. Death would indeed be like a destroying sun, the text seems to argue, had God not used his power to shield us from it.<sup>479</sup> One is here reminded of the passage Isa 4:5-6, in which YHWH sets up a tabernacle to shade his people from the burning rays of the sun, but in the *Wisdom of Solomon*, the idea is much more “spiritualized” and universal. The salvation from the power of death is extended to the entire human species. Also, the idea that all material beings would be subjected to the drought-like power of dying were it not for the eternal might of the Israelite God is reminiscent of Isaiah 40.

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<sup>479</sup> Interestingly, verse 18:3 of the *Wisdom of Solomon* refers to the pillar of fire that guided the Israelites during their desert wanderings as a “sun that does not harm” (ἥλιον δὲ ἀβλαβὴν). The shining power of YHWH is here too portrayed, it appears, as something from which YHWH himself protects his people. Of course, it might also be possible to interpret this expression as meaning that the pillar could never be dangerous to anybody, but that seems a bit far-fetched, as it is referred to as consisting of flaming fire.

**3.4.2 Ben Sira 43—Burning Sun and Glory**

The passage from the Wisdom of Solomon is not the only instance in which the later sapiential literature invokes the old motifs of the lethal burning sun. In the book of Ben Sira, there is a clear occurrence in vv. 43:2-5, which actually associate the destroying sun outright with God's creation. According to the Greek text, the verses run as follows:<sup>480</sup>

ἥλιος ἐν ὀπτασίᾳ διαγγέλλων ἐν ἐξόδῳ,  
 σκευὸς θαυμαστόν, ἔργον Ὑψίστου.  
 ἐν μεσημβρίᾳ αὐτοῦ ἀναξηραίνει χώραν,  
 καὶ ἐναντίον καύματος αὐτοῦ τίς ὑποστήσεται;  
 κάμινον φουσῶν ἐν ἔργοις καύματος,  
 τριπλασίως ἥλιος ἐκκαίων ὄρη·  
 ἀτμίδας πυρώδεις ἐκφουσῶν  
 καὶ ἐκλάμπων ἀκτῖνας ἀμανροῖ ὀφθαλμούς.  
 μέγας Κύριος ὁ ποιήσας αὐτόν,  
 καὶ ἐν λόγοις αὐτοῦ κατέσπευσε πορείαν.

The sun, when it appears, is a messenger as it goes forth,  
 a marvellous instrument, a work of the Most High.  
 At its noon-point, it parches the land,  
 and who can withstand its heat?  
 One blows a furnace in works of heat,  
 but thrice as much does the sun burn the mountains;  
 it breaths out fiery vapors  
 and blinds the eyes as it shines forth its rays.  
 Great is the Lord who has made it,  
 and by his words it runs its speedy course.

The context of this “burning sun” pericope from Ben Sira is rather interesting. From v. 42:15 to the end of ch. 43 there is a great hymnal piece extolling the works of God in creation, including many features of the natural world. The passage on the scorching rays of the sun occurs near the middle of this poem. A number of the natural phenomena mentioned in the hymn are strongly reminiscent of ancient Northwest Semitic poetic tradition, for example the reference to God conquering the sea in 43:23 and the weather god imagery of 43:16/17. This makes it likely that the passage on the sun should also be seen in this religio-historical light. In fact, the sun is mentioned earlier on in the hymn,

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<sup>480</sup> The preserved Hebrew text shows only slight differences from the Greek version. The word τριπλασίως (“thrice as much”) in v. 4 is apparently based on a reading reflecting a form of *šlwš* (“three”), as opposed to the *šlwḥ* (“[when it is] sent out”) of manuscript B (see Beentjes 2006: 75, 170), but this has no bearing on the issues here at hand.

in 42:16, a verse which parallelistically juxtaposes the sun with the “glory” of God (the Hebrew text expressly uses the term *kābôd* here): this is yet another instance of the solar conception of YHWH’s *kābôd* that I have discussed earlier in the section on Ps 84:12. The second half-verse artfully quotes from Isa 6:3, creating a subtextual connection to temple theology. The sun is shown to be the vehicle through which the glory of the Israelite God is manifested, and this makes the burning, scorching description of that heavenly body later in the hymn highly conspicuous.

The hymn from Ben Sira puts forth the destructive sun as an integral part of YHWH’s creative activity. It appears together with all the other natural phenomena, a fact that might have made it tempting to ignore the pericope as insignificant. However, if we read the passage together with the earlier reference in 42:16, it appears that the sun is being mentioned as a prime physical example of God’s *kābôd* at work in nature. The connection between *kābôd* and burning solar activity that was demonstrated earlier puts the lines on the scorching sun in a special category.

The passage likens the glaring sun to a burning furnace: this is a piece of imagery which has previously been met with in the course of this study (Ps 102:4 comes to mind, as does Mal 3:19). But here, the furnace is part of God’s majestic creation—the burning power of the sun is given as a sign of the great power of the Israelite God. And this is scarcely surprising, considering the reference to his *kābôd* (given solar characteristics) earlier on in the hymnal piece. It is quite interesting to note how the Ben Sira text combines the motifs of the sea-conquering storm god and the scorching sun: a thousand years earlier, and even to some extent in the Hebrew Bible, these two powers were the bitterest of enemies, but in Ben Sira, they are both portrayed as instances of YHWH’s power. And the destructive sun is presented as a part of the manifestations of God’s creative power in nature, an idea very far removed indeed from any conception of the killing sun as a chaotic force. In this sense, the Ben Sira passage appears to have something in common with the combination of solar and Northwest Semitic storm god imagery found in Psalm 104.

As argued above, the destroying, burning sun is portrayed in Sir 43:2-5 as a constituent part of God’s creation. In 43:22, however, the opposite of its power is, as has been mentioned earlier in this study, invoked, as the text speaks of the “dew” giving solace to the parched land (*šārāb* in the Hebrew text). Here, the results of the burning rays of the sun are themselves overcome by the powers of YHWH. Interestingly, this verse is immediately followed in the Greek text by a reference (43:23) to the sea being conquered by God, which could imply that the power of drought was still somehow seen as a “free” power of chaos in the mind of the author, but soon thereafter (43:25), the sea monsters are said to have been

created by God.<sup>481</sup> Thus, both the chaotic powers (Death/drought and Sea) have an ambivalent status in Sir 43—in quite a parallel way.

It is highly significant that Ben Sira attributes quite different characteristics to the sun and the moon in the hymnal piece on the wonders of creation. Although the passage on the moon is replete with references to its calendrical function (marking holidays and feasts), there are no such attributions concerning the sun. As Benjamin Wright has fittingly pointed out, this discrepancy is most interesting, and merits further analysis. Wright's own conclusion is that Ben Sira takes this stance in conscious opposition to solar-calendrical works such as *1 Enoch* and the *Aramaic Levi*. He also points out the marked discrepancy between the views of Ben Sira and the Priestly creation account in Genesis, in which both luminaries cooperate in marking out times (Gen 1:14-15), a difference that he attributes to yet another attempt to avoid connection with the form of calendrical schemes that are put forth in the two pseudepigraphies mentioned above.<sup>482</sup> Howsoever that may be, the lack of calendrical significance attributed to the sun makes way for the much older motif of the hot, destroying, drought sun. I believe that Wright has hit the nail on the head when he notes the differences in the descriptions of the two great lights, yet I would certainly say that there is much more to Ben Sira's passage on the sun than he would acknowledge when merely stating that "[Ben Sira's] interest in the sun is actually quite mundane—it is hot."<sup>483</sup> As seen above, I believe that this hotness has a whole religious history behind it. If Wright's hypothesis about the difference between the book's views of the sun and of the moon is correct, the appearance of the burning sun here is probably highly significant: it shows the view of the sun that the author had to fall back on when not having other theological constructs to defend concerning it. Wright also himself points out yet another reference to the solar "glory" in the text, in 43:2-5, where the high-priest Simon II is compared to the sun shining on the Temple.<sup>484</sup> As shown above, I believe that this Temple/*kābôd*-oriented view of the sun should be read in connection with the scorching characteristics the heavenly body is given in the hymnal piece on creation, again connecting these two conceptions of solarinity with each other, just as in Ps 84:12.

The passage from Ben Sira 43 quoted above occurs in a context of other natural phenomena being recounted as parts of God's glorious creation (sky, moon, stars, wind etc.). This magnificent imagery may owe a debt both to earlier Old Testament material from the Psalms and, possibly, to Stoic thinking,

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<sup>481</sup> According to the Greek text and the Hebrew Masada manuscript (see Beentjes 2006: 120, 173).

<sup>482</sup> Wright 2008: 113-114.

<sup>483</sup> Wright 2008: 113.

<sup>484</sup> Other heavenly objects (morning star, moon, rainbow) also occur in the surrounding verses, but, tellingly enough, none of these are given the "glorious" and temple-centered connections that are given to the sun, and the moon is again mainly mentioned in relation to its calendrical function (50:5b).

expressing the idea of an orderly universe. The enumeration of various parts of the world and their workings certainly makes such associations possible, but in this general context, the depiction of the sun stands out, especially due to its connection with *kābôd*. Thus, even here, the Northwest Semitic motifs can be seen.

## 4. Religio-Historical Trajectories of Drought, Death and the Sun

### 4.1 Kingship, Solarization, Justice and the Burning Sun: Retentions and Transformations

In reading the relevant passages of the Ugaritic corpus and the Hebrew Bible, it will have become more and more clear that, while the motifs of death and drought have very much survived from the earlier Northwest Semitic faiths into the religion of Ancient Israel as it is preserved to us in the canonical texts, the figure of the sun is not as conspicuous, or has at least changed in character.

In the Hebrew Bible, one finds ample instances of solar imagery applied to YHWH, in a way never occurring in connection with any of the major Ugaritic deities (El, Baal, Anat, Athirat).<sup>485</sup> This has often been referred to as a solarization of YHWH, and it may well be regarded as such. The God of Israel is likened to a shining solar light (Isaiah 60), the sun is described as his subordinate (e.g. Ps 74:16, Jer 31:35-36), and at many other times the sun is used as a part of poetic and/or theological imagery.

Despite our findings, there are relatively few cases in which one can find the “drought sun” of Ugaritic thought, the sun that (against its will) falls under the sway of the powers of death and brings destruction to the land through its burning rays. The former of these two characteristics (the sun being “ruled” by death) seems nowhere to be found in the Old Testament, while the latter (the sun being destructive) is rare but not nonexistent (see, for example, Mal 3:20, Jonah 4:8, Ps 37:2,6, Ps 84:12, Sir 43:2-5).

Yet, one can almost feel at times that the sun is conspicuous by its absence in the other cases in which the drought motif turns up: it is not mentioned either in the Carmel text or in the description of drought in Jeremiah 14, where it would certainly fit with the general imagery of dryness.<sup>486</sup> The passage in Psalm 102 seemingly using drought as a metaphor does not mention the sun with a single word.

It is perhaps illustrative that the relevant poetic expression *ḥammâ* (“the hot one,” said of the sun) which has been referred to on a few occasions in the study, does not appear to be intimately tied to the drought motif as applied to YHWH. It occurs rather seldom in this context, and its role appears to be somewhat ambiguous. The lack of descriptions of drought using *ḥammâ* is of course an argument from silence, but it still interesting, given that such a word

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<sup>485</sup> For various views of YHWH in relation to solarity, see Stähli 1985, Langer 1989, Smith 1990, Taylor 1993, Dion 1994 and Janowski 1995.

<sup>486</sup> However, it must be conceded that the same is the case in the drought passages of the Kirta and Aqhat texts, which do not mention the sun outright. The classic passages on solar drought at Ugarit are from the Baal Cycle. However, one should not forget that CAT 1.161 also appears to mention the heat of the sun in connection with death, meaning that the Baal Cycle is definitely not the only Ugaritic text that attests to the drought-death-sun motif.

(specifically accentuating the heat of the sun) existed in Biblical Hebrew poetic diction.<sup>487</sup> There are references to the hotness of the sun (e.g. Ex 16:21, Nah 3:17), but not necessarily involving drought.

In the Hebrew Bible, the sun seems often to have taken on a rather different connotation. At Ugarit, we have seen a fusion of different elements in the figure of Shapshu: the drought and the connection with Mot's rule, the passage through the underworld and the royal ideological trappings possibly connected with the solar imagery in this sphere found in the Hittite empire; but in the Baal Cycle, the drought role is very much in the forefront. In Israel, the figure of the sun has in some cases become radically different. Here it becomes a symbol of light as opposed to darkness, of rulership and even of life and salvation from death—this association appears in Gen 19:23 and 32:32 and possibly in Ex 22:2.<sup>488</sup> In the “final words of David” in 2 Samuel 23, the glowing sun in a clear sky is a metaphor of life and prosperity, the sun explicitly being said to aid the growth of verdure.<sup>489</sup> In Judg 5:31, the victorious ones who love YHWH are likened to the rising sun. And YHWH's “solarization” seems to be of a character very different from that presented in the Ugaritic myths. It is perhaps not surprising that the drought scenes from the Book of Joel occur together with descriptions later in the text of the sun (and moon) being *darkened* (2:10, 3:4, 4:15); the sun certainly does not appear to send drought in Joel.

There are, as noted earlier, isolated instances in the Ugaritic texts in which the sun seems to be a sort of benevolent “light-giver” (the most plausible example is in *CAT* 1.23, but even there, the connection with Mot could be just as important), yet the overall impression one gets is that in the Hebrew Bible, the sun has to some extent been “written out” of the drought theology and has acquired a sense even of saving people from death (as, for example, in Qoh 6:5; 7:11; 11:7).<sup>490</sup>

Because of these more recent theological developments, the sun was less of an adequate vehicle for describing the power of drought, at least drought that appeared “in and of itself.” The role of the sun had, so to speak, been reassigned. In Malachi 3 and Psalm 84, the survival of the drought sun seems to have been effected through its very identification and correlation with the

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<sup>487</sup> The passages containing this word that I discuss are Isa 24:23, 30:26 as well as Ps 19:7 and Job 30:28. The word also occurs in Song 6:10. The possible importance of *ḥammā* for the subject of this book was pointed out by Eskhult (2012: 222), who also mentions that the word has the additional meaning “heat” or “fever” in Mishnaic Hebrew. On a sidenote, it is noteworthy that the use of *ḥammā* as a term for the sun increases in Mediaeval Hebrew literature; for example, it is the normal term for the sun in certain Mediaeval astrological literature, such as the *Reʿšūt Ḥokmā* of Ibn Ezra (see Epstein 1998: vi–vii).

<sup>488</sup> Langer 1989: 37.

<sup>489</sup> This passage is suggested by del Olmo Lete (1984: 420) to represent a possibly deliberate “antithetic allusion” to the role of Mot as cause of the drought sun in the Baal Cycle (albeit with a high degree of uncertainty).

<sup>490</sup> Langer 1989: 38.

theology of the monarchical “ruler-sun,” i.e.: through the acceptance of and identification with the motif of the ruling solarized YHWH could the burning sun survive into these OT passages. In Psalm 37, drought and the sun are mentioned together, but it is worth noting that the sun is clearly portrayed as a positive symbol, associated with justice. The relationship between the sun and the drought is not a direct one but appears almost to carry a sense of irony: the evil ones dry up, but the righteous one will shine—or rather, his *šedeq* (“righteousness”) will. The drought sun is there as a faint memory, but the judicial ruler sun is at the forefront.

The relative scarcity of the sun in the “drought” passages of the Hebrew Bible is perhaps hardly surprising. The interplay between the “drought sun” and the fertility-giving protagonist Baal is strongly tied to the archaic Northwest Semitic image of the storm god. The “solar God” of the Hebrew Bible, however, appears to owe more to Egyptian<sup>491</sup> and possibly Mesopotamian influences than to the old Baal-type deity, which we see looming behind the figure of YHWH in texts such as Psalm 29. The sun often has a rather different connotation in these two cultural spheres than it did in Ugaritic religion. The same can be said for some Hittite conceptions of the great Sun God, who is not mainly connected to drought or to dying but to justice—the judicial function of the sun is here very much at the forefront. In the Hittite hymn to the great Sun God (*KUB XXXI 128*), we read.<sup>492</sup>

*Istanue isha-mi  
handanza hannesnas ishas  
nepisas daganzipas-a hassue  
utne zik dudduskisi  
irhus-a-kan zik-pat zi[kkisi]  
tarhuilatar zik-pat peskisi  
(var.): [utne] anda huisnuskisi  
zik-pat handanza  
anda genzu daskisi zik-pat  
mugauwar zik-pat essati  
zik-pat genzuwalas Istanus  
nu genzu zik-pat daskisi*

Sun God, my lord,  
just lord of judgment,  
lord of heaven and earth!  
You rule<sup>493</sup> the land  
and set boundaries.  
You give strength.  
[In the country] you always give life.  
Only you are righteous,  
only you give mercy,  
only you fulfill prayers.  
Only you are the Sun God of mercy,  
and only you give mercy.

<sup>491</sup> Cf. Smith 1990: 35-36, who identifies Late Bronze Age New Kingdom Egypt as the main source of the “ruler-sun” theology, based on usages in Amarna letters and correspondence from Ugarit.

<sup>492</sup> My normalization of the text is based on the transcribed edition of Güterbock (1958). The line *irhus-a-kan zik-pat zi[kkisi]* is added in a variant.

<sup>493</sup> The text marks this and the following verbs with the iterative affix *-sk-*, indicating the continued or repeating character of the actions, and (thereby) their staying-power. The life-giving and ruling functions of the Sun God is therefore a generally given fact of the Hymn and not dependent on changing fortunes, as seems to be the case in the Baal Cycle.



The image of the sun painted here—one of benevolent and righteous rulership—has much in common with what we find in the Hebrew Bible.

One of the more apparent instances of collisions between the older storm god imagery and the later image of the solar ruler can be found in Ps 104. As Dion has shown, one finds in this text a layering of different theological strands, in which the earliest seems to be that of the classic Northwest Semitic weather god, which is then combined with and transformed into an unmistakably solar deity (with Egyptian influences) in the text as preserved for us.<sup>494</sup>

In Psalm 104, the subdued powers of chaos (in the form of the Leviathan) may well have been a contributing factor in the somewhat startling combination of storm god imagery and Egyptian-style solar language used regarding YHWH. Presenting the Israelite God as a solar character is then yet another example of the similar fates of the chaos powers in the development of Israelite thought: just as the sea monsters become less and less of an actual threat, so the destructive and parching powers of the sun become identified with YHWH's own character, as has hopefully been shown in a number of places in this study. It is my view that these developments occur in parallel and serve to reinforce each other (cf. the analysis provided of Job 37:21 in section 3.3.3.2).

There are of course a number of exceptions to this general trend of the sun becoming less of a danger, as we have seen. One such exception to this lack of solar drought in the Hebrew Bible (and a very important one at that) consists of the cases in which the burning sun has been identified or conflated with YHWH's *kābôd*, as has been seen to be the case in many places in the book (see for example my discussion of Ps 84:12). Later on in this chapter, I will look at and discuss possible trends and motifs of religious history that made it possible for the sun to retain some of its destructive characteristics even when applied to YHWH. The fact that many instances of the solarized YHWH display no drought characteristics does not make those that do any less interesting—quite the contrary, in fact. The sun of rulership does, as we have seen, enable some retentions of the drought sun motif.<sup>495</sup>

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<sup>494</sup> See, for example, Dion 1993.

<sup>495</sup> Again, I would also like to point to the two passages Jer 15:8 and Ps 91:6 (suggested in Eskhult 2012: 222) which use the root *šdd* ("to devastate") and *šohōrāyim* ("mid-day", "noon") together in a way which could possibly suggest by inference the destructive power of the sun; in the first of these, the "devastator at mid-day" is definitely portrayed as being under YHWH's power, which could represent yet another instance of destructive solarility being retained. However, the exact meaning of both these passages is uncertain (see further above, n. 365).

## 4.2 The God of Both Drought and Rain

In studying the relationship between the Ugaritic and Israelite texts in this book, a pattern has emerged in which the figure of YHWH has absorbed the somewhat contradictory figures of the Baal-like rainmaker and the sender of solar, destroying drought, the latter often connected (through the conception of the light-like *kābôd*-power) with the ruling functions of the sun. One may speculate that this transition is paralleled by the gradual subsuming of the figure of Death into the power of YHWH himself, thus transforming the Israelite God into a much more “morally monistic” figure as time goes by. It is perhaps no wonder that one of the clearest formulations of this synthesis occurs at the end of the Book of Malachi, which is, of course, quite a late composition, whereas the drought seems much more “self active” in earlier texts, such as some of the Psalms, which are closer in theological outlook to what we find at Ugarit, thereby probably representing a stage closer to the shared Northwest Semitic mythological background.

### 4.2.1 Isa 26:19—Rain, Sun and the Dry Sheol

One striking example of how the idea of a rain-giving God can be combined with solar characteristics in a context clearly connected to the idea of death can be found in Isa 26:19.<sup>496</sup>

<i>yihyû mētêkā</i>	Your dead shall live,
<i>niblôtām yēqûmûn</i>	their corpses shall rise,
<i>hāqîṣû wērannēnû šōkēnē ʿāpār</i>	those who dwell in dust shall sing and jubilate!
<i>kî ṭal ʾōrôt ṭallekā</i>	For your dew is the dew of light,
<i>wē ʾereṣ rēpāʾîm tappîl</i>	and on the land of the <i>rēpāʾîm</i> you let it fall.

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<sup>496</sup> Reading *niblôtām* with BHSApp (following Peshitta and Targum) for MT’s *nēbēlātî*, and (like the Revised Standard Version) *ʾereṣ* for *ʾāreṣ*, which makes much better sense of this highly unclear passage. The translation implied by the MT vocalization (“For your dew is the dew of light, and the land/netherworld gives birth to the *rēpāʾîm*”) would of course create an explicable meaning, but it would yield no parallelism in the lines and would destroy the connection between the line about the dew and the one about the *rēpāʾîm*, making the connection difficult. Despite these uncertainties, however, the allusion to dew is quite clear. Spronk (1986: 299) keeps the MT in the latter case and translates “and the earth shall bring forth the shades,” but he still believes (pp. 303-304) that a “Ugaritic” background for the text is relevant, especially concerning the connection between *ṭal* (“dew”) and two of the maidens of Baal, Tallay and Pidray (both associated with dew and water), who descend into the netherworld together with Baal and who Spronk says are to be “raised again with Baal at the turning of the year.”

Provided that the reading adopted here is the right one, this passage is an eminent demonstration of how the author ascribes to the Israelite God both solarly (light) and rain-giving when speaking of the raising of the dead from the netherworld. The use of the word *ṣēpā'im* connects this little poetic masterpiece with a whole history of Northwest Semitic ideas concerning the dead, and the implied idea that Sheol is a land of drought securely places the passage in the tradition studied in this volume. Again, as in *CAT* 1.12 and Hosea 13, the domain of the dead is shown to be a dried up place: otherwise there would be no reason for YHWH to let his dew fall upon it.<sup>497</sup> Note how the dew sent by YHWH to wake up the dead is also connected to “light.” Do we have here a piece of reception and transformation of the exhortation in *CAT* 1.161 that Shapshu should “be hot” or “bright” when visiting the netherworld? This may seem speculative, but the fact remains that both the Ugaritic text and the one from Isaiah talk of connecting the land of the living with that of the dead using the vehicle of solar light. The biblical text integrates this motif with that of the “rain-maker” God, who has now also acquired the power of the solar deity of creating a passageway between the two worlds. This may be yet another example of YHWH’s ongoing appropriation of the powers associated with sun, drought and death. In Isaiah 26, the context has turned into an eschatological one, and the “sun of death” power is that of YHWH exclusively, even to the point of combining it with dew, the traditional attribute of the irrigator Baal.<sup>498</sup>

#### 4.2.2 A Solar YHWH Gazing into the Netherworld?—And a Comparison with Deuteronomy 32

The view of the conceptual connection between the heat of the sun and the barren land of Sheol lends a new layer of interpretation of the pattern elucidated by Gönke Eberhard in her volume *JHWH und die Unterwelt: Spuren einer Kompetenzausweitung JHWHs im Alten Testament*, that the increasingly solar image of YHWH from the 8<sup>th</sup> century onwards created a greater closeness between the deity and the underworld. According to Eberhard, the solarization of YHWH included the idea of the gaze of the sun god reaching into the dark

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<sup>497</sup> On Sheol as a place of dried out barrenness, see section 3.2.3.3. John Day (1980, 1986: 405-406) has argued that there is a direct historical relationship between Hos 13:4-14:10 and Isa 26:13-27:11. This assertion is based on eight parallel motifs he believes he has found in the texts; these parallels include the imagery of the life-giving dew, the rescuing from Sheol and the appearance of the destructive east wind. If the supposition of such a dependence on Hosea 13 (another important text studied in this book) is correct, we have yet another example of the transformation of the motifs examined in the present study, this time within the biblical corpus itself.

<sup>498</sup> Spronk (1986: 304-305) points out the eschatological sense of the passage and also appears to see it as a transformation of a “Canaanite” motif, but the great difference according to him is whether or not the revivifying powers are related to the “cycle of nature.” Such may indeed be the case, but my above interpretation is not dependent on a cyclic-seasonal view of the Ugaritic material.

lands of Sheol. As an example of this principle, she adduces Prov 15:11, a verse that describes YHWH as looking into the underworld with the same gaze that he uses to probe the hearts of mankind; Eberhard supports her connection of this verse with the solarized YHWH by comparing with the terminology of Ps 11:4, 14:2 and 53:3. Eberhard also points to Job 38:17, a verse that talks of the Israelite God having access to the “gates of Death” (*šā’āre māwet*), and also the gates of *šalmāwet*.<sup>499</sup> Note that the idea of YHWH’s destructive wind occurs close to one of these verses, in Ps 11:6!

Eberhard’s idea of YHWH using his solar characteristics to gaze into the netherworld creates a parallel with the picture that has emerged in this study of Shapshu’s role both in the Baal Cycle and in the funerary text *CAT* 1.161: as has been described earlier (section 2.2.5.2), the reason why it is Shapshu that searches the cracked fields for the dead Baal and creates the contact with the netherworld in 1.161 is her conceptual connection with the sphere of death and the poetic/theological association between the potentially destructive heat of the sun and the power of personified Death. The all-seeing sun sees especially well into the land of the dead, as the sun is associated with death in and of itself. In this context, one comes to think of what is said of the sun in Ps 19:7:

<i>miqṣē haššamayim mōšā’ō</i>	From the edge of the heavens it comes out,
<i>ūtēqūpātō ‘al-qēšōtām</i>	and its turning-point is at its ends,
<i>wē’ēn nistār mēḥammātō</i>	and nothing is hidden from its heat. <sup>500</sup>

This verse alludes to the burning heat of the sun in connection with its “all-seeing” characteristics—yet it includes no reference to the netherworld. The image painted by Eberhard is one in which this all-encompassing gaze penetrates specifically into the land of the dead.

In the passage concerning Shapshu’s search of the dried furrows (at the beginning of *CAT* 1.6 IV) as well as in *CAT* 1.12, one also (probably) finds the interesting mention of the fields being cracked by heat, a fact that brings to mind an extra-biblical, Greco-Roman parallel which may shed some light on the idea of the divine gaze into the underworld as connected to the drought of the sun. This is the myth of Phaeton, the son of Helios, who insisted on borrowing his father’s sun wagon, with terrible solar (and drought-related) devastation as a consequence. In Ovid’s account of this myth, the folly of Phaeton leads to mountains and cities being burned by terrible solar heat. This of course leads to the fields of the earth cracking, and here the following interesting passage occurs:<sup>501</sup>

<sup>499</sup> Eberhard 2007: 216. See also the discussion in Eberhard 2007: 208-212, 394, 396-397.

<sup>500</sup> The importance of this verse was pointed out to me by Marjo Korpel (p.c.), for which I would like to thank her.

<sup>501</sup> I would like to thank Sara Kylander (p.c.) for bringing this parallel to my attention.

*Dissilit omne solum, penetratque in Tartara rimis  
lumen et infernum terret cum coniuge regem;  
et mare contrahitur siccaeque est campus arenae,  
quod modo pontus erat [...]*

The whole earth breaks up, and the light penetrates the cracks into the netherworld  
and terrifies the infernal king and his consort;  
and the sea contracts, and what was earlier ocean  
is [now] a plain of dry sand ...

(Ov. *Met.* II 260-263)

These lines from the myth of Phaeton paint a very vivid picture of how terrible drought from the sun could be conceptually connected with the ability of gazing directly into the land of the dead. The ability to penetrate into the netherworld is presented as being a result of the fields cracking up, and the solar glare pierces the ground and even frightens the god of death himself. There may, of course, be no certain (or even very probable) historical link between this text and the biblical and Ugaritic passages, but it does show a possible frame of interpretation for Shapshu searching for the dead Baal with the cracked furrows being mentioned and for YHWH's solar gaze piercing into the depths of Sheol. Whether there is any real connection with the myth recounted by Ovid or not, it provides a possible idea of how these conceptions may have been viewed in Antiquity.

I will now turn to an often-discussed (and possibly archaic) poetic piece of text that may serve as an illustration of this Phaeton-like penetration of the earth by the burning power of the Israelite God. I am thinking of a number of verses in the middle of the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32, verses that do not mention the sun or drying directly but that definitely seem to imply a reference to the motif in a more veiled manner:<sup>502</sup>

<i>Kî 'ēš qādēhâ bē' appî</i>	For a fire flares up in my anger,
<i>wattiqad 'ad-šē'ôl tahtît</i>	and it burns to Sheol down below,

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<sup>502</sup> Deuteronomy 32 is of course a text that appears to include a number of references to religio-historically ancient material (and many seemingly old grammatical constructs, such as narrative short *yiqṭōls*). It also appears to contain imagery also occurring in the Hurrian/Hittite *Epic of Liberation* (see Wikander 2013a). However, there is no consensus regarding its dating. One finds in the literature such diverging suggestions as a very early dating from around 1190 BC (de Moor 1990a: 155-160; as pointed out in Sanders 1996: 30, n. 151, the number "1090" on de Moor's p. 155 is a misprint for "1190"), a pre-monarchic or monarchic origin (Sanders 1996: 435-436) and a post-exilic one, the text being in part influenced by Wisdom literature (Hidal 1978: 19).

<i>wattōʿkal ʿeres wībūlāh</i>	and it swallows the earth and its yield,
<i>wattēlahēt mōsēdē hārīm</i>	and it burns the bases of mountains.

(Deut 32:22)

Here, one can note how YHWH's flaming, destructive anger traverses the boundary of life and death by reaching into Sheol itself. This means that his fire—even though it is not called a sun—makes the same journey to the netherworld that Shapshu does, and it burns all in its path, just as she does when under the feverish hands of Mot. Note the reference to mountains on the threshold to the netherworld (a motif occurring at Ugarit as well, not insignificantly near one of the attestations of of the Refrain of the Burning Sun, when Baal instructs his servants how to descend to Mot with his message).<sup>503</sup> In Deut 32:22, it is not merely a question of the solarized YHWH looking into the land of the dead but of the full burning capacity of divine anger being used in what may be a more radical version of the same idea. On a sidenote, one may point out that meteorological metaphors of a type highly reminiscent of passages from the Ugaritic corpus are definitely not foreign to Deuteronomy 32, as shown by the fact that the text actually begins by referring to itself as rain falling over the land, giving life to it:

<i>Yaʿārōp kammātār liqhī</i>	May my teaching fall like the rain,
<i>tizzal kaṭṭal ʿimrātī</i>	may my speech flow like the dew,
<i>kīš ʿirīm ʿālē-dešeʿ</i>	like downpour upon grass,
<i>wēkirbībīm ʿālē-ʿēseb</i>	and like showers upon greenery.

(Deut 32:2)

Here, one should note the term *šēʿirīm*, which may perhaps be a cognate (with metathesis) of the Ugaritic word *šrʿ*, which was used for some type of movement of water in the Epic of Aqhat (*CAT* 1.19 I 45) and may also appear in the *Urtext* of 2 Sam 1:21 (see the discussion in sections 2.3.4.1 and 2.3.4.2).<sup>504</sup> This connection indicates that whether Deuteronomy 32 is an ancient text or not, it certainly may contain survivals of archaic poetic collocations and ideas.

Also, close to verse 22, the dangers of Resheph (and *qeṭeb*, cf. Hos 13:14 and Ps 91:6) are recounted, again indicating that ancient mythological references of this sort are not unexpected in this Song of Moses:

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<sup>503</sup> *CAT* 1.4 VIII 1-6 (the Refrain occurs in lines 21-24, when Baal describes the dangers of Mot). See also my discussion of these “sun mountains” (so Tsevat 1974) in the Appendix (section 6.2).

<sup>504</sup> The connection between Hebrew *šēʿirīm* and Ugaritic *šrʿ* was suggested by Umberto Cassuto (1939: 239, n. 6).

<i>Mězê rā' āb</i>	Weakened by famine
<i>ûlēhūmê rešep</i>	and consumed by plague/Resheph
<i>wēqeteb mērîrî</i>	and bitter sickness/qeteb.

(Deut 32:24, first half)

It is thus apparent that this text includes various references to poetic imagery consonant with that found at Ugarit, whether because of actual high antiquity or of conscious archaizing. This means that the talk of fire burning down to Sheol in v. 22 may well contain an echo of the drought of Shapshu and the heat that reaches down into the great below, but now applied solely to YHWH.<sup>505</sup>

The idea of YHWH's wrath being associated with solar characteristics appears also in places not speaking of death or the netherworld. One interesting instance of this can perhaps be found in Num 25:4 (one of the few texts from the Pentateuch showing references to the motifs studied in this volume):

<i>Wayyō' mer YHWH 'el-môšê</i>	And YHWH said to Moses:
<i>qah' 'et-kol-rā' šê hā' ām</i>	"Take all the leaders of the people
<i>wēhōqā' 'ôlām laYHWH</i>	and hang them before YHWH,
<i>neged haššemeš</i>	before the sun;
<i>wēyāšōb hārôn 'ap-YHWH</i>	the burning wrath of YHWH will turn away
<i>miyyiśrā' ēl</i>	from Israel."

In this passage, there is no reference to Sheol; however, the combined occurrence of the sun and the word *hārôn* ("burning wrath") is certainly interesting in the context. But yet again, there is no trace of the sun actually falling under the sway of the deathly powers. It is at most a tool of YHWH's burning power of judgment (here used associatively), and there is no reference to a descent of that burning wrath into the netherworld, as appears to be the case in Deut 32:22. But it is nonetheless interesting to note the reference to hanging bodies in front of the sun being used as a way of diverting (burning) divine

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<sup>505</sup> Pace Eskhult 2012: 222, I do not believe that the "Shapshu-like" passage in Deut 32 "actually weakens the whole concept of a gradual development by which Yahweh and his consuming fire replace a menacing solar deity" if the text really is archaic. The burning anger described in the passage may be an example of the older image (a physical fire descending into the netherworld) that has already undergone some transformation and become a tool of YHWH. Even if the ideas of the text are archaic (from an Old Testament point of view), they need not be identical with what one finds at Ugarit. However, this analysis could be construed as weakening the idea (espoused by Eberhard) that a solarization of YHWH from the 8<sup>th</sup> century onwards is behind the idea of YHWH looking into the netherworld: Deuteronomy 32 seems to attest to a quasi-solar image of this type in a text which may be more archaic.

anger. Ideas such as that of the burning, sun-like anger of Deut 32:22 could here be a frame of reference for the author.

#### 4.2.3 Amos 1:2

A very telling instance of the alliance and integration between the theological images of weather god and drought giver can be found in Amos 1:2, which says the following, after an introductory *wayyō' mer*:

<i>YHWH miššiyôn yiš' āg</i>	YHWH is roaring from Zion
<i>ûmîrûšālayim yittēn qôlô</i>	and from Jerusalem he sends out his voice,
<i>wē' ābēlû nē' ôṭ hārô' îm</i>	and the fields of the shepherds dry out
<i>wēyābēš rō' š hakkarmel</i>	and the summit of Carmel is parched.

The first two lines of this verse have a verbatim parallel in Joel 4:16. It has been suggested that this is a direct borrowing from Amos to Joel.<sup>506</sup> Howsoever that may be, there is an interesting difference between the two versions. The Joel verse gives the results of God's sending out his voice in a way typical of a storm theophany: the heavens and the earth shake. The Amos version is quite different. It begins with poetic material connected with storm deities and their theophanies, speaking of the "voice" of YHWH, which is so often a reference to his thunder and lightning.<sup>507</sup> In the second part of the verse, however, the imagery shifts rather dramatically. In Amos 1:2, the result of YHWH's thunder-voice in the natural world is not shaking ground but dried-up pastures—and Mount Carmel itself is parched by its power. This is a strange combination indeed: the God of Israel sends out his thunderous, mighty voice, and the accompanying phenomena are not rain, hail storm or even earthquake but *drought*. Given the association between the voice of the Storm God and his theophany, this reinterpretation is nothing short of radical.<sup>508</sup>

In essence: the storm god is sending out drought. The terminology is the same as has been seen earlier in this book: the verb *'ābal* is especially conspicuous, with its double sense of "dry up" and "lament," which may opaquely tie the passage in with the motif of death.

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<sup>506</sup> Jeremias 1965: 100

<sup>507</sup> The *locus classicus* is lines 13-15 of El Amarna letter 147, which speak of the Egyptian king using the words *ša iddin rigmašu ina šamē kīma Addi u targub gabbi māti ištu rigmīšu* ("[he] who gives out his voice in heaven like Adad/Baal, and all the land is frightened because of his voice"). Text available in Knudtzon 1907. For the reading *targub*, see Moran 1992: 234, n. 4, taking his cue from the discussion of the Ugaritic verb *rgb* ("to be frightened, to fear") in de Moor 1969: 188.

<sup>508</sup> The contrary images were noted by Jeremias (1998: 13-14), who also saw a reference to the roar of a lion. If this image is indeed what is intended, the text may contain another veiled reference to the "Death as gaping lion"-idea attested at Ugarit and possibly alluded to in Hosea and Joel.



When viewed in the light of the pattern of religious history delineated in this book, there is another fact in Amos 1:2 that stands out very clearly: the reference to Carmel as the place where the drought is manifested. Given that one of the most well-known and theologically potent accounts of drought in the whole of the Hebrew Bible is that of Elijah's religious battle in that very place, one must at least consider the possibility of a connection of motifs. In 1 Kings 17-18, YHWH seems to be the one who has commanded the lack of verdure as a means of paving the way for the experiment in "empirical theology" that Elijah carries out on Carmel, and in Amos 1:2 the author uses the "voice"-terminology associated with gods such as Baal to depict yet another such drought (even though it is here used as a literary image). Just as a well known story of drought on Carmel may have been associated with victory over Baal, so the voice of YHWH dries out the mountain, showing that the Israelite God has the power not only over rain and fertility but also over its absolute opposite.

#### 4.2.4 Rain, Drought and Baalshamem

Though it may at the outset seem strange that the Hebrew Bible ascribes both the traditionally "Canaanite" fertility-bringing role of the storm god and the power of the destructive, potentially death-inducing drought to the same divine character, such a development is certainly not without parallel in ancient Northwest Semitic culture. For example, one finds quite a similar phenomenon being reported in the description of Phoenician theology of the priest Sachuniathon (given by Philo of Byblos and preserved in the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea), which speaks of the attitude towards the god Baalshamem, who combined the characteristics of a storm god and a burning solar deity in a way quite reminiscent of what one finds in the Hebrew Bible:

αὐχμῶν δὲ γενομένων τὰς χεῖρας εἰς οὐρανὸν ὀρέγειν πρὸς τὸν ἥλιον. τοῦτον γὰρ (φησί) θεὸν ἐνόμιζον μόνον οὐρανοῦ κύριον, Βεελσάμην καλοῦντες, ὃ ἐστὶ παρὰ Φοῖνιξι κύριος οὐρανοῦ, Ζεὺς δὲ παρ' Ἑλλήσιν.<sup>509</sup>

[Philo reported that] .... when droughts would occur, they would stretch out their hands to heaven towards the sun. For him (he says) they reckoned as god, the only lord of heaven, calling him Beelsamēn, who among the Phoenicians is the lord heaven, [known as] "Zeus" among the Greeks.

This excerpt, of course, clearly shows that Baalshamem was regarded as a solar deity with the power to control droughts (and therefore, it may be assumed, to cause them as well, as the deity is here identified with the sun itself, the very sender of the killing, drought-giving rays). At the same time, the passage states

<sup>509</sup> Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* I 10,7. Text available in Mras 1982.

that Baalshamem was regarded as the equivalent to Zeus among the Greeks, that is, to the god in control of lightning, storms etc.<sup>510</sup>

#### **4.2.5 The Rain of the Builders**

The combination of life-giving rains, the “right state of the universe” (in Hebrew symbolized by the word *šedāqā*) and the existence of a palatial dwelling of the divine is a recurring motif in Ugarit as well as in some of the Israelite texts studied here. Baal sends his rain over the earth when his rule is made official through the building of his house at the end of *CAT* 1.5; earlier on in the story (*CAT* 1.3 V 17-18), the Refrain of the Burning Sun is even used in the discussion between Anat and El in order to highlight the necessity of the installed, palatial rulership of the storm god in order to combat the rule of Death in the land.<sup>511</sup> Without a palace, Baal’s power is not enough to thwart the rule of drought and Death. At this point in the story, of course, Baal is not dead, yet one should not discount the possibility that Mot’s rule is, so to speak, automatic in the absence of the animating powers of the storm god. This conception is similar to what is found in Jeremiah 14, where the mere absence of YHWH (albeit a deliberate absence, as opposed to a forced one, as in the case of Baal) is enough to let the powers of destruction through the door. But when Baal’s palace is built and duly inaugurated, the rains come falling down, poetically described as Baal opening “a rift in the clouds.”

In the Hebrew Bible, too, one finds the “anti-drought” power at its strongest when civil order is ensconced. It is perhaps no wonder that Solomon warns his citizens of the dangers of the heavens shutting up during his very speech installing the Ark of the Covenant in the temple (1 Kings 8). In Jeremiah 14, the dangers of war and slaughter of the people represent an upsetting of the natural social order, and drought becomes a natural and integrated part of this. In Psalm 84, the rain bringing the Baka valley to life during the pilgrimage to the temple is juxtaposed to a (possibly destructive) ruler-sun image of YHWH being both “sun and shield,” thus creating an artful combination between mythemes or theologoumena that are seemingly opposed to one another. In the nationalizing redaction of Psalm 102, the drought is intentionally opposed to the enduring rule of YHWH, which, of course, represents the ultimate “right state of the universe.” In the Carmel narrative, the drought is brought on not only by the

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<sup>510</sup> Röllig in *DDD*: 150 (s.v. “Baal-Shamem”). One notes with interest Niehr’s (1994) proposition that Baalshamem served as the template for YHWH’s rise to the status of major deity. Such a development would make the parallel even stronger. Niehr specifically points out (p. 309) that Baalshamem originally appears to have functioned as a weather deity in the treaty between Esarhaddon and Baal of Tyros in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. It is also noteworthy that the Nabateans identified Baalshamem with Zeus Helios, a very explicit solar reference, again combined with the idea that he was some form of “Zeus” (Cross 1973: 7, n. 13).

<sup>511</sup> On the relationship between Baal’s building project and the sending of the rains, see Korpel 1990: 385.

slaughter of the Yahwist prophets (a clear case of death at work) but also by the upsetting of the religio-political order by Ahab and Jezebel, especially their institution of non-Yahwistic cults, something that outwardly constitutes the ultimate disempowerment of YHWH. When the rain finally comes at the order of the Israelite God, it is when Elijah has taken great care in building a cult site for him, a sort of miniature temple, almost.

In Hag 1:8-11, it is quite clear that the lack of a temple has one immediate consequence: drought. This goes for Ancient Israel as well as Ugarit. The author of Haggai chastises the people in very explicit terms because of their failure to provide the Israelite God with a new, rebuilt temple:

‘*ālū hāhār wahābē*’ *tem* ‘*ēs*  
*ūbēnū habbāyit*  
*wē*’*eršē-bō*  
*wē*’*ekkābēdā*  
 ‘*āmar* YHWH  
*pānō* ‘*el-harbē*  
*wēhinnē* *lim*’*āt*  
*wēhābē*’ *tem habbayit*  
*wēnāpaḥtī bō*  
*yā*’*an mē nē*’*ūm* YHWH *šēbā*’*ōt*  
*yā*’*an bētī*  
 ‘*āšer-hū*’ *ḥārēb*  
*wē*’*attem rāšīm*  
 ‘*iš lēbētō*  
 ‘*al-kēn* ‘*ālēkem*  
*kālē*’*ū šāmayim miṭṭāl*  
*wēhā*’*āreš kālē*’*ā yēbūlāh*  
*wā*’*eqrā*’ *ḥōreb* ‘*al-hā*’*āreš*  
*wē*’*al-hehārīm wē*’*al-haddāgān*  
*wē*’*al-hattīrōš wē*’*al-hayyišhār*  
*wē*’*al*’*āšer tōš*’*hā*’*ādāmā*  
*wē*’*al-hā*’*ādām*  
*wē*’*al-habbēhēmā*  
*wē*’*al kol-yēgīa*’*kappāyīm*

Ascend the mountain and bring wood  
 and build the house!  
 I will take pleasure in it  
 and show my glory,  
 says YHWH.  
 You turn to much,  
 yet it comes to little—  
 You bring into your house,  
 yet I blow it away.  
 Why? says YHWH of Hosts.  
 Because of my house,  
 because it is in ruins.  
 Yet you run off,  
 each one to his own house.  
 Therefore, from you  
 the heavens hold back [their] dew  
 and the earth holds back its yield.  
 I have called a drought upon the land,  
 on the mountains, on the corn,  
 on the wine, on the oil,  
 on that which the ground brings,  
 on man,  
 on beast,  
 and on all that [your] hands have toiled.

Here, the old motif of the building of a house of the deity as a prerequisite of rainfall is transposed into a concrete situation: the tardiness of the Israelite returnees in rebuilding the temple after the return from the Babylonian exile. Death is nowhere mentioned in this text, neither personified nor impersonal. Yet when read in the light of Northwest Semitic religious and poetic history, the passage stands out as a piece of reception of oppositions treated in the Baal Cycle: a house for the god means rain, lack of a house means lack of rain. Note

again the illustrative wordplay on *hārēb* (“in ruins,” of YHWH’s temple) and *hōreb* (“drought”), which reinforces the connection.

The Haggai poet has written Death out of the equation (or rather: the history of ideas has) and replaced him with the free choice of the Israelite God, who is not *unable* but *unwilling* to send rain in the absence of a temple. Compare the Haggai text with the drought lament from the Kirta epic (*CAT* 1.16 III 2-16; see section 2.3.4.6), and it is apparent how close even late Israelite texts can be to the conception of terrible drought as poetically recounted at Ugarit many hundred years earlier. Yet in Hag 1:8-11, YHWH is supreme ruler both of rain and of drought.

### 4.3 From Threat to Tool of YHWH: the Conceptual Movement of Drought

One of the processes we have been able to observe in the course of the study is the gradual weakening of the drought-death motif, from representing a macrocosmic struggle between differing divine powers over the rule of the universe to becoming a method of moralistic expression (and punishment) in the hands of a single (perhaps monotheistically viewed) deity—and sometimes little more than a literary trope or poetic simile. This development is similar in its outlines to that which befell one of the greatest representatives of the other great chaos power, the Leviathan. In the Ugaritic texts, Leviathan (in his appropriate linguistic form *ltn*) seems to be a terrible and awful monster, the destruction of which is a true achievement. This is also the view found in some parts of the Hebrew Bible, such as Isa 27:1. In Job, the power of the monster has been greatly subdued, and he is used only as a symbol of the great power of YHWH (“pulling up Leviathan with a hook,” etc.); the monster is no longer a real threat to the cosmic existence. YHWH’s victory over it is so to speak a given, a necessary prerequisite for its use as an example of divine power in the YHWH speeches. In other texts, the devaluation of Leviathan has gone even further: in Ps 104:26, he is a being created by YHWH to tumble around in the sea, and the Talmud states that God spends three hours a day playing with him, as if he were simply a toy or a curiosity.<sup>512</sup> The once powerful and dangerous water beast has become something of a joke.

A similar (though of course not identical) fate seems to have befallen the other great danger of ancient Northwest Semitic myth, the killing drought and the burning sun from which it emanates.<sup>513</sup> From having been an almost

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<sup>512</sup> B. Avodah Zarah (3b).

<sup>513</sup> I am not convinced by Gulde’s (2007: 115) contention that Mot/Māwet/Death is not really a chaos power at all. The argument that death is a “natural” part of the world and thus not to be regarded as an exponent of chaos might at the outset seem intriguing, but the very same thing might be said about Yamm, whose terrible, flooding powers certainly do not lie outside the world as a whole. In the Baal Cycle, there is also a clear indication that Mot was also regarded as quite as much of a chaos power as was Yamm in the fact that in *CAT* 1.5 I 1-8 the god of death threatens to make the skies burn “like” or

hypostasized power of its own, it is turned into a weapon of YHWH, into something subservient and objectified that he can use to threaten evildoers with (cf. Malachi 3). Although not quite becoming a plaything—as Leviathan did—the drought and the drought sun turn into simple tools of the universal sovereign, tools that can be put to use as cosmological weapons when the need arises. As I hope to have shown, there are also transitional stages, such as Hosea 13, in which the destructive death-themed drought is a tool of YHWH while Māwet is still portrayed as a semi-autonomous power.

#### 4.3.1 Late Examples from the Book of Revelation

One almost programmatic example of the survival of this subsumed drought weapon until post-OT times can be found in the Book of Revelation, where the following powerful picture is painted in verse 16:8-9:

Καὶ ὁ τέταρτος ἐξέχεεν τὴν φιάλην αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν ἥλιον: καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ καυματίσαι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐν πυρί. καὶ ἐκαυματίσθησαν οἱ ἄνθρωποι καῦμα μέγα, καὶ ἐβλασφήμησαν τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἔχοντος τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τὰς πληγὰς ταύτας, καὶ οὐ μετενόησαν δοῦναι αὐτῷ δόξαν.

The fourth [angel] emptied his bowl over the sun. And to it was given the right to scorch men with fire, and men were scorched by a strong heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who had the power over these torments and did not wish to repent and give him homage.

Earlier on in the same text (7:15-16), the more felicitous fate of the righteous is described thus:

διὰ τοῦτό εἰσιν ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ λατρεύουσιν αὐτῷ ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς ἐν τῷ ναῷ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου σκηνώσει ἐπ' αὐτούς. οὐ πεινάσουσιν ἔτι οὐδὲ διψήσουσιν ἔτι, οὐδὲ μὴ πέση ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ὁ ἥλιος οὐδὲ πᾶν καῦμα ...

Therefore they are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his sanctuary, and the one sitting on the throne will set up his tent over them. They shall no longer hunger and no longer thirst, neither the sun nor any other heat shall strike them.

Here, it is easy to observe how the transformation of the drought into a tool of the Israelite God has become complete. The passage parallels Isa 49:10, another

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“because” Baal destroyed the Leviathan—a connection also noted by Dietrich and Loretz (1980). This shows that the aquatic chaos beings were considered to be on the “same side” as Mot (that of chaos).

drought text studied in this volume. However, in that passage, the burning sun seems almost like a random physical phenomenon against which YHWH provides protection, or at least as an affliction coming from outside the power of the Israelite deity; in the Book of Revelation, the account of the “fourth angel” deliberately making the sun burn in 16:8-9 implies a transformation of the conception into a burning sun controlled by YHWH and directed against the unrighteous, a solar glare from which the righteous are saved, in a way quite similar to what I have argued concerning Malachi 3. Note also the idea of God setting up a tent or covering to shield the righteous from the blasting rays of the sun in a way similar to the “canopy” (*huppâ*) that provides protection from the burning *kābôd* in Isa 4:5. That dangerous but powerful *kābôd* has here become a tool of eschatological judgment: no longer a solar, burning attribute of rulership of a Near Eastern divinity, the burning sun (and the shelter therefrom) have been transformed into the weapons using which the lord of the universe ushers in a new age.

#### **4.3.2 The Parallel Developments of the Chaos Powers in Israelite Tradition**

As Mark Smith points out,<sup>514</sup> the subsuming of the great Sea Monster under the power of YHWH may well have been a sort of reinterpretation of notions such as those appearing in Ugaritic expressions like *mdd il* (“beloved of El”) that are often applied to Yamm and his cohorts. Because of the (sometimes subliminal) conflict between Baal and the older ruler, El, Baal’s opponents are metaphorically associated with the divine patriarch, and these expressions may have provided a horizon of interpretation for the idea that the “new” ruler god, YHWH, could be expected to have power and dominion over the monsters by virtue of his identification with El in the Hebrew Bible.

I believe that this line of reasoning can be expanded and can also shed light on the integration of drought powers into the figure of the Israelite God. Smith concentrated on the fate of the sea monsters, but again, I believe that a close parallel to their development is at hand concerning the powers of the deadly drought. In the textual passage most clearly showing the rulership of El over the various monstrous beings, the list of demons battled by Anat in CAT 1.3 III 38-46, one may note that the demons *išt* (“Fire”) and *ḏbb* (“Flame”),<sup>515</sup> whose

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<sup>514</sup> Smith 2001: 36-37.

<sup>515</sup> Another possible translation of *ḏbb* is “fly” (cf. Hebrew *zēbūb*), an interpretation opted for by de Moor (1987: 12, n. 64) and, it seems, at least counted as a possibility by Caquot, Sznycer and Herdner (1974: 168, note n, with references to earlier literature). That translation would, however, also fit very well with a death-themed monster, given the affinity of flies for corpses. If the translation “Flame” is correct (which would after all sit well with the parallel word *išt*), the word is etymologically related to the Akkadian verb *šabābu* (“to burn”) and the Hebrew word *šābīb* (probably meaning something like “spark” or “flame,” a translation partly inspired by the Ugaritic word). The correspondence of phonemes is far from perfect however: the Ugaritic *ḏ* is odd. However, that grapheme is in itself somewhat anomalous and obsolescent in Ugaritic

characters seem more akin to destructive drought than to aquatic enemies of the cosmic order, are also associated with El (they are El's "she-dog" and his "daughter," respectively). Anat says the following:

<i>l mḥšt . mdd il ym .</i>	Truly, I have defeated Yamm, the beloved of El,
<i>l klt . nhr . il . rbm</i>	truly, I have finished off River, the great god.
<i>l ištbm . tnn .</i>	Truly, I have muzzled <sup>516</sup> the Dragon,
<i>ištm . lh</i>	I ... him. <sup>517</sup>
<i>mḥšt . btñ . ʿqltn</i>	I have defeated the writhing serpent,
<i>šlyt . d. šbʿt . rašm</i>	the ruler with seaven heads.
<i>mḥšt . mdd . ilm . arš</i>	I have defeated Arish, the beloved of El,
<i>šmt . ʿgl . il . ʿtk</i>	I killed the Attacker, <sup>518</sup> calf of El.
<i>mḥšt k{.}lbt . ilm . išt</i>	I have defeated Fire, the she-dog of El, <sup>519</sup>
<i>klt . bt . il . ḏbb</i>	I finished off Flame, daughter of El.

(CAT 1.3 III 38-46)

One should also note that the two monsters *išt* and *ḏbb* stand on their own at the end of this list, which begins by enumerating specifically aquatic or "Yamm-

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orthography, which might explain what appears to be aberrant workings of the sound laws here. If this etymon is indeed the correct one, one should also take note of Biblical Aramaic *šēbībā* ("flame") and, especially interesting in this context, Syriac *šwb* ("to be scorched" or "to wither"). Payne Smith (1903 [s.v. *šwb*]) points out that this "scorching" or "withering" refers in particular to the effects of "hot wind," a type of imagery that we have of course seen much of in the present study. The Hebrew text of Sir 45:19 (manuscript B, see Beentjes 2006: 81) applies the word *šābīb* to the judging powers of the Israelite God, perhaps showing yet another instance of the integration of the drought/heat weapon into YHWH's arsenal.

<sup>516</sup> Following Pardee 1984.

<sup>517</sup> The meaning of this line is highly unclear; it is often regarded as a further verbal declaration in the first person singular (so, e.g., del Olmo Lete 1981: 185, de Moor 1987: 11). However, another suggestion is found in Rahmouni 2008: 309-310. Rahmouni regards the word *ištm* as a dual noun and translates the line as an epithet of the dragon, "the dragon of the two flames." This is an intriguing suggestion, which would perhaps to some degree break the neat separation into heat- and water-themed monsters that I outline above. But it must even then be remembered that even though the dragon breathes fire, it is still a "sea dragon" (so translated by Rahmouni on p. 310), still keeping the division between monsters of heat and water valid. And, it must be remembered, the translation "of the two flames" is uncertain, and I therefore do not think it advisable to use it as a basis of interpretation for the passage as such.

<sup>518</sup> For the background of this name see, e.g., Gibson 1978: 50, n. 9 (translating "the quarrelsome one").

<sup>519</sup> Note Smith's (1998b) analysis of the expressions "calf" and "she-dog" of El, seeing these as expressions of "endearment" that show the closeness between El and these servants.

themed” beings (Yamm himself, the Dragon and the “ruler with seven heads” who must be the Leviathan/Lotan/Litan). This reinforces the idea that the list consists of two groups of demonic beings: one associated with the chaotic sea and the other connected with the burning powers of drought. Of course, this lines up beautifully with the division of the Baal Cycle itself into conflicts with two major opponents: Sea and Death. It also underscores the fact that the “Death”-camp was closely associated with heat, as both these monsters have fire-themed names.

Mot is himself referred to as *mdd il* or *ydd il* (“beloved of El”). In the context of the Ugaritic myth, these expressions are probably indicative of the semi-repressed conflict that exists between the “sides” of Baal and El during the earlier parts of the Cycle, the monsters sometimes having a closer relation to El. From this quasi-relationship between El and the monsters, Smith derives part of the background for the biblical and postbiblical ideas of God’s playing with the Leviathan and being served by the Tanninim, etc. In this he is certainly correct; of course, it was by no means the only process involved (probably not even the catalytic one), but it was there as a pattern for the proto-monotheist tendencies within Israelite religion to model their ideology on when the need arose to view the sea monsters as less than terrifying cosmic beasts that actually challenge the rule of God (the conflation of Baal and El imagery in the Israelite deity certainly helped in this regard).

But, as stated above, I think that one can apply this kind of reasoning to the other class of chaotic power as well, that of Death and burning drought. We have already seen that the process of subsuming the drought power and putting it under the sway of YHWH closely parallels what seems to have happened with Leviathan and his ilk. I would propose that the older descriptions of Mot being the “beloved” of El may have been metaphorically reinterpreted in the same manner. That is, the integration of the drought power traditionally associated with Mot may well have been facilitated by the poetically and metaphorically existent expressions connecting him, “Fire” and such beings with the divine patriarch himself. When Israelite religion started to combine traits earlier associated with El and Baal into the one figure of YHWH, the idea that Death and his assorted cohorts could be regarded as favorites and/or servants of El would come in handy when ascribing these forces to YHWH, a deity that in many respects resembles the Ugaritic Baal, their angriest rival and adversary.

Here, one is reminded of the fact that Resheph is shown to be part of God’s own retinue in the very solar theophany of Hab 3:3-5, together with the equally interesting *deber* (“Pestilence”):

ʿēlōah mittēmān yabōʿ  
wēqādōš mēha-pāʾrān selā  
kissā šamayim hōdō  
ūtēhillātō mālēʾā hāʾāreṣ  
wēnōgah kāʾōr tihyē

God comes from Teman,  
and the Holy One from Paran. (*selā*)  
His splendor covers the heavens,  
and his praise fills the earth.  
The gleam is like daylight,



<i>qarnayim miyyādō lō</i>	its rays are from his hand, (?)
<i>wěšām ḥebyôn ʿuzzō</i>	and there is the cover of his strength.
<i>lēpānāyw yēlēk deber</i>	Before him <i>deber</i> walks,
<i>wēyēšēʾ rešep lēraglāyw</i>	and <i>rešep</i> goes forth at his feet.

Resheph, the West Semitic equivalent of Erra, was possibly connected with the drought-giving sun at Ugarit. In addition, as has been discussed, the name Resheph was probably at least synchronically interpreted as meaning something like “flame”, regardless of the actual etymological background of the name, while the name *deber* may have been phonetically and (quasi)-etymologically associated with the lands of death and chaos as delineated at Ugarit and in the Hebrew Bible (see the discussion in section 3.2.3.5). Thus, these two monstrous, feverish powers, which form part of YHWH’s own retinue, turn out to be firmly grounded in the history of Northwest Semitic mythology. Note that Hab 3:4, the verse immediately preceding the one with *rešep* and *deber*, speaks of YHWH’s coming in terms of “gleaming, bright light” (*nōgah*) and “rays” (*qarnayim*), a very clear solar reference. The solar appearance of the deity and the chthonic monsters are associated with one another in a most conspicuous manner.<sup>520</sup> Even though the text does not here speak of *kābōd*, the *hōd* (“splendor”) mentioned seems to play the same role of potentially destructive radiance that was seen for *kābōd* in section 3.3.1.2.

It is probably not insignificant that one of the instances in which the Hebrew word *rešep* is associated with fire is in the rather mythological passage Song 8:6-7, which depicts love as a burning flame and compares its strength to personified Death and Sheol (*kī ʿazzā kammāwet ʾahābā / qāšā kišʾōl qinʾā*), while also saying that love is stronger than the other chaos power, the mighty waters, which cannot quench it (*mayim rabbīm lō yūkēlū lekabbōt ʾet-hāʾahābā*). The use of the interesting and much-discussed word *šalhebetyā(h)* (“flame of Yah” or something like “very mighty flame”) as a poetic simile for the *rešeps* of love in 8:6f may also include some clues concerning religious history. The occurrence of this *hapax legomenon* together with a name associated with an ancient Northwest Semitic deity of burning heat is

<sup>520</sup> One can note that in the Hittite hymn to the great Sun God (*KUB XXXI 128*) mentioned above, an expression occurs that seems to parallel YHWH’s solar appearance together with *rešep* and *deber*. In lines 58-60 of Güterbock’s (1958) edition, the following words appear (here given in normalized form and divided into poetic cola): *Istanue sarku hassue / 4 halhaltumari ukturi istarna arha iyattari / kunnaz-tet nahsarattes huiyantes / GÜB-laz-ma-ta we<r>temas huiyantes* (“Sun God, powerful king! / You stride through the four everlasting world-corners, / Terrors walking at your right side / and Horrors walking at your left”). I have substituted the form *nahsarattes* for Güterbock’s *nahsarantes*, as is common in modern discussions of the text (see, for example, Puhvel 2007: 11 [s.v. *nah(h)*]). The way in which the solar deity here strides through the world flanked by two personified forms of danger of this sort certainly recalls the *rešep* and *deber* of Hab 3:4-5.

conspicuous in view of the other mythological references in the passage, especially the one to Death, and given that a number of the Ugaritic passages studied here include nouns ending in *-mt* as strengthening element, the parallelistic explanation of *rešep* as a “flame of Yah” becomes rather interesting. Is this an opaque allusion to the Resheph-like burning (of love) being (though still interpreted as an attribute of Death) under the main aegis of YHWH in this late view of Israelite religion? It may very well be that this expression poetically refers to Resheph here not being a god “of his own” but simply a weapon of YHWH.<sup>521</sup> This would then be yet another reference to the netherworldly, scorching powers being thought of as subordinated to the executive mastery of the God of Israel—an especially attractive possibility given the comparisons to Māwet and the land of the dead.<sup>522</sup>

We have seen yet another possible instance of Mot’s connection with El in the phrase “firstborn Death” in Job 18:13. As I have previously stated, it is probably no coincidence that the fever-inducing “Devourers” of *CAT* 1.12 are connected with El as well. This type of connection probably helped serve as a template for the absorption of the drought power into YHWH, as he was gradually identified with El.

As I noted in the chapter on the Refrain of the Burning Sun, Ps 32:4 portrays YHWH as a sender of both fever and (metaphorical) drought by means of his “hand”—an expression that is known from Babylonian texts on illnesses and has an obvious parallel in the “hand” of Mot which causes the destructive function of Shapshu in the Refrain. That verse is a quite telling example of the restructuring and transformation of the drought motif. At Ugarit, the “hand” of Mot made Shapshu burn and devastate the land with her heat, but in Psalm 32, a sinner feels the “hand” of YHWH burning him “like the drought of summer.” Again, the old weapons of heat and fever are put under the command of the God of Israel, creating a very vivid picture of what it meant that he was now thought to have power over *rešep* and *deber*.

#### **4.3.3 Drought against Sea—One Chaos Power against the Other?**

Sometimes, the Israelite reception of the two chaos powers can take surprising turns because of the peculiar characteristics of Israelite mythology. In a passage from Deutero-Isaiah, 51:10, there is possible evidence for a religio-historically interesting and in a sense startling way in which the two main “chaos villains” were integrated into Israelite thought. In this verse, the victory over the forces of Sea are given a rather special wording. The text speaks to the “arm of YHWH” (*zērôa’ YHWH*), and one should again remember how the “hand” of a deity can be used in Ugaritic and other texts to signify the origin of divinely sent (feverish) illness:

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<sup>521</sup> An oblique argument seemingly in this direction was also made by Paolo Xella (*DDD*: 703 [s.v. “Resheph”]).

<sup>522</sup> Note also the use of *šalhebet* as an instrument of drought in Job 15:30.

<i>Hālô' att-hî' hammaḥārebet yām</i>	You it was that dried up the sea,
<i>mê tēhôm rabbā</i>	the waters of the great deep,
<i>haššāmā ma' āmaqqê-yām derek</i>	who made the depths of sea into a road
<i>la' ābôr gē' ūlīm</i>	for the liberated to pass on.

The image of this passage is of course an allusion to the story of the Exodus, but the expressions are borrowed directly from the ancient Northwest Semitic background. Yet this is not all: we are told that YHWH has “dried up” the ocean.<sup>523</sup> That is, he has used the weapon derived from the tradition of one chaos being (Death/drought) to defeat the other (Sea). This shows how the Israelite God is, in the mind of the author, becoming the most powerful being in this primordial triad (Storm God-Death-Sea), so mighty, indeed, that he can use the power often associated with one of them against the other. The motif of the Israelite God turning the “ocean” of the Sea of Reeds into dry land becomes an excellent catalyst for such a novel construct. Using dryness against the sea is the perfect example not only of YHWH’s mastery over history (in liberating the Exodus-group) but of his command over all powers of the universe (using drought/death against the other representative of chaos).<sup>524</sup>

This idea occurs earlier in Deutero-Isaiah as well, in Isa 44:27 (using the word *šûlā*, a *hapax legomenon*, to designate the depths), and in Isa 50:2-3 (beginning in the second half of v. 2), in which YHWH says:

<i>Hēn bēga'ārātī aḥārīb yām</i>	See, in my rebuke I dry up the sea,
<i>āsīm nēhārôt midbār</i>	I make rivers into desert.
<i>tib'aš dēgātām mē'ēn mayim</i>	Their fish dry/rot <sup>525</sup> from lack of water
<i>wētāmōt baššāmā'</i>	and die of thirst.
<i>albīš šamayim qadrūt</i>	I clothe the heavens in darkness,
<i>wēšaq āsīm kēsūtām</i>	and sack-cloth I put as their garments.

Here one finds the fascinating conflation of the idea of drought being deployed against the Sea and that of the skies being darkened (by the order of YHWH). The drought is not accompanied by burning sunlight but by the gloom associated with the land of the dead (at Ugarit, Mot does, after all, dwell in the

<sup>523</sup> There are, of course, many other references to YHWH drying up or hindering bodies of water such as the Sea of Reeds, Jordan and others (e.g. Josh 2:10, 4:23, 5:1; Isa 19:5-7, 42:15), but Isa 51:11 is especially relevant because of its reference to *tēhôm*, and similar mythological terminology occurs in many of the other passages mentioned in this section.

<sup>524</sup> Again, this conception has a parallel in the passage from Ovid’s account of Phaeton quoted in section 4.2.2, in which the drying up of the sea by the power of the sun is mentioned.

<sup>525</sup> Note the clever and certainly intentional word-play between *tib'aš* and *tibaš!* The LXX apparently understood the verb as “dry up” and translated ξηρανθήσονται οἱ ἰχθύες αὐτῶν.

dark netherworld). The talk of darkness is yet another hint that the chthonic powers are here invoked as tools of the God of Israel; the garments of mourning mentioned make the motif of death even clearer, and the text does after all refer outright to creatures dying. Jer 2:6 also paradoxically juxtaposes drought and darkness, and the same may be said of Isa 58:10-11, in which salvation is metaphorically recounted as light replacing darkness as well as dryness being eradicated and replaced by a garden that is “well watered” (*rāwê*).<sup>526</sup> This “dark deathly drought” may occur in the Baal Cycle as well (with a possible parallel in the Deir Alla inscription)—see my discussion in the Appendix of this book.

The concept of the drought power being used as a weapon against the aquatic chaos monsters, though special, is not entirely without earlier antecedents. As I pointed out in the section on the “parched furrows” of the Baal Cycle, this type of wording also occurs in a Ugaritic text, *CAT* 1.83, in which Yamm is (probably) said to be “dried up” in some sort of magical act. In a manner reminiscent of what I argued above concerning the connection between El and the chaos monsters at Ugarit, passages such as the one in 1.83 may very well have provided a backdrop of motifs for the creation of this majestic conception: the Israelite God using drought to defeat Sea and thereby assuring the safe passage of his people. This idea occurs in a number of other places as well, such as Ps 106:9. A similar reference (though not explicitly connected to the Exodus) is found in Isa 11:15, if one accepts the emendation of *wēheherîm* to *wēheherîb*.<sup>527</sup> Note also that this verse contains a reference to the powerful wind of YHWH, implying yet another instance of the integration between the Mot-like drought power and the terrible hot wind of the Israelite God.

Other examples of this general idea are Isa 50:2 and Nah 1:4,<sup>528</sup> and especially Ps 74:15, which uses the *hipʿîl* of the verb *yābēš* for YHWH drying up the “mighty rivers” (*nahārôt ʿētān*). That passage is especially interesting because of the well-known mythological references in Ps 74:13-14, dealing with the destruction of *yām* and the Leviathan. All of these cases paint YHWH as a deity capable of using the old, desiccating power of Death against Sea, a development that is quite logical given the integration that has been demonstrated in this study of the powers of Death, the former of the ancient enemies, into the figure of the God of Israel.

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<sup>526</sup> Isa 58:11 includes the otherwise unattested word *ṣahṣahôt*, which apparently refers to aridity of some sort. The root of the word is apparently the one appearing in the two variants *ṣhh/ṣhy* and *ṣhh*, which often carry meanings connected with being “scorched,” “bright,” etc. For more on these roots, and an audacious, uncertain but nevertheless interesting suggestion that these roots are distantly related to the *ṣhr* root so often discussed in this study, see Dijkstra 1974: 65 (esp. n. 43).

<sup>527</sup> BHSApp.

<sup>528</sup> Note that Mount Carmel is mentioned here yet again! Fuchs (2003: 76) provides a convincing analysis of Nah 1:2-8 as being essentially solar in character, referring to the burning “glow” of the judging sun.

#### 4.4 The *Nachleben* of the Drought Motif

As the end of this chapter, I will provide an outlook concerning possible later survivals of the drought motifs studied in this volume, providing two short examples from vastly differing contexts (one of which comes from an area quite different from those well-known to students of the Hebrew Bible). These are probably only two such examples of the *Nachleben* of these poetic motifs, and they should only be seen as pointers to what is probably a larger trajectory in the history of ideas.

##### 4.4.1 The Story of Honi the Circle Drawer

The conceptual staying power of the motifs discussed in this book can easily be grasped by looking at examples of their post-biblical *Nachleben*. One very illustrative example of this can be found in the Mishnaic story of Honi the Circle-drawer in Ta'anit 3:8. This story, which is also referred to in passing by Josephus (*Ant. Iud.* XIV 22-24) tells of the miraculous calling down of rain during a period of intense drought. The pious Honi (Onias in the Greek text) draws a circle in the dust, stands within it and informs God that he will not move until rain has come—and the rain comes first in drops, but after a further prayer by Honi, starts falling torrentially. Honi then starts negotiating with God about the amount of precipitation, ending with a nice, steady drizzle coming down from the heavens.

The tale of Honi shows how pertinent the question of rain versus drought is throughout the Israelite period and beyond, into the time of early Judaism. The thaumaturgical, almost magical, practice that Honi uses to end the terrible drought evokes the intercessory powers of Elijah—and, in a wider perspective—the propitiatory rituals undertaken by Danel when drought has struck his land in the Aqhat Epic.<sup>529</sup> Just as Elijah claims (somewhat audaciously, it may be presumed) that there will be no dew or rain except on his “word,” the Mishnaic passage implies that Honi’s boldness in arguing with God about the amount of precipitation and the very idea of his almost being able to command the deity to let the rain fall were regarded as almost blasphemous by his contemporaries (or at least by the compilers of the text itself). The passage ends with the Tannaitic sage Shimon ben Shetah, famous for his actions against witches and sorcerers, saying that he might very well have pronounced a ban on Honi for his impious act.

This story has, of course, transformed the issues of rain and drought into something quite different than the great cosmic struggle that we find in the Ugaritic literature, but the actions of Honi demonstrate that the traditional threats of drought were regarded as supreme dangers long thereafter, and that the ability to battle them was seen as a most potent power—a power which might belong to Baal, Elijah or to Honi the Circle-drawer. Yet in the story of

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<sup>529</sup> A comparison between Honi and Elijah in the Carmel story is also made by White (1997: 37).

Honi, the one instigator of the drought is YHWH himself: the integration of the old death weapon is complete, but it must still be battled, even in this case, in which the one challenging it is a mere human. At Ugarit, the storm god battled his enemy, Death, the lord of drought, but after centuries of theological restructuring, the battle occurs between a human and God himself.

#### **4.4.2 Combustion**

One instance in which the ancient Northwest Semitic motifs of the destructive and burning, yet royal, sun may possibly have survived is probably not readily apparent to students of Ugarit and the Old Testament. This is the realm of classical astrology, that is the mainstream of horoscopic astrological thought which emerged in Hellenistic Egypt a few centuries BC (as opposed to the earlier astral divinatory techniques known from Babylonia, etc.). In that world view, which persisted among practitioners of horoscopic astrology relatively unchanged up until early modern times, the sun is given strangely dual characteristics. On one hand, the great luminary is portrayed as representing kingship, might and authority, but on the other, it is thought of as a potentially destructive influence due to its heat, causing any planet it conjuncts to become “combust” or “burned up” by its rays, and thus rendering that planet weak. At the outset, this might seem like a strange contradiction in a system that otherwise posits a rather clear-cut dichotomy between benefic (Jupiter, Venus) and malefic (Saturn, Mars) planets. But as I hope to have demonstrated in this study, the sun was associated with these very characteristics in early Levantine religious thinking, and the role of the sun in classical astrology may well be yet another resonance of these motifs in the history of ideas of much later times. Whether this similarity is due to coincidence or historical influence is, of course, difficult to say.<sup>530</sup>

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<sup>530</sup> Concerning the relationship between astrological combustion and motifs known from Ugarit, see Wikander 2013b, in which I further explore these possibilities in connection with *CAT* 1.78 and the role of the planet Mars in that text.

## 5. Conclusions

### 5.1 Drought and Heat as Theological Metaphors and Markers of Death

As has been seen in the pages of this study, the idea that there is a deep conceptual connection between death, drought, (often solar) heat and fever-like hotness is very much a shared inheritance found both at Ugarit and in the pages of the Hebrew Bible. At Ugarit, the connections between these concepts are, of course, given a much clearer mythological (and thereby more easily surveyable) background, as they indeed play a highly pivotal role in what is without doubt the most important religious text recovered from the city, the Baal Cycle. The recurring depictions of drought in that text are far from “aside[s] by the poet on the weather”<sup>531</sup>—they are depictions of what the power of Death really threatens the world with. Nor are they necessarily seasonal in the simple aetiological sense: they (and the struggles of Baal against them) do not only explain why the seasons change every year, but rather serve to reinforce an entire world view in which the forces of life-giving salvation and destructive Death are always in battle with each other. The turning, seasonal wheel of the Syrian climate is definitely there in the text, but we cannot presuppose this to be the meta-analysis of the story: the drought illustrates Mot’s power, not necessarily the other way around. Ilmilkku uses drought and the “sun of Mot” as a literary and mythological way of illustrating the stakes of the battle. The text aims at answering the question: “Which forces struggle against each other in the cosmos,” not simply: “why do we have different seasons.”

A number of times during the study I have pointed out that the terrible drought-death power can in many cases be more of a literary or mythological metaphor than the mechanical result of the absence of a rain-giver. Of course, there are quite a number of cases in which the drought manifests itself as a direct result of the lord of the rains being absent (Jeremiah 14 is a prime example of this, in which the lack of YHWH is stated and lamented straight out), but in other cases the terrible heat is not said to be a result of such an absence but is used as a metaphorical marker of the power of death in the story, as a signal of the netherworldly power manifesting itself or simply as an associational device on the part of the author(s), to bring the idea complex of death to the fore in the minds of the audience.

A most pertinent example of the drought motif as a signal not of the absence of a rain-giver but of the manifestation of deathly power is the Refrain of the Burning Sun, the study of which began the book. The three occurrences of the refrain illustrate the matter perfectly: the two later instances appear when Baal is in contact with or has already descended into the netherworld, in the latter case thus being unable to care for his people by providing precipitation (a state of

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<sup>531</sup> So Wyatt 2002: 85, n. 65.

affairs explicitly noted with sorrow by the characters in the story),<sup>532</sup> but the first one has quite a different context. In *CAT* 1.3 V 17-18, a fragmented snippet of the Refrain occurs during a discussion between Anat and El concerning Baal's palace, at a place in the story where Baal is not dead at all and has no clear relationship with the land of the dead. The role of the Refrain here, I argue, is to reinforce the danger of Mot's implicit rule over the land when Baal has not yet completely taken his kingship and sent out his rains through the medium of the palace. To be sure, this may be interpreted as a form of "absence" of the storm deity, inasmuch as Baal has not yet had the opportunity to manifest his role as rain god, but the power of Mot is here not a result of his having overpowered Baal in any way or killed him—all this comes later in the story. However, I would say that the problem Anat is referring to in her speech to El (beseeching him to grant Baal the right of a princely dwelling) is that Mot is so to speak ruling by default, and that these very circumstances motivate Baal being properly installed as king.

Another very telling instance of the motif being a marker of the influence of the netherworldly powers is the drought that ensues after the death of Aqhat. In that case too, there is a reference to Baal being absent, but this comes as a result of Aqhat's wrongful death and appears rather to be a narrative consequence thereof. Aqhat is not analogous to Baal: he has no rain-giving powers, but his death still has drought as its consequence. A similar conception seems to be in evidence during the narrative of the illness of Kirta. Death being center stage is what provokes the drought and makes it a natural narrative result of the account of the mortality of a central character. The drought reinforces the death imagery in the minds of the audience, metaphorically connecting the death of the individual, the danger to the collective (as the individuals in question are often "great men" who may symbolize the fate of a larger group) and the mourning of nature. The lament of David in 2 Sam 1 is yet another example, one in which the deaths of Saul and Jonathan are considered by the author to be a fully adequate reason for David to call for a great drought in his grief.

The interesting thing to note here is that this metaphorical connection apparently "worked" in the ears of the contemporary audience. To a modern, western reader, there does not appear to be any immediate reason for David to call for a cessation of precipitation on Mount Gilboa because of Saul and Jonathan having died in battle against the Philistines, but we must assume that such a connection was readily understandable and perceived as logical by the intended receivers of the message. To the Iron Age hearers of the story, this was apparently a normal enough idea for the author to insert it into a poetic lament. The association between death and drought was implicit in the narrative culture of the period. It was a deeply rooted metaphor of the greater Northwest Semitic cultural milieu.

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<sup>532</sup> Note Anat's and El's very explicit laments over Baal in *CAT* 1.5 VI 11-25 and 1.5 VI 31-1.6 I 8.



## 5.2 Drought, YHWH and Integration: from Ego-Dystonic to Ego-Syntonic

In the Hebrew Bible, the motifs are more hidden than in the Ugaritic material, but they are there—sometimes as poetic-literary similes and sometimes as concrete references or even theology. In the course of the study, I have highlighted the fluctuating role of the drought-death motif: sometimes intrinsic to the character of the Israelite God, integrated into his increasingly all-powerful role, but sometimes coming from outside and inimical to his faithful. When the psalmist of Psalm 102 complains of the killing (metaphorical?) heat that has him in its grasp, it appears quite clear that it is not sent out by YHWH but is an autonomous danger inherent in nature and the cosmos. In Malachi 3, the avenging solar radiance of YHWH makes the “day” burn like an oven for the unrighteous, but in Psalm 102 the furnace burns all by itself. In the attestations mentioned from the Book of Revelation, the process has moved even further: the destructive sun and the shelter therefrom are both parts of God’s eschatological plan.

Borrowing a pair of terms from the realm of psychology, I would say that the drought power appears in the beginning to have been “ego-dystonic” in relation to YHWH, that is, it is described as being alien to the nature of the Israelite God, something with which he is not identified and which he is described as viewing as inimical to his *Wesen*.<sup>533</sup> This early tendency can be glimpsed in Hosea 13, and it is quite in harmony with the ancient Northwest Semitic conceptions represented at Ugarit: the drought is (at least partly) associated with powers outside of YHWH. The passage from Hosea 13 does, however, appear to stand at the threshold of the development of the integration of the drought power into the character of the Israelite God. On one hand, it seems as though Death is an independent character to the poet, at least as a matter of literary convention. On the other hand, however, the drying power is associated with the burning desert wind of YHWH; indeed, it almost appears as though the prophet pokes fun at Death for not bringing drought in as effective a manner as YHWH does! In later texts, the drought power appears to have become more and more “ego-syntonic.” One of the clearest examples of this is the text from Malachi. This is of course a late text, one of the latest discussed in the study as a whole. Yet despite this, it provides a fascinating demonstration of the resilience of poetic motifs when it clearly portrays the dual roles of the sun as burner and healer, attested as early as in the Ugaritic material but now cast in a monotheist light, with YHWH as the sender of both. This is almost a programmatic illustration of the processes I have attempted to highlight: YHWH’s gradual appropriation of the drought power and rule over the forces of death, the forces described in literature of a whole millennium earlier. As I pointed out concerning the texts from Job, this integration sometimes does not take place in quite so drastic a way—in the case of Job, the retention of drought-

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<sup>533</sup> Colman (2006: 240) defines “ego-dystonic” as “[e]xperienced as self-repugnant, alien, discordant, or inconsistent with the total personality [...]”

Death as more of an autonomous entity is not only more archaizing but also serves the interests of the theology of the Book as a whole.

As I have argued earlier, I believe that the passages in the Hebrew Bible that show an integration of the drought motif into the figure of the Israelite God were made possible by using a number of different religio-historical conceptions as ideological vehicles. The idea of YHWH, to whom many traits of the classical Northwest Semitic storm deity were ascribed, being responsible for destroying heat must in a sense have been rather radical. I shall here sum up and enumerate the different theological/ideological presuppositions that I have argued tended to make this integration easier:

(a) The role of Mot, the progenitor of drought, as “beloved” or “son” of El, a god whose characteristics were most definitely integrated into the character of YHWH, and El’s attested relationship with heat- and fire-themed monstrous beings in the Ugaritic literature.

(b) YHWH’s well-attested mastery over the terrible desert wind, a trait which may well be connected with his possible origin as a God from the southerly, Sinai desert region, and was probably easy to integrate with the appropriation of Ugaritic-style drought imagery.

(c) The in some cases dangerous connotation of the “ruler sun” used often as an attribute of the Israelite God. Connected with this is the concept of YHWH’s *kābôd*, which I believe served as a medium for expressing the deity’s control of destructive solar activity in a new context.<sup>534</sup>

(d) The general process of subordination of the chaotic powers to the might of YHWH, as especially shown by the gradual weakening of the power of Leviathan.

The combination of these ideas, I argue, created a conceptual backdrop against which the Israelite God could acquire the powers of what appears to have been one of the main inimical forces of the Northwest Semitic conception of nature and the divine world. I would propose that this process helped further the rhetorical strategies of the “YHWH only movement,” and thus, ultimately, played a part in the emergence of what was later to become Abrahamic monotheism.

One may note with interest that the main examples of the drought motif in the Hebrew Bible are found in poetic/prophetic material and in a few

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<sup>534</sup> See also the passage on the Phoenician god Baalshamem in section 4.2.4; that deity also appears gradually to have combined the characteristics of a weather deity with power over drought in a way reminiscent of what is argued here—in a very closely related cultural milieu.

Deuteronom(ist)ic texts. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers have not been much represented in this study.

### 5.3 The Role of Feverish Illness

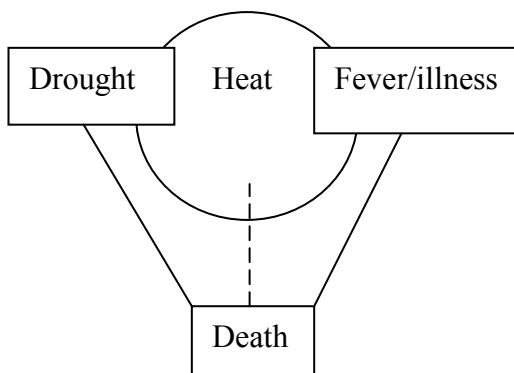
I announced already at the beginning that I would also look at any connections between the drought motif and the imagery of feverish heat and illness. Such a search has indeed been amply rewarded: time after time, this conceptual association reappears, and this occurs both in the Ugaritic and in the Hebrew corpus. At Ugarit, Shapshu is associated with Rashpu/Resheph, the god of pestilence. In the Refrain of the Burning Sun, the talk of being “in the hands of Death” relates to expressions used for malady and fever. In *CAT* 1.12, the drought is internalized into Baal himself as its feverish heat manifests in his body due to his confrontation with the “Devourers,” who not only bring death but are also described in terms highly reminiscent of those used for Mot himself (insatiable appetite, a connection with El). Shapshu appears together with various netherworld deities in order to fight off disease (?) in *CAT* 1.82. In Deuteronomy 28, drought and fever are enumerated together as part of the same problem sphere, which is connected by the theologian author with disobedience towards the Israelite God. Even the etymological material speaks to this association: the roots *hrr* and *ʾml* link drought and fever (as, it would seem, *šhrr* in *CAT* 1.12), thus encoding the connection into the terminology itself. Another such example is the probable connection between Hosea 13’s term *tal’ūbôt* and the “sun heat” malady called *li’bu* (section 3.2.3.4). Hosea 13 also includes the talk of Death’s “plagues” (*deber* and *qeteb/qōṭeb*) in the same context as the drought. Ps 32:4 uses the terminology of the “hand” of a deity found at Ugarit (in the Refrain of the Burning Sun) and in Babylonian medical texts as an expression of the metaphorical “summer drought” sent by YHWH against the sinner in a manner which is clearly meant to create associations to fever. Psalm 102 speaks of effects similar to fever using words highly reminiscent of the Ugaritic drought texts. In Job 30:30, the bones of the righteous sufferer burn with heat.

Just as is the case with the more overt drought of the agricultural land, this “fever” is in some cases associated with YHWH in the Hebrew Bible. His “hand” sends it, and I believe that texts such as *CAT* 1.12 (in which the fever-bringing monsters appear to be under the sway of El) helped provide a template for such a link, as seen above.

I have spoken of how the Sun at Ugarit became the ideal metaphorical vehicle with which to express the relationship between heat/drought and the rule of Death and the underworld—her intrinsic hotness and journeys beneath the horizon making this connection “work.” I would propose that the “fever” motif works in a similar manner: it is a type of sickness (intrinsically death-related), and it is also hot, creating an ideal conceptual bridge between the burned land and the burned individual. Although the burning sun became for various reasons less of a central autonomous symbol in Israel (though not without exceptions, as

we have seen), the heat of fever remained and also retained its role as the manifestation of drought and death in the world even in the biblical material.

One can illustrate the relationships between the concepts involved graphically in the following manner:



What this image is aimed at illustrating is the following: The idea of death is metaphorically and conceptually connected to illness in and of itself. As we have seen, the rule of personified Death in the universe has a strong correlation with drought imagery. The connecting element between drought and illness is heat. The idea of excessive heat shares in both of these two semantic spheres, and as those two are both associated with death (each in a different way), the concept of “great, excessive heat” seems to gain such an association as well. This analysis makes eminent sense of textual passages such as Ps 102:4-5 (and v. 12), which uses a general “heat” image to evoke the concept of death—and the text does this using the verb *škh* (Ugaritic *tkh*), which in terms of comparative etymological poetics is the ideal carrier of such imagery.

#### **5.4 The Drought and the Verbs: Inherited Poetics**

The methodology of comparative etymological poetics can, as I hope to have shown, yield a rich harvest concerning surviving mythemes in Northwest Semitic religion. The retention of shared mythological material is reinforced by attaching it to specific etyma that act, so to speak, as vectors or carriers of ideas, facilitating their survival. Examples of this process have been seen in the present study in the form of specific verbal roots such as *šhr*, *hrr*, *hrh*, *tkh* and *ʿbl*, which appear in many places to be imbued with intertextual and mythological import that made it possible to retain old poetic and narrative material over vast periods of time, in much the same way that Calvert Watkins and others have shown to be the case in the Indo-European languages. In a case such as *ʿbl*, the intrinsic ambiguity of the verbal semantics (“dry up” or “mourn”) must have been especially well suited for creating associative patterns involving drought and

death. Thus, in my view, the recurrence of these terms is not simply a matter of the Israelite authors using words that would easily fit the point they were making, but rather of this vocabulary itself carrying inherent associative patterns that could awaken certain mythological expectations in the minds of the contemporary audience. Another such instance occurs in the expressions on the lines of “no dew, no rain.”

The central role of vocabulary as a bearer of poetic/mythological meaning is underscored by the cases in which what I believe to be references to the death-drought motif can only be fully unearthed and identified when an etymological analysis is undertaken—consider here the examples in Psalms 102 and 137 (using *škh/ikh*), as well as many of the attestations from Job, which are not readily detectable without looking at the history of the vocabulary employed. None of these cases is overtly about drought, but they are all of them rendered more understandable when their words are connected with the larger sphere of motifs and the religious history surrounding it. Indeed, it is interesting to note that these passages are in some ways clearer exponents of the association between death and drought than such texts as Jeremiah 14, which appears expressly to describe a physical drought occurring in this world and not in a land of metaphors and mythemes. The same can be said of Job 24:19, with its retention of the verb *gzl*, connected with the sphere of dying in the Eshmunazor inscription and its explicit reference to Sheol. This again highlights the fact that the drought of the “motif” may very well be a metaphor for death, rather than the other way around, as is so often presupposed.

### 5.5 Poetic Inheritance and “Mythology of Nature”

In a study such as this, the relationship between poetic inheritance and “natural mythology” is obviously a very important question. The propensity of the Ugaritic authors to use the motifs of drought and rain as illustrative of their theological and narrative ideas is often ascribed to their having lived in an agrarian society in which the threat of drought was ever-present: indeed, as I mentioned in the introduction, one of the proposed reasons for the demise of Ugarit in the early twelfth century BC is a long-standing and devastating drought.<sup>535</sup> The same explanation could be adduced for many of the Hebrew texts studied in this volume.

Yet, the drought imagery persists into Hellenistic texts such as the Wisdom of Solomon, the ideology of which appears to be thoroughly urbanized and much less prone to agrarian imagery. Also, as I noted in speaking of Isa 5:13-14, the drought expressions can be used in quite un-agrarian contexts in the very heart of the texts of the Hebrew Bible. This is yet another example of how the “environmental context” of a text may not necessarily be the one reflected in the material, a fact due in large part to the marked influence of poetic inheritance and retention so clearly seen in this study. Indeed, in the Lutheran churches of

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<sup>535</sup> Schaeffer 1983.

modern Sweden, one of the most popular hymns recasts the “dry” words of Isaiah 40:

*Allt kött är hö  
och blomstren dö  
och tiden allt fördriver.  
Blott Herrens ord förbliver.*<sup>536</sup>

All flesh is hay  
and the flowers die  
and time expells all.  
Only the word of the Lord remains.

This text still carries on the poetic tradition of drought and death to this day in a Nordic climate very far removed indeed from the Northwest Semitic Bronze Age, illustrating again the necessity of separating poetic inheritance and intertextuality from a mechanistic interpretation of the surrounding environment and, in this case, the climate. It underscores the need of not automatically ascribing poetic material concerning drought to a contemporary and existing drought in the milieu of the author.

Nevertheless, it is of course no coincidence that the integration of the ideas of drought, sun and death appear to have taken place in the drought-stricken Levant. It was here that gifted authors and poets combined ideas such as the dying or disappearing storm-giver with the medium of the sun as transcending agent and the drought as indicator not only of the absence of the weather god but of the power of Death itself.

In many cases the references to “theological effects in nature” may be the result of these effects being actual and imminent dangers in the poet’s world, but in others, the inherited poetic material may point far back to a quite different original *Sitz im Leben*. An extra-biblical example of this process can be found in certain Hittite texts that formulaically describe how the sun rises from the sea. In the region where the Hittites lived (Asia Minor), there is no possibility of this occurring, which is why a number of scholars see in this phrase a reference to a time in which the linguistic ancestors of the Hittites lived further to the North, closer to the assumed homeland of the Proto-Indo-Europeans on the Eurasian steppes, where the “sea” in question would then have referred to the Black or the Caspian Sea. The “nature reference” in this case would then be an entirely inherited one and not one from which conclusions regarding the actual environment of the authors can be drawn.<sup>537</sup>

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<sup>536</sup> Lyrics by Carl David af Wirsén (1842-1912).

<sup>537</sup> Anthony (2007: 262) appears to prefer the Black Sea in this context.

### 5.6 The Liminal Role of the Sun as an Important Concept for the Development of Ugaritic Mythology; the Literary Nature of the Ugaritic Material

One of the perhaps more nebulous but still interesting ideas that have arisen in the course of this study is that of the specific, transcending character of the Sun at Ugarit possibly having served as a vehicle for integrating and harmonizing the “struggle against Death” mythology with the more general myth of the “disappearing god” found in Hittite culture, for example. In the latter type of myth (the classical exponent of which is the tale of Telepinu), drought appears as a direct consequence of the absence of the weather deity, an absence which often seems to be freely chosen—as the Hittite text puts it, *Telepinus-a arha iyannis* (“but Telepinu wandered away”).<sup>538</sup> In Telepinu, the solar deity does have an important role, as it is the sun god who initiates the first, unsuccessful searches for the missing god (an interesting parallel to the “searching sun” of the Baal Cycle), but he is not the one who actually finds him, nor does he have any role comparable to that of the “burning Sun” of Ugarit.

Thus, one may speculate that the combination of (a) a probably well-known mythical pattern of a disappearing storm god, (b) the motif of drought, (c) Mot serving as a cosmic enemy necessary for Baal to battle in order to make his cosmic kingship believable and (d) the connection between the sun and the land of the dead known from many places in the Ancient Near East made it eminently easy for the Northwest Semitic poets (perhaps especially the Ugaritic ones) to associate the general “disappearance” of the storm deity with something much more specific and somewhat different—his death—and to make the “chthonic sun” the perfect medium through which the drought would manifest itself. The brute fact of the sun’s burning rays during a severe drought must have made this association very easy to make, so that Death himself could readily be introduced into the drama, thus creating a mythical pattern related to, but substantially different from, the more general “disappearing god” pattern. Baal has not chosen to be absent, but he has been swallowed by a hostile divine power, and the role of Shapshu corroborates this. It is quite possible that *CAT* 1.12 represents a transitional stage in this process of mythological transformation and integration: it includes neither Death nor Sun, but Baal appears to be killed, there seems to be a drought, and fever is mentioned (i.e. disease, the domain of Mot).

It is noteworthy that the Ugaritic evidence for the drought/death motif comes mainly from the narrative texts and not from the ritual material. To be sure, there are a few attestations among the sacrificial texts, and *CAT* 1.12 does appear to have a few ritual references, but the bulk of the instances occur in the literary corpus. There is no great Ugaritic anti-drought liturgy, as might have been expected if the Ugaritic religion were indeed cultically focused on the warding off of anti-fertility powers. Although this is an *e silentio* argument, it

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<sup>538</sup> See section 3.2.2.1.

does seem fair to assume that the references to drought, death and the sun are mainly part of a literary universe. Even the hints in *CAT* 1.161, the “funerary” text, appear in the clearest manner when read in the context of what has been said in the Baal Cycle. In the main corpus of sacrificial texts, there is little reference to drought as a problem or indeed to “fertility” as a whole, a fact pointed out by Dennis Pardee.<sup>539</sup> The sphere of ideas seems to be mainly a part of mythological thinking and poetic technique and not necessarily deeply ingrained in the cult. It can be suggested that this was one of the reasons for the retention of the motif into Old Testament times (albeit in highly transformed manners): it was a common mythological and literary entity of the Northwest Semitic world rather than a cultic phenomenon tied to a certain culture.

### **5.7 The Burning Sun as Connector Between Living and Dead**

In regard to the Ugaritic texts and to a certain extent those of the Hebrew Bible, the following can be said: the role of the burning drought and the destructive power of the sun is to instantiate the rule of death in the land of the living. Conceptually, drought serves as a vehicle for connecting these two normally and ideally separate realms with each other, and to make the land of the living “like death,” so to speak. As seen in the discussion of the Ugaritic funerary and/or necromantic text *CAT* 1.161, this connection could sometimes be thought of as necessary and even beneficial, yet it was still by definition a break from the normal manner of things. In Israel, the more the power to do this was ascribed to the Israelite God, the more apparent the limitlessness of his rule became.

A question, problem or seeming internal contradiction appearing in a number of places in the study has been the relationship between the conception of the netherworld or the sphere of death as being dark and gloomy (attested both at Ugarit and in the Hebrew Bible) and the role of the sun as sender of deathly drought and as communicator and mediator between the lands of the living and the dead—predominantly in the Ugarit texts but also in certain places in the Israelite writings. To some readers, the co-occurrence of these phenomena may seem hard to swallow. However, I believe this tension to constitute a deliberate form of thought construct brought about by the differing and not always easily reconcilable images associated with dying in the ancient Northwest Semitic cultural milieu. At Ugarit, one finds this creative dichotomy when Mot’s abode is spoken of as a “pit,” which is still said to be guarded by a mountain perhaps bearing the name of a Hurrian sun god, as well as when Mot, the “son of darkness” is “clouding” or “grieving” the day while the sun throws her destroying glare, and when Shapshu is instructed to “be hot” when descending into the dark realm of the dead.<sup>540</sup>

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<sup>539</sup> Pardee (*RCU*): 234.

<sup>540</sup> The name of the mountain at the gate of the netherworld and the question of the “son of darkness” are discussed in the Appendix.



**5.8 Final Remarks**

As we move into the twenty-first century, we see a world in which global warming is regarded as one of the major threats to human existence as we have previously known it. Only a few years ago, just as I was finishing the dissertation edition of the present study, a major case of drought affected the Horn of Africa, killing vast numbers of people. Even in our technologized world, melanoma caused by the glare of the sun is a common cause of disease and death. The thoughts and words written by people living in the ancient Near East seem in some senses to be strangely prophetic. Despite our technological and societal advances, our modern world is still not immune to the powers of drought, death and the sun.

## 6. Appendix:

### Sun in Darkness and “Son of Darkness”? CAT 1.3 VI 5-12 (former 1.8 II 5-12)/1.4 VII 52-57 and the Deir Alla Inscription

This Appendix deals with some textual entities that do not directly concern the drought/death motif but the interpretation of which may in some respects affect the general view of these concepts in the Baal Cycle. The main passage in question is one of the most philologically obscure of all texts discussed in the study—and any interpretation of it must be regarded as highly conjectural, which is why I have chosen to discuss it (and certain possible parallels in the Balaam text from Deir Alla) here, rather than as a part of the main analysis (and it must be stressed that this Appendix includes only a cursory treatment of it). The text in question is the passage that occurs in a broken context in CAT 1.4 VII 52-57 (part of the Baal-Mot episode) and has a clear parallel in 1.8 II 5-12 (the latter text having been used to reconstruct the former). After a startling discovery by Dennis Pardee (published in 2009), it is now clear that what has been known as CAT 1.8 (RS 3.364) is in fact a part of the Baal Cycle tablet 1.3, forming the beginning of its column VI.<sup>541</sup> This discovery was incorporated into the commentary by Smith and Pitard.<sup>542</sup> This has created an entirely new situation for the interpretation of these lines, as we now have them attested in two different contexts. According to CAT, the text of 1.3 VI 5-12 (former 1.8 II 5-12) runs:<sup>543</sup>

<i>l ḡlmh b' l yṣh .</i>	To his lads Baal cries:
<i>‘n . ḡpn . w ugr .</i>	‘See, Gapnu and Ugar
<i>bn . ḡlmt ‘mm ym .</i>	...
<i>bn . ḡlm[t] rmt pr‘t .</i>	
<i>ibr [...]. ṣḥrrm</i>	
<i>ḥbl [...]</i>	
<i>‘rpt . tht [...]</i>	
<i>m ‘ṣrm [...]</i>	

The passage is extremely unclear, and I have left the main part untranslated. One line of interpretation has been to regard it as some sort of description of calamities of nature connected with Mot’s rule, but this is now questioned by

<sup>541</sup> Pardee 2009. This is now reflected in the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of *KTU/CAT*.

<sup>542</sup> Smith and Pitard 2009: 9.

<sup>543</sup> I choose this version of the passage because of its better state of preservation. I have made a few very minor typographical adjustments to the CAT version and removed one word, which is based on the CAT 1.4 VII 56 version, the reading of which is highly uncertain (the common reconstruction *mnt* [after *ibr*] has been called into question in Pardee 2009: 382, n. 13). In de Moor 2012: 132, the reading *mnt* is retained and interpreted (p. 133) as a divine name, Manât.

Pardee and Smith/Pitard because of the insight that it occurs not only as part of the Baal-Mot episode but also in a previously unknown context—namely when Baal sends his messengers Gapnu and Ugar to Athirat to enlist her help in getting a palace for the young Storm God. This new development caused Smith and Pitard to take the position that the words in question are not descriptions of Mot or his lackeys but represent some sort of formulaic epithets of Baal's messengers, epithets the nature of which is, however, very uncertain.<sup>544</sup>

### 6.1 The Words *bn ḡlmt* and *bn ṣlmt*

Specifically, the discussion has to a large extent centered on the expressions *bn ḡlmt* and *bn ṣlmt*, which occur in parallelism with each other. A common view has been to regard the first of these as an alphabetic spelling of the syllabically attested word *ḥu-ul-ma-tu<sub>4</sub>* (thus to be read /ḡulmatu/), meaning “darkness” and the second one as some sort of variant of the same, and then regarding *bn* as the word for “son.”<sup>545</sup> The expression would then refer either to Mot himself or to his minions. Another option is to regard *ḡlmt* as the attested feminine of *ḡlm*, “lad,” thus “young woman.”<sup>546</sup> This latter suggestion I find harder to accept: it is highly unclear who this “young woman” would be.

The newly discovered context for the words in question may at first glance appear to invalidate any claim that the passage alludes to the power of Mot: in *CAT* 1.3, the matter at hand is not Baal's battle against the god of death but his wish to be granted a divine palace from which to rule. This line of reasoning is, I agree, quite possible, but it is not one hundred percent compelling. After all, Smith and Pitard themselves agree to interpret what I refer to in this book as the Refrain of the Burning Sun as a reference to Mot when it occurs in *CAT* 1.3 V 17-18, a place in the story where the main question at hand is also Baal's palace and not the struggle with Mot (which only comes to the forefront in tablets 1.5 and 1.6).

This means that one cannot dismiss an interpretation connected with the power of Mot from the outset. It must, however, be borne in mind that a correct understanding of the present passage is extremely difficult to arrive at, and all conclusions must be regarded as highly tentative.

One thing immediately suggesting the realm of death as being relevant to this context is the use of the word *ṣhrr*, which only otherwise occurs in the Baal Cycle in the Refrain of the Burning Sun, a textual entity which is of course

<sup>544</sup> Smith and Pitard 2009: 372-373.

<sup>545</sup> The interpretation of the words as variants of “darkness” is found, e.g., in de Moor 1971: 172. He maintains this position (in my view rightly) in de Moor 2012: 133. I want to thank Professor de Moor for kindly allowing me to refer to this article prior to its publication in the earlier, dissertation edition of this book. The syllabic attestation can be found in the polyglot vocabulary material (Ug. 5 137 iii 15) and is discussed in Huehnergard 1987: 99, 164-165.

<sup>546</sup> So, for example, Smith and Pitard 2009: 365 (translating “Lass”).

intimately connected with the figure of Mot.<sup>547</sup> This in itself is an important marker suggesting that the rule of Death may be at the forefront here as well. Also, it is difficult to deny that references to darkness appear to abound (*złmt* is most easily explained as a derivation from the root *złm* and as being connected with Hebrew *šalmāwet*, and *głmt* can, as has been seen, be linked with this meaning on the basis of Ugaritic evidence), and these would be quite easy to explain if the powers of Mot were somehow involved here, as being the lord of the dark land of the netherworld—he would certainly be a candidate for being the “son of darkness.”<sup>548</sup> If this interpretation of the terms *głmt* and *złmt* is correct, the lines constitute evidence of very sophisticated linguistic sensibilities on the part of the author. First, he plays on the differing outcomes of the Proto-Semitic phoneme *z* in Ugaritic (probably indicating that the sound changes involved were in a state of flux at the time of composition, as also indicated by the existence of the word *hłmz*, meaning “dragon”, which corresponds to Akkadian *hulmiṭtu* and perhaps Hebrew *hōmet*);<sup>549</sup> and, secondly, the author may actually be trying punningly to etymologize *złmt* into “shadow of death.” Given the contrasting of sunshine and darkness that seems to be at the center of this passage, such a reading does not appear unreasonable. For one thing, it creates a plausible reason for a very strange juxtaposition of two linguistic shapes of what seems to be the same word.

## 6.2 More Difficult Words: “Covering” or “Grieving” and the “Exalted Princess”

Many of the words in the passage are highly enigmatic. Does it, for example, mention “birds” (for *m'šrm* or *šrm*) and their “pinions” or “wings” (for *ibr*, if that reading is indeed correct and not *hbr*, which may be the reading in *CAT* 1.4 VII 56), indeed a “flock” (for *hbl*) of them?<sup>550</sup> It is quite possible, and the

<sup>547</sup> Note that Pardee (2009: 383) also translates this word as “are dried up”.

<sup>548</sup> Also, on a more speculative note, it is quite interesting that one of the words used may be the Ugaritic cognate of the Hebrew *šalmāwet*. As is well known, this word (which of course has an entire history of scholarship by itself) is often emended today to *šalmūt*, based on the very above-mentioned Ugaritic words for “darkness” and the supposed inability of ancient Semitic languages to form compound words. However, as noted elsewhere in this study, there are a number of conspicuous cases where such compounds seem to occur when ending in the specific element *mt*—especially interesting in this case, as the element *zł* (“shadow,” “shade”) occurs in connection with dead ancestors in *CAT* 1.161 (see section 2.3.1). Thus, one of the very words used to designate the “darkness” may in itself contain a reference to the god of death! However, if this is correct, it does make it a bit more difficult to identify the *bn głmt* and *bn złmt* with Mot himself, as the idea that he would be described as the “son of the shadow of Mot” is rather difficult to swallow.

<sup>549</sup> On this and other comparable examples, see Segert 1984: 35 and Tropper 2000: 113.

<sup>550</sup> Interpretations of this sort can be found e.g. in de Moor 1971: 164. He, however, regarded the “wings” as an attribute of the “breeze,” which he translated as being “dust-

reference could then be to the circling scavengers connected to the rule of Death in the land. But all this is, of course, uncertain. The word *ʿmm* is often interpreted as a cognate of the Arabic *ḡamma* (“to cover”) and of the Hebrew *yūʿam* of Lam 4:1. The expression *ʿmmym* or *ʿmm ym* is variously translated along the lines of “he has darkened the day,” “kinsmen of the Day (?)” (as a reference to Gapnu and Ugar), etc. Johannes de Moor, in particular, sees this expression as a depiction of the sky being covered or darkened.<sup>551</sup>

However, if one accepts that *ʿmm* is cognate with Arabic *ḡamma*, the implied meaning need not necessarily be that of a covered sky. To be sure, the Arabic root can have this significance (a fact corroborated by the existence of a derived lexeme *ḡamāma*, meaning “cloud”), but it can also have a more general sense of “to grieve (transitive),” “to cause to lament.”<sup>552</sup> If this line of translation is accepted, the possible references to Death and/or his minions become even more probable—a “day in grief” would, after all, be quite a fitting illustration of the situation implied in the Refrain of the Burning Sun. If the day is “grieved,” it is because of the power of Mot.<sup>553</sup>

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coloured,” in keeping with his rendering of the verb *šhrr* in the Refrain of the Burning Sun. de Moor 2012: 132 has “the wings of Manāt become brownish.”

<sup>551</sup> The idea of the darkened sky is found in de Moor 1971: 172, and a similar translation is followed e.g. by Wyatt (2002: 111-112). The translation “kinsmen of the Day (?)” is opted for by Smith and Pitard (2009: 365). Others interpret *ym* as the word for “sea”—e.g. Smith (*UNP*): 138, and, for that matter, Pardee 2009: 383. A survey of various translations is given in Loretz 2000: 276-277. As an alternative, it could theoretically also be possible to regard it as an epithet of Mot (parallel to “the son of darkness”), showing his greatness by calling him “the equal of Yamm”—thus connecting *ʿmm* to the rare Hebrew root *ʿmm* meaning “be equal to,” occurring in Ezek 31:8 and possibly 28:3. Such an epithet would fit well in the first attestation of the passage (in *CAT* 1.3), as it would create an artful bridge between Yamm and Mot as the main enemies of Baal in the text. It would also make sense for Baal to address Kothar-wa-Khasis in these terms and asking him to construct a palace, as it was the craftsman god who helped Baal to defeat Yamm by making his weapons; if Baal compares the dangerous drought wrought by the rising power of Mot (designated by the root *šhrr*) to the danger of Yamm, his wishes to gain a palace might seem much more pressing (the building of the palace and the sending out of the rains are connected with each other outright in *CAT* 1.4 V 6-11).

<sup>552</sup> Lane 1863: 2289: “it, or he grieved him; or caused him to mourn or lament, or to be sorrowful or sad or unhappy”. See also Müller 1969: 81, who associates the meanings connected to darkness and grief with each other when discussing Ezek 28:3.

<sup>553</sup> This sort of reading would resonate nicely with the astral oracular text *CAT* 1.78, one interpretation of which involves the day being “shamed,” combined with references to Shapshu and the destructive god Resheph/Rashpu—see above, n. 240. As noted there, and in Wikander 2013b, I do not necessarily see in that text a reference to a solar eclipse, but instead a more general and ambiguous statement of some (unclear) astronomical calamity involving the sun and Resheph. In this case, too, one would then find the “day” being grieved by Shapshu’s contact with a dangerous god.

Who or what is represented by the possible reference to an “exalted princess” (*rmt pr<sup>c</sup>t*) is equally unclear. It is possible, though hardly self-evident, to see this as denoting Shapshu. She is never referred to in this way in other contexts, but it remains a possibility, one which must, however, be used with caution.

If we are to accept *rmt pr<sup>c</sup>t* as some sort of reference to Shapshu, I believe that the usual interpretation (“the exalted princess”) may need some revision.<sup>554</sup> The reason for this is the syntax of the expression: adjectival attributes appearing in front of the word they describe are not very common in Ugaritic. Such constructions do occur in some places, to be sure, but only sporadically and when special emphasis is intended (classic examples are the standardized divine titles *aliyn b<sup>c</sup>l* and *ltpn il*).<sup>555</sup> Rather, it would perhaps seem more likely from a syntactical standpoint to regard the expression as containing a nominal predicate or possibly a stative perfect, thus “the princess [=Shapshu?] is exalted.” This would create an (admittedly extremely tenuous) translation of the following kind:

The son(s) of darkness rival(s)/veil(s)/grieve(s) the day,  
The son(s) of gloom/deathly shadow,  
(and/yet) the princess is exalted (= high in the heavens?).

Such an interpretation of the final half-verse could be construed as describing the same situation as the Refrain of the Burning Sun: the forces of Death have taken control of the “day” (that is, probably, the sky—which is expressly mentioned in the Refrain of the Burning Sun itself as being taken over by Mot), but despite the dark and gloomy connections of these forces, the scorching sun (note the use of *šhrr* later in the same context) is still high on the firmament of heaven.<sup>556</sup>

<sup>554</sup> Translations on the lines of “the exalted princess” can be found in Gibson 1978: 66, de Moor 1971: 164 and Wyatt 2002: 112. One should also note the interpretation of *rmt pr<sup>c</sup>t* as a term for “high peaks,” i.e. mountains (so, e.g., Pardee 2009: 383).

<sup>555</sup> Tropper 2000: 841-842. One may, of course, take the position that the present expression is just such a poetic divine epithet, but, as noted earlier, the phrase never occurs in any other context, and such a view is, to my mind, therefore difficult to sustain.

<sup>556</sup> The possible parallels with the Refrain of the Burning Sun can be further elaborated. One may note the following correspondences between it and the passage here discussed:

Refrain of the Burning Sun

*la šmm* (“the heavens are powerless”)  
*špš šhrrt* (“the sun is glowing”)  
*bn ḡlmt/ḡlmt* (“son[s] of darkness”)

Present passage

*‘mm ym* (“grieves the day”)  
*rmt pr<sup>c</sup>t* (“the princess is exalted”)  
*bn ilm mt* (“Divine Mot”)

If this interpretation of the passage is adopted, the lines would constitute an illustration of and literary elaboration on what is surely one of the most overt metaphorical paradoxes

This would make better sense when viewed in the larger context of the Cycle than any idea of the sky being in perpetual darkness (*à la* the Deir Alla inscription, on which further below), as the main problem is later shown to be that of parched furrows and comparable phenomena (the “burning of the olive” is even mentioned outright in connection with Baal’s descent into Mot’s gullet). But, as pointed out in footnote 90, there does not have to be a contradiction between an interpretation based on a sirocco-like clouding of the sky (following de Moor) and an intense, burning heat being associated with the sun. A totally *blackened* sky would, however, be hard to make sense of in the greater context of the Baal Cycle.

Of course, the dual nuances of the verb *ʿmm* would create a beautiful punning illustration of the paradoxical relationship between Shapshu and Mot: that Shapshu is a light-giving deity residing in heaven, while Mot is a “son of darkness” whose influence can reach her even when she is glaring in the heavens. He is, so to speak, “covering” her, though not “darkening” her. Yet, even if darkness of the heavens is really involved, there is evidence of such a paradoxical conception from the Hebrew Bible as well—an example is Isa 50:2-3, which lets YHWH dry up the ocean at the same time as he makes the sky dark. However, it must be remembered that all of these suggestions are speculative: we do *not* know for certain that Shapshu is the “exalted princess” or, indeed, if that even is what the expression means.

An opaque reference to the sun as guardian of the way to the realm of Mot may be present in CAT 1.4 VIII 2, at very the beginning of the column following the words discussed above. Here, the entrance to the netherworld is described as two twin mountains (just as in the ninth tablet of the Standard Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic). One of the mountains is given the difficult name *trmg*, which is probably a rendition of the name of the Hurrian sun god, Šimegi.<sup>557</sup> If this is indeed the case, the passage in which Baal sends his messengers involves a startling amount of references to the sun as being involved with death: first,

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in the worldview of the Baal Cycle: that of Mot ruling the presumably dark regions of the underworld (described as a “pit”, *mk*, in CAT 1.4 VIII 12 and 1.5 II 15), yet influencing the natural world through the manifestation of burning heat and the flaming sun.

This apparent contradiction almost begs for an elaboration, and the passage here under discussion may be an example of this—even though it must always be borne in mind that this reading of the lines (as indeed any reading of this most obscure of textual entities) must be taken with a grain of salt. If one follows this line of reasoning, the words paint a picture of the powers of darkness and Death ruling the day even though its “princess” Shapshu is in her culminating position, sending her burning rays over the land. The birds that appear to be mentioned lend credence to the idea that Mot or his minions are on center stage in this context: circling birds, especially scavenging ones, are of course a classic piece of imagery related to death. It is also notable that such a motif also occurs very prominently in the Epic of Aqhat, where the murderous agent Yatpan is dropped from a flock of *nšrm* (eagles or vultures).

<sup>557</sup> First suggested by Tsevat (1974).

there is the (possible) description of Shapshu as a “princess” who is high in the heavens, then the Hurrian solar deity occurs as a name of the mountain guarding the passageway into the netherworld, and finally comes one of the instances of the Refrain of the Burning Sun. A more concentrated demonstration of the multifaceted relationship between sun and death could hardly be asked for.

It may of course be asked why a passage on the manifestations of deathly power in the world would occur in the context of Baal sending his messengers to Kothar in *CAT* 1.3 VI, but such an interpretation may not be so far-fetched after all, as the very office for which the craftsman god is here commissioned is to make gifts for Athirat, imploring her to help get the approval from El for the construction of Baal’s palace, which is a direct necessity for the life-giving rainfalls to appear. The situation could very well be regarded as quite analogous to the one in which the Refrain of the Burning Sun appears when Anat intervenes on Baal’s behalf in trying to persuade El to give the go-ahead signal for the building project: the account of Mot’s power over the natural world provide a motivational thrust for the characters in order to make the building activity even more necessary. Such references also serve narratologically to connect the “palace” episode of *CAT* 1.3 and 1.4 with the “Baal-Mot” episode of 1.5-1.6. Mot does, after all, choose to attack Baal as a direct consequence of his house-building activities. The connection between these two motifs may become less enigmatic if one brings into mind what happens after Baal’s palace has been finished:

yph . hln . b bhtm .	He opens a window in the house,
urbt bqrb . hklm [.]	an opening in the midst of the palace.
yph . b’l . bdqt [.] rpt	Baal opens a rift in the clouds.
qlh . qdš [.] b’l [.] ytn	Baal sends out his sacred voice,
ytny . b’l . š[at .] špth	Baal repeats the issue of his lips

(*CAT* 1.4 VII 25-30)

This passage shows Baal sending out his storm voice, and, as a consequence one may assume, the fertility-bringing rains. It (and the further account of Baal’s power, following the finishing of his palace) appears immediately before Baal sends his messengers to Mot using the strange wording discussed in this Appendix.

### 6.3 The Deir Alla inscription

An uncertain but possible parallel to this conception of the relationship between the lord of the dark underworld and the power of drought is to be found in the 8<sup>th</sup> century Deir Alla inscription, recounting the terrible vision of the prophet Balaam. This is, of course, a text fraught with perhaps even greater philological difficulties than the Baal Cycle—extending even as far as the question of what language the text is written in (an archaic form of Aramaic or an aberrant



Canaanite dialect?), and one must therefore exercise caution in its interpretation. One parallel, however, suggests itself.

In the Deir Alla text, Balaam sees a vision during the night and thus gains insight into the discussions of a group of divine beings called Shadayin (*šdyn*). Upon waking up, he recounts what he has seen and heard, a message of doom concerning terrible natural catastrophes that are about to happen. In this passage, it appears that a female figure is addressed, possibly a goddess whose name begins with a *š* (various identities of this character have been proposed, including a solar deity *šmš*, which would of course be a counterpart of Shapshu, as well as *šgr*, a figure mentioned later on in the text, but there is of course no way of knowing the truth of this).<sup>558</sup> In the commonly accepted reading, this female figure is addressed by the Shadayin using the words *tpry skry šmyn*.<sup>559</sup>

One common interpretation of these words is to regard them as two feminine singular imperatives in a *hendiadyoin* construction meaning, approximately, “sew up and close the heavens.”<sup>560</sup> This line is followed by what appears to be a reference to the world becoming dark and gloomy (*bʿbky šm hšk wʾl ngh*, translated by Dijkstra as “In your clouds, darkness reigns with no glimmer”).<sup>561</sup>

The question now is what this “sewing up and closing of heaven” would mean. Hoftijzer found it very odd that such a concept should occur next to an expression concerning darkness and that it should be present in a context of natural disasters. Following Helga and Manfred Weippert (1982), he therefore rejected this translation and opted instead for viewing *skry* as a noun in the plural construct state, deriving the verb *tpry* not from *tpr* (“to sew”) but from *pr* (“to break”), and seeing the verbal form as an imperfect instead of an imperative, which would yield a translation along the lines of “you may break the bolts of heaven.”<sup>562</sup> He notes a large number of examples from the Hebrew Bible where the shutting of heaven means the holding back of rain. One most telling instance is Gen 8:2, where the actual root *skr* occurs, and another one is a text discussed elsewhere in this volume, 1 Kings 8:35-36 (see section 3.1.1.3).

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<sup>558</sup> One has to agree with Hackett (1984: 41) that it is “extremely frustrating” that the rest of the name is unpreserved! Caquot and Lemaire (1977: 196-197) argue the solar deity. *šgr* was proposed in Hoftijzer and van der Kooij 1976: 272-274.

<sup>559</sup> The reading *tpry* was first proposed by Caquot and Lemaire (1977: 197). Hoftijzer originally read the text differently but later agreed with them (see Hoftijzer 1991: 122). The reading *tpry* is also supported by Dijkstra (1995: 38), who, however, reconstructs an *ʾl* before the word and translates the sentence as “Do [not] burst open the latches of heaven!”).

<sup>560</sup> For translations of this type, see, for example, McCarter 1980: 51, 54 and Hackett 1984: 29, 42-43.

<sup>561</sup> Dijkstra 1995: 48. I have removed the intrusive line numbering of the article for the purposes of readability.

<sup>562</sup> Hoftijzer 1991: 122-123. The original suggestion is found in Weippert and Weippert 1982: 92, 103 (“Du magst die Riegel des Himmels zerbrechen”).

Yet, given what has been seen above concerning the paradoxical role of covering the heavens despite the clear role of drought in the Ugaritic story, a similar explanation could well apply to the Deir Alla inscription. The text could indeed be talking of the goddess “sewing the heavens shut,” meaning that no rain would fall—one of the greatest natural disasters the ancient Northwest Semitic cultures knew.<sup>563</sup> Such an interpretation (that the danger spoken of in the Deir Alla text refers to a great drought) was also put forth by Alexander Rofé, and (following him) by Zeron.<sup>564</sup>

The accompanying references to darkness make sense in the context of what is known from Ugarit: the dangerous, chthonic deities do rule the land of darkness, and when their influence is spread to the land of the living, the heavens shut and no rain falls. The possibility that the goddess referred to in the Deir Alla text could be the solar deity herself, to be sure, is highly alluring in this context, but this is, of course, something we do not know. Again, I would like to refer to the views put forth by Breytenbach (1971) regarding the connection between drought and darkness in the Hebrew Bible. A very clear instance of this conception is found in Jer 4:28, which speaks of the sky growing dark (*qādar*) and the earth mourning/drying up (*‘ābal*) at the same time. Such a conception does in my mind not conflict with the role of the sun as sender of drought. As I hope to have shown, it is specifically the sun in its chthonic aspect that is connected with drought.

There are further indications in the Deir Alla text that a conception similar to the one in the passages on the “son(s) of darkness” from the Baal Cycle may be in evidence. For one thing, one of the many examples given in the inscription of the world being turned “upside down,” so to speak, involves birds, which seem also to appear in the Baal Cycle passage, albeit in another context.

The terrifying vision of the Deir Alla text is in many ways a picture of a world the order of which has been stood on its head. The swallow battles the eagle, the rich walk in poverty, etc. The darkness and the sewing shut of the heavens should be viewed in this perspective. A similar conception may, I propose, be in evidence in the “son of darkness” passage from the Baal Cycle. The sun is high in the heavens, and yet the son of darkness rules and influences the sky. The paradox of drought and darkness is addressed.

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<sup>563</sup> Hoftijzer (1991: 123) instead holds that the text implies that the “mass of water held back by [the bolts of heaven] will not be restrained anymore” and compares with the “bolt” holding the waters back in Job 38:10. That is, however, a reference to the chaotic sea and not at all to the life-giving rains of the heavens, which makes the comparison less compelling.

<sup>564</sup> Rofé 1979: 66, n. 27; Zeron 1991: 190.

## 7. Abbreviations

AB	The Anchor Bible
AHw	Wolfram von Soden, <i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch: unter Benutzung des lexikalischen Nachlasses von Bruno Meissner (1868-1947)</i> . 3 Vols. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz 1965-1981.
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> ed., ed. James B. Pritchard. New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1969
AOAT	Alter Orient und altes Testament
ASTI	<i>Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BAM	Franz Köcher, <i>Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen</i> (6 vols.). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter 1963
BHK	<i>Biblia Hebraica</i> (Kittel)
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
BHSApp	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> critical apparatus
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAD	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> , ed. Ignace J. Gelb <i>et al.</i> Chicago: Oriental Institute 1956-
CAT second edition:	Dietrich, Manfred, Loretz, Oswald and Sanmartín, Joaquín, <i>The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places (KTU: second, enlarged edition)</i> . Abhandlungen zur Literatur Alt-Syrien-Palästinas und Mesopotamiens 8. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag 1995
third edition:	Dietrich, Manfred, Loretz, Oswald and Sanmartín, Joaquín, <i>Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani und anderen Orten/The Cuneiform</i>

- Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places: Third, Enlarged Edition, KTU<sup>3</sup>. AOAT 360/1. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag 2013*
- CDG                      Leslau, Wolf, *Comparative Dictionary of Ge'ez (Classical Ethiopic)*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz 1987
- ConBOT                  Coniectanea Biblica: Old Testament Series
- COS                      *The Context of Scripture : Canonical Compositions, Monumental Inscriptions and Archival Documents from the Biblical World. Vol. 1: Canonical compositions from the biblical world*, ed. William W. Hallo. Leiden: Brill 1997
- DDD                      *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Karel van de Toorn, Bob Becking and Pieter W. van der Horst. Leiden: Brill 1999
- DUL                      Olmo Lete, Gregorio del and Sanmartín, Joaquín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*, 2 vols., translated by Wilfred G. E. Watson. Handbuch der Orientalistik 1: 67. Leiden: Brill 2003
- EIET (Telepinu)        Slocum, Jonathan and Kimball, Sara E., *Early Indo-European Texts, Hittite: The Telepinus "Vanishing God" Myth (Anatolian Mythology)*, <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/lrc/ietexts/hit/hit-2-X.html> (updated September 27, 2013. Accessed April 9, 2014).
- FAT                      Forschungen zum Alten Testament
- GAT                      Grundrisse zum Alten Testament
- HALOT                  Koehler, Ludwig and Baumgartner, Walter, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, rev. by Walter Baumgartner and Johann Jakob Stamm, translated and edited under the supervision of M.E.J Richardson. Leiden: Brill 2001
- HSS                      Harvard Semitic Studies
- IEJ                        *Israel Exploration Journal*
- JAOS                      *Journal of the American Oriental Society*

<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JCS</i>	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>KAI</i>	Donner, H. and Röllig W., <i>Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften: mit einem Beitrag von O. Rössler</i> . 3 vols. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz 1962-1964.
<i>KBo</i>	<i>Keilschrift-texte aus Boghazköi</i>
<i>KTU</i>	See <i>CAT</i>
<i>KUB</i>	<i>Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi</i>
<i>LTR</i>	Pardee, Dennis, <i>Les Textes Rituels. Ras Shamra-Ugarit XII</i> , 2 vols., Paris: Recherche sur les Civilisations 2000
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
OTL	Old Testament Library
<i>RCU</i>	Pardee, Dennis, ed. Lewis, Theodore J., <i>Ritual and Cult at Ugarit</i> . SBL Writings from the Ancient World 10. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature 2002
SBLRBS	Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study
RS	Ras Shamra
<i>SEÅ</i>	<i>Svensk exegetisk årsbok</i>
<i>SEL</i>	<i>Studi epigrafici e linguistici</i>
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah

- TDOT* Botterweck, G. Johannes and Ringgren, Helmer (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (various translators), Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1974-
- ThZ* *Theologische Zeitschrift*
- TUAT* *Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments* (3 main vols.). Gütersloh: Mohn.
- TUDB* Cunchillos, Jesus-Luis, Vita, Juan-Pablo and Zamora, José-Ángel, *The Texts of the Ugaritic Data Bank*, 4 vols., Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press 2003
- UBL* Ugaritisch-Biblische Literatur
- UF* *Ugarit-Forschungen*
- Ug. 5* Schaeffer, Claude F.A. and Nougayrol, Jean, *Ugaritica 5: Nouveaux textes accadiens, hourrites et ugaritiques des archives et bibliothèques privées d'Ugarit*. Bibliothèque archéologique et historique / Institut français d'archéologie de Beyrouth 80; Mission de Ras Shamra 16. Paris.
- UNP* *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, ed. Simon B. Parker. SBL Writings from the Ancient World 9. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press 1997
- VT* *Vetus Testamentum*
- VTSup* Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
- ZAW* *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

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*Drought, Death, and the Sun in Ugarit and Ancient Israel*  
*A Philological and Comparative Study*  
by Ola Wikander

The goal of Wikander's study is to elucidate the interconnected motifs of drought and death in the Bronze Age cuneiform alphabetic texts from Ugarit in Syria and the survival of these motifs as they appear in the world and text of the Hebrew Bible.

The sun and its heat are two of the most universal symbols known to humanity; the sun can be a giver of life, but its hot, scorching rays can also be associated with drought and the forces of destruction. The Ugaritic texts portray the sun goddess, Shapshu, as the sender of terrible drought; she manifests the rule of the god of death through her burning rays. The daily passage of the sun below the horizon also connects her with the land of the dead, and this idea is conflated with that of the destructive drought-sun into the image of a "sun of death." Wikander discusses the philology of these passages (especially in the Baal Cycle) and follows the motif of solar drought and its connections with the netherworld into the literature of ancient Israel, noting transformations of the motif when influenced by the rising prominence of YHWH.

In the Hebrew Bible, the study traces terminology that refers to the ancient motifs of drought, death, and the sun in texts such as 1 Kings 17–18, Jeremiah 14, Hosea 13, and Malachi 3, as well as passages from the Psalms, using both linguistic and religio-historical methods. The transformations of these motifs indicate changes that Israelite religion went through as it gained its own identity within a greater Northwest Semitic context.

The dissertation on which this work is based has been awarded prizes by The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters–History and Antiquities and the Royal Society of Letters at Lund.



Eisenbrauns  
POB 275  
Winona Lake, IN 46590  
[www.eisenbrauns.com](http://www.eisenbrauns.com)

ISBN-13: 978-1-57506-827-5



9 781575 068275