THE CANAANITE GOD EL

THE CANAANITE GOD EL
HIS ROLE IN UGARITIC LITERATURE

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS:

An examination of the Ugaritic texts which contain references to the Canaanite god El, and an analysis of the attributes accorded him in this literature, to demonstrate that there is not sufficient evidence to substantiate the theory that El was conceptualized, in early Canaanite thought, as a moral and rational deity.

PREFACE

The catalyst for this thesis was Whitehead's theory of the development of ideas. It was my original intention to show that a speculative suggestion of the Canaanites was appropriated by Israel where it developed into one of the great ideas of mankind. During the course of my research, writing, and revising, I found my original intention to be, for the present, too ambitious. I decided, therefore, to restrict the thesis to a study of the attributes of the Canaanite god, El. I am still intrigued by Whitehead's theory, but have serious doubts whether it can be proven without its a priori acceptance. Because the theory has been in the back of my mind, but was not incorporated into the thesis, I have outlined it in Appendix I.

I wish to express my appreciation to those who assisted me in the preparation of my thesis--to my supervisor, Dr. A. E. Combs, for his guidance and criticism; to Mr. Israel Tzvi Abusch, for illuminating a number of difficult passages; to my fellow students in the Ancient Near Eastern field who have freely shared with me of the fruits of their insights and research, particularly Peter Craigie, Robert Forrest, Yoshi Masaki, Miss Joyce Rilett, and Miss Jean Angi; and to my wife, Jean, for her help in the preparation of the manuscript.

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

ANET	J. B. Pritchard, ed. Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament; 2nd ed. rev. (Princeton University Press, 1955).
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research.
CRAIBL	Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres.
ETL	Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses.
HTR	Harvard Theological Review.
IDB	Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962).
IEJ	Israel Exploration Journal.
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society.
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature.
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies.
JPESB	Jewish Palestine Exploration Society Bulletin.
JRH	Journal of Religious History.
JSS	Journal of Semitic Studies.
JTS	Journal of Tehological Studies.
RHR	Revue de l'Histoire des Religions.
UH	C. H. Gordon, Ugaritic Handbook (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1947).
UT	C. H. Gordon, Ugaritic Textbook (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965).
VT	Vetus Testamentum.
VTS	Vetus Testamentum Supplement.
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft.

INTRODUCTION

The thesis to be explored and defended in this study is that El, the high god of the Canaanite pantheon, was accorded a number of ethical attributes in Ugaritic literature, but that these were insignificant to the fulfillment of his role in myth and legend. If this proposition can be demonstrated, some criteria will be provided for the investigation of an exceedingly more complex problem--the nature of the contribution of Canaan to Israel.

A number of scholars have advanced the theory that in some way El was the Canaanite contribution to Israel. F. Lokkegaard has commented that the Israelites fused the Canaanite El with their violent and capricious god, Yahweh, enabling him to become "the expression of all fatherliness, being mild and stern at the same time."[1] E. C. B. MacLaurin contends that the Hebrew Yahweh and the Canaanite El are the same deity.[2] It is his theory that a conflict took place between Baal and El in Ugarit and Baal triumphed, but in Israel El triumphed and Baal disappeared.[3] In developing this thesis, MacLaurin

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[1]F. Lokkegaard, "A Plea for El, the Bull, and Other Ugaritic Miscellanies," Studia Orientalia Ioanni Pedersen septuazenario dicata (Copenhague: Einar Munsgaard, 1953), p. 232.

[2]E. C. B. MacLaurin, "The Development of the Idea of God in Ancient Canaan," JRH, II, No. 1-4 (1962-63), pp. 277-294.

[3]Ibid., p. 283. MacLaurin also connects the demise of

makes the assumption that in Ugarit El was the moral, rational god.[1] Eissfeldt does not identify the two deities, but proposes that when the Hebrews migrated to Canaan Yahweh assumed the attributes of El.[2] Dussaud holds essentially the same view, but gives Yahweh an added advantage for appropriating El's attributes by his theory that Yahweh was a son of El.[3]

The first step in evaluating the validity of any of these propositions, or in offering alternatives,[4] ought to be

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Ugarit with the triumph of Baal. "Ugarit died within one hundred and fifty years of the completion of the Ugaritic texts whilst Israel went on to become the mother of Judaism, Christianity and Islam." Ibid., p. 284. Albright, while noting the decadence of the Canaanite society, attributes the death of Ugarit to the Sea Peoples who devastated the coast of Syria and Palestine around the end of the thirteenth century B.C. "The Role of the Canaanites in the History of Civilization," The Bible and the Ancient Near East, ed. by G. Ernest Wright (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), pp. 455-456.

[1]MacLaurin, op. cit., p. 283.

[2]Otto Eissfeldt, "El and Yahweh," JSS, I (1956), pp. 25-37. The most important attributes taken over by Yahweh from El, according to Eissfeldt were his kingship and creatorship. "Beside some traits of El which were taken over by Yahweh, the latter appropriated the function of Creator of the world and King of the gods, which according to the evidence of the Ugaritic texts are especially peculiar to El, and which are generally assumed to have been originally alien to Yahweh." Ibid., p. 36.

[3]Rene Dussaud, "Yahwé, Fils de El," Syria, XXXIV (1957), pp. 232-242. Dussaud notes that attributes of both El and Baal eventually were incorporated into the Hebrew conception of Yahweh. "Le monothéisme tel que l'ont institué les Prophètes est le résultat d'un syncrétisme qhi a concentré en Yahwé les prérogatives de El et de Baʿal." Ibid., p. 238.

[4]An alternative theory, which the present writer intends to examine in a subsequent study is outlined in Appendix I.

an examination of El's role in Canaanite literature in order to determine which of the attributes assigned him were necessary for the fulfillment of his functions as the high god. It is the purpose of this thesis to make such an examination. The first chapter of the study consists of a discussion of the passages in Ugaritic literature where El plays a prominent part. In the second chapter the various epithets commonly ascribed to El are examined. Some of these epithets indicate attributes which are related to the fulfillment of his role in myth and legend while others are indicative of irrelevant attributes. Moral and rational attributes fall into the second category.

The primary sources used in the thesis are the mythological and legendary texts from Ras Shamra, the site of ancient Ugarit. Until the publication of these texts by Ch. Virolleaud, which were discovered quite by accident in 1928 when a Syrian peasant ploughed into a Mycenaean tomb at Ras Shamra, our major source of knowledge about Canaanite religion was the Old Testament.[1] The impression of Canaanite

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[1]The other basic source for knowledge of Canaanite mythology, before the Ugaritic discoveries, was Philo Byblious' account of the "Phoenician History" of Sanchuniathon. Scholars have been dubious as to the accuracy of this history. The Ugaritic texts, however, have shown it to be more reliable than previously thought. Patrick D. Miller, Jr. states "Philo's history has been vindicated and shown to be far more reliable than ever suspected, having been based on quite ancient and authentic sources." "El the Warrior," HTR, LX (1967), p. 414. Although Philo has been vindicated to some extent, Pope warns that "the use of Philo of Byblos and other late sources for the elucidation of the Ugaritic myths should

religion given in the Biblical sources is not a favorable one. The numerous references in the Law, the Deuteronomic history, and the Prophets are polemical castigations of the fertility cult. The bulk of the literary texts from Ras Shamra are myths of the fertility cult. The unfavorable description of the Biblical writers is at many points confirmed by this material, but caution should be taken not to interpret the literature by negative impressions received from the Biblical condemnations of Canaanite religion. With the discovery of the Ras Shamra material it is necessary to regard the Old Testament as of secondary importance in the study of Canaanite culture. These texts of ancient Ugarit provide first-hand access to the Canaanite mythology of Baal, against whose worship the Hebrews reacted so strongly.[1] Also of interest are the references to other deities of the Canaanite pantheon, some of which are alluded to in the Old Testament, but whose attributes and nature, and sometimes

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be made with extreme caution." El in the Ugaritic Texts (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955), p. 5.

[1]A. Van Selms notes that the Old Testament polemic is directed against the cult of Baal, and that harmonious relationships may have existed with El. He ennumerates seventeen instances from the book of Genesis of positive relations with the Canaanites, and only one negative instance (Gen. 15: 13-16) which he judges to reflect the attitude of the redactor. His explanation of these data is that in the time of the patriarchs the religion of the Canaanites did not constitute a threat. There is also no reference to Baal in this early literature. "The Canaanites in the Book of Genesis," Studies in the Book of Genesis (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958), pp. 182-214.

even existence, had previously been shrouded in mystery.[1] Such a deity is El.[2] He is acknowledged in the mythology and legend from Ras Shamra as the head of the pantheon. He does not figure as prominently in the literature as a number of other deities, particularly Baal. This fact has produced considerable speculation that a bitter conflict had taken place between El and Baal in which the latter had usurped for all practical purposes the place of the older god. It is a crucial problem which will be discussed in the examination of the relevant texts. It is sufficient for the present to acknowledge that Baal was the most popular deity of the Can-

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[1] For discussions of Canaanite deities see Mitchell J. Dahood's article, "Ancient Semitic Deities in Syria and Palestine," Le Antiche Divinita Semitiche (Rome, 1948), pp. 65-94; and also "Der Mythologie der Ugariter and Phöniger" by M. H. Pope and W. Rollig in H. W. Haussig's Wörterbuch der Mythologie (Stuttgart s.a.), pp. 219-312.

[2] Pope has noted that the Ugaritic texts have finally cleared up the long-standing doubt whether ʾil was the proper name of a specific god or merely an appelation. El in the Ugaritic Texts, p. 3. Before the Ras Shamra discoveries Kittel expressed the opinion that the term was appelative. "We must insist, therefore, that before the first millenium the word ʾel was used on non-Biblical Canaanite soil to signify God and the Godhead generally, but not to designate a definite, individual god, while in Israel Elohim or El was very commonly used as a proper name for Yahweh." The Religion of the People of Israel (New York: Macmillan, 1925), p. 22. Oesterley and Robinson in their discussion of the references to ʾel and ʾelim in the Old Testament submit the theory that these were local gods, which were developed from animistic spirits. Hebrew Religion: Its Origin and Development, second ed. (London: S.P.C.K., 1937), p. 52. Acknowledgement is made in this work to the Ras Shamra El, but no connection is noted. Ibid., p. 51. One wonders if they would have reached the same conclusions if the Ras Shamra material had been available when they first formulated their hypothesis.

aanite pantheon. This fact, however, does not establish that he was considered the most powerful. It is proposed in this thesis that El was regarded, in Ugaritic Literature, as the supreme head of the pantheon. His attributes of power and authority, necessary to the maintenance of that position, are indicated in the texts, but there is no conclusive evidence that he was regarded as a moral and rational deity.

The texts of the tablets from Ras Shamra were originally published in transliteration and French translation by Charles Virolleaud between 1929 and 1943 in Syria. The entire corpus of the alphabetic cuneiform texts from Ugarit, published prior to 1965, is available in C. H. Gordon's Ugaritic Textbook.[1] Gordon has also made an English translation of the epical narratives and some of the more important prose selections in his Ugaritic Literature.[2] This material is also available, in whole or in part, in the translations by Ginsberg, Driver, Gaster, and Gray.[3] Gordon's translation[4] is used in this thesis and is compared on questionable

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[1]C. H. Gordon, Ugaritic Textbook (Rome 2: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965). This supplements his previous three works, Ugaritic Grammar (1940), Ugaritic Handbook (1947), and Ugaritic Manual (1955).

[2]C. H. Gordon, Ugaritic Literature: A Comprehensive Translation of the Poetic and Prose Texts (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1949).

[3]H. L. Ginsberg, "Ugaritic Myths, Epics, and Legends," in ANET, pp. 129-155; G. R. Driver, Canaanite Myths and Legends (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clarke, 1956); T. H. Gaster, Thespis, rev. ed. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966); John Gray, The Legacy of Canaan, second rev. ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965).

[4]Gordon's text treats the material objectively, as

passages with the interpretations of other translators. As is the case of every work done in the field, the conclusions reached in this thesis can be offered only as tentative possibilities. The limitations imposed by the fragmentary nature of the primary sources, the question of their genre, and the problems related to sequence, translation, and interpretation, leave no room for dogmatic assertions or final solutions.[1]

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he himself notes in the foreward to his translation: "I have no theories to defend, nor would I wittingly take liberties with the texts." Ugaritic Literature, p. x.

[1]See Appendix II for a fuller discussion of some of the more serious problems of Ugaritic studies.

CHAPTER I

EL'S ROLE IN UGARITIC LITERATURE

When ethical qualities were associated with deity in the literature of Ugarit, these were attributes of El. To evaluate the significance of this fact, it is necessary to discuss the question of El's place in the pantheon. The view has been advanced on the one hand that El was no more than the titular head of the gods--"at times quite otiose", to use Albright's phrase[1]--and on the other hand that El was the real governing power who acted behind the scenes, controlling the events, and Baal, Anath and Mot were little more than marionettes in his hands.[2] An examination of the passages where El is active, or referred to in more than a superficial way, will reveal that there is evidence to support both views, but not enough to establish with certainty either one. The information about El, provided for us in the texts, is extremely sparse.[3] It is remarkable that such an abundance

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[1] W.F. Albright, Review of M. H. Pope, El in the Ugaritic Texts, JBL LXXV (1956), p. 256.

[2] F. Løkkegaard, "A Plea for El, the Bull," John Gray proposes that El's province was social relationships rather than nature, and therefore is less active in the Baal-myth. But even here, he is acknowledged as the final authority. "Social Aspects of Canaanite Religion," p. 179.

[3] The number of references to El, the head of the Ugaritic pantheon, cannot be stated with precision as the

of conflicting theory has been erected on so small a foundation. The references to El in Ugaritic Literature are not so voluminous to forbid a careful study of each one of them to see what is said or implied about El's position and role in the Ugaritic pantheon. There are several types of literature which should not be confused with one another. The poetic texts include myth and legend. The Baal cycle will be considered as a whole. GORDON UH 52, which is also a mythological text, but obviously cut from an altogether different material than the Baal cycle, will be treated independently, as will the legends of Kret and Aqhat. Mention will also be made to some unpublished mythological texts which have relevance to the study. The prose texts are largely administrative and diplomatic, but there are a few religious texts that provide information about El which will come within the scope of the investigation.

Ugaritic word *el* or *il* has the meaning of "god" as well as "chief god". literally, then "El" means The God. (See paragraph 163 in Gordon's glossary, UT, p. 357). In numerous passages, where Gordon translates *el*, and particularly the plural form *elm*, by "god", "gods", "assembly of the gods," etc., Driver (see Canaanite Myths and Legends) uses the proper noun "El", e.g.

	Driver	Gordon
51:II:8	O El, of the king	O god(s) of king(ship)
51:IV:51	"Now there is not a house for Baal like El . . ."	"Lo there is no house unto Baal like the gods."
67:II:12	"Hail, Mot son of El!"	"Hail, O god Mot!"
49:I:3	. . .brother-in-law unto El.	. . .a brother-in-law to the gods.

The Baal Cycle

El is depicted as the father of the gods in GORDON UH 129 (III AB,C), which is the first text of the Baal cycle according to Gordon's sequence. The tablet on which the text is inscribed is so fragmentary that a connected translation is not possible. The text does reveal that El is being petitioned, at his abode at the sources of the Two Rivers, for permission to build a house for Yam. The identity of the petitioner is not known,[1] but the impression is conveyed that Yam is granted his request. But although Yam's kingship is established his sovereignty is limited. He is a vassal of El, and his authority can be removed at El's discretion.

She lifts her voice
And (shouts):
"[Hea]r! - - - - -
Thor-El, thy father, [ ]
To the presence of Prince Sea
[Judge Riv]er
Will not Thor-El, thy father, hear thee?
Will he not remove [the props of thy throne]?

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[1] T. H. Gaster identifies the messenger as Ashtar, which in his opinion is a preferable interpretation to that of Virolleaud who suggests it was Koshar-wa-Khasis. Thespis, p. 135. The identity of the speaker is not relevant to the validity of the point in question.

[Nor up]set [the chair] of thy kingship?
Nor break the scepter of thy government?"[1]

This warning to Yam, coupled with the fact that Yam's messenger took the trouble to journey to El's abode to make the request, supports the view that to the writer of this particular episode El had absolute power and authority among the gods.[2]

El is pictured in the highest place of authority in the assembly of the gods described in GORDON UH 137 (IIIAB,B). This text tells of the rivalry between Yam and Baal. Yam, who has been granted kingship arrogantly demands that Baal be turned over to him. El grants the request and Baal is handed over to Yam as his slave. The text opens with Yam's instructions to his messengers who are to take his request before the Convocation of the gods.

[At the feet of El] do not fall
Do not prostrate yourselves before the
Convocation [of the Assembly]
But declare your information!
And say to Thor, [my] father, [El]:
[Declare to the Convocation] of the Assembly:

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[1]GORDON UH 129:15-18. Quotations of the poetic material are taken from Gordon's translation in Ugarit and Minoan Crete (New York:Norton Library, 1967), which is essentially the same as his translation in Ugaritic Literature with a few minor changes and corrections.

[2]Marvin H. Pope draws the opposite conclusion from this text. His acknowledgement of Yam's kingship is an indication that El has become a deus otiosus. El in the Ugaritic Texts, p. 93. The identification of El's abode at the Sources of the Two Rivers supports the position that El had once ruled in heaven but was deposed and banished to the netherworld. Ibid., p. 94. If El had been banished, as Pope contends, why should it be necessary for Yam to seek his permission to build a house?

"The message of Sea, your lord,
Of your master Ju[dge River]:
"Give up, O Gods, him whom you harbor
Him whom the multitude harbor!
Give up Baal [and his partisans]
Dagon's Son, so that I may inherit his gold!""[1]

Baal is seated beside El at the banquet table when the emissaries of Yam arrive. According to Gordon's translation, they follow their instructions and do not prostrate themselves, but declare their information standing erect.

They say to Thor, his father, El
"The message of Sea, your lord,
Of your master, Judge River:
"Give up, O gods, him whom ye harbor
Him whom the [multitudes] harbor!
Give up Baal and his partisans
Dagon's Son, so that I may inherit his gold!""
[And] Thor, his father, El, [replies]:
"Baal is thy slave, O Sea!
Baal is thy slave, [O S]ea!
Dagon's Son is thy captive!
He will bring thy tribute like the gods
He will bring [ ]
Like the deities, thy gift!"[2]

At these words Baal is infuriated and attempts to slay the messengers. The pronouncement of El is not questioned, and Baal is restrained by Anath and Astarte.

But Prince Baal is infuriated.
[A knife he tak]es in the hand
A dagger in the right hand.
To smite the lads he fl[ourishes them/it].
[Ana]th seizes his right hand

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[1]GORDON UH 137:15-18.

[2]GORDON UH 137:33-38.

Astarte seizes his left hand;
"How [canst thou smite the messengers of Sea],
[The emis]saries of Judge River?
The messengers - - - - - - - [ ]
[ ]messengers on the shoulders,
Word of his lord and [ ]".[1]

Scholars are not agreed as to what this particular passage tells us about El. Disregarding the morality of El's action in turning Baal over to Yam, it seems obvious that El was in control of the situation. When El speaks the word, Baal becomes the prisoner of Yam, and even the two goddesses, who take Baal's part on other occasions comply with El's decision. Pope sees the episode as an example of double-dealing on the part of El, who, in the face of Baal's ambition senses how precarious is his position, so he sets up Prince Sea as his champion and pins his hopes on him for the defeat of Baal.[2] He also finds evidence in the text that the events it describes took place before El was banished to the netherworld.

> Since the passage IIIAB B 19-31 is the only one in the Ugaritic texts which represents El as presiding over the assembly of the gods, and since the place of this meeting is designated in terms different from the regular stereotype description of El's infernal sea, we venture to suggest that this episode transpires while El rules in the supernal regions, on his holy mountain, before he was vanquished and banished to the infernal regions.[3]

The fact that Yam's messengers do not bow down before El has also been interpreted as a sign of El's otiosity and his in-

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[1]GORDON UH 137:39-43.

[2]El in the Ugaritic Texts, p. 93. [3]Ibid., p. 95.

creasing inability to command the respect of the gods. Not too much should be deduced from this particular event, however, for a philological difficulty makes it impossible to be certain whether the messengers did in fact refrain from bowing.[1] Hence, Driver translates the passage

> Afterwards the messengers of Yam, the embassy of judge Nahar, arrived; they [verily] fell down at the feet of El, verily bowed down (in) the full convocation;[2]

According to Gaster's translation[3] the messengers prostrate themselves before El. Ginsberg follows Gordon on this point.[4] Because of the textual ambiguity it is not known whether the messengers bowed or did not bow, and any arguments based on this incident are therefore quite worthless. The bare facts from the passage which comment on El's authority are that El turned Baal over to the messengers of Yam and his action was not challenged.

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[1]There is confusion because the Ugaritic particles l and al have a variety of meanings, including both "not", and "verily, surely". For the various meanings of l see UT, paragraphs 1337-1340, p. 425, for al see UT, paragraph 162, p. 357.

[2]Driver, Canaanite Myths and Legends, p. 81. In a footnote he offers as an alternative reading "bowed not down."

[3]Thespis, pp. 156, 158.

[4]ANET, p. 130. "At El's feet they do [not] fall down."

An important reference to El is found in the Anath text (V AB) where Anath, Baal's consort and sister, makes violent demands of El that a palace be built for Baal. The text begins with a description of a divine banquet. This is followed by an account of Anath's blood-thirsty rampage in which she nearly destroys all of mankind. In column III she boasts of some of her past victories over Baal's enemies, which include "El's darling, Sea," the "crooked serpent," "Mot, the calf of El," "Fire, the bitch of the gods."[1] The literary effect of Anath's conquests, past and present, is the building up of a climax which is reached with Anath's intercession for Baal before El that a house be built for him. On hearing that Baal has no house like the other gods, Anath declares:

"Thor-El, [my father], will reconsider
Reconsider for my sake and his
[Lest I] trample him like a lamb to the earth
[Make] his gray hair [run] with blood
The gray of his beard [with gore]
Unless a house be given to Baal like the gods

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[1]GORDON UH ᶜnt: III: 36-44.

[Yea a cour]t like the sons of Asherah."[1]

After speaking these words she speeds to the abode of El, confronts him in his innermost chamber and makes her demands.

And the Virgin Anath replies:
"[ ] O gods [ ]
Do [not re]joice!
Do not rejoice! [ ]
Be not glad - - - [ ]
In the greatness of - - - - -
[ ] thy head.
I shall make [thy] gray hair run [with blood]
The gray of thy beard with gore."
El replies
Out of the seven rooms
Out of the eight chambers:
"I know thee, my daughter, that thou art impetuous
That there is no forbearance among goddesses.
What dost thou wish, O Virgin Anath?"
And the Virgin Anath replies:
"Thy word, El, is wise;
Thy wisdom, unto eternity
Lucky life, thy word.
Our king is Aliyan Baal
Our ruler, there is none above him.
Let both of us drain his chalice
Both of us drain his cup!"
Loudly cries Thor-El, her father,
El, the king who brought her into being:
There cry Asherah and her sons,
The goddess and the band of her brood:
"Lo Baal has no house like the gods
Nor a court like the sons of Asherah:
The dwelling of El
The shelter of his sons
The dwelling of Lady Asherah of the Sea
The dwelling of [Pidr]ay, girl of light,
[The shelter] of Tallay, [girl] of rain,
The dwelling [of Arṯay, girl of Yʿbdr].[2]

This passage does little to enhance the dignity of El.

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[1]GORDON UH ʿnt. pl. vi:V:8-11.

[2]GORDON UH ʿnt, pl. vi:V:26-50.

That he is not taken seriously as chief of the gods is suggested by at least three facts. First, there is Anath's threat to make his gray hair run with blood. Pope calls this threat of violence to El's person "the crowning indignity of his old age."[1] Second, is the fact that Anath finds El in the eighth chamber, where according to Gordon and Cassuto, he was hiding from her wrath.[2] Third, is Anath's declaration that Baal is king and that there is none above him.

Dussaud has attempted to exonerate El with the proposition that Anath's words to El that she would bash in his aged head did not constitute a threat but rather her offer to regenerate him through a blood bath similar to the one she had given herself earlier in the text.[3] Pope is

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[1]Pope, op. cit., p. 34.

[2]Gordon, Ugarit and Minoan Crete, p. 56, n. 21. Cassuto shares the view that El is terrified of his daughter. Commenting on line 18 he states: האל הזקן פחד מפני כחו התקיפה והאיומה: הוא נשא את קולו ויזעק ובכה. (The old god is terrified in the face of the assault and the threat of his daughter; He lifts up his voice and cries and weeps). U. Cassuto, "The Innermost Chambers of El in the Ugaritic Epics" (Hebrew). JPESB, XIII (1946-47), p. 76.

[3]Dussaud explains Anath's intent in changing the color of El's beard as follows:

Si l'on reconnu l'exactitude de notre explication au sujet de ʿAnat se régénérant dans le sang, on comprenda qu'elle pratique la même operation sur El. Bien que le texte n'y insiste pas, du moins dans les passages conservés, il faut se la représenter les mains et le corps couverts du sang le plus efficace, celui des jeunes gens qu'elle a sacrifiés; elle en barbouillera la barbe perdra sa blancheur, le dieu sera rajeuni." "Les combats sanglants de ʿAnat et le pouvoir universal de El (VAB et VIAB)," RHR, CXVIII (1938), p. 151.

correct in dismissing this interpretation as being out of the question on the basis that Anath's declaration that she would "smite him like a lamb to the ground," could not be reasonably understood as anything else but a threat.[1]

El can be defended against the charge of senility on more substantial arguments than the straw at which Dussaud grasps. The main theme of the passage is not the senility of El, but the fierceness of Anath. This is illustrated first of all by her massacre of mankind and her bath in the blood and gore of her victims, and secondly by her boasting of the rivals of Baal she has destroyed. It would be a distinct anti-climax after these escapades to utter such threats against a powerless, senile, and otiose deity. But if El is in fact the high god, who has the power to bind and loose the kingship of Baal, the narrative works to a genuine climax. The fierceness and audacity of Anath is demonstrated by the fact that she will not be thwarted in her pursuits, neither by armies of men nor by the strongest of gods. And she does not hesitate to threaten even the person of the high god himself. And if El does seem to cower a bit before her demands, this only adds to the desired effect.[2]

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[1]Pope, op. cit., p. 28.

[2]A similar literary device is used in the story of Abraham's bargaining with Yahweh for the city of Sodom (Genesis 18:22-33). It could be argued from this episode that Yahweh is capricious and weak-willed. The intended effect, however, is to impress upon the reader the greatness of

Another point that is not clear from the Anath text is whether El actually did grant Anath's request. El's reply is not included in the extant portion of the text. It is Gordon's opinion that El was sufficiently intimidated by his daughter to authorize the building of Baal's temple.[1] Cassuto, on the other hand, questions that Anath's request was granted, and proposes that El hesitated to give his consent.[2] If El did in fact refuse Anath's demand, this would explain the need for a subsequent visit, with the same mission, by Asherat in GORDON UH 51 (IIAB).[3]

The second part of the Anath text (frequently designated VIAB) is so fragmentary that a connected translation is not possible. From the readible portions can be discerned a dialogue between El and Koshar-wa-Khasis in which El gives his permission to build a house. It is in this poorly preserved tablet that the reference to the god Yw is found.

Abraham who withstood even Yahweh in his demands for righteousness.

[1] Ugarit and Minoan Crete, p. 56, n. 21.

[2] Umberto Cassuto, "The Palace of Baal," JBL, LXI (1942), p. 52. Løkkegaard holds the same view and states that El was unmoved by Anath's threats--"her harsh words are warded off by El, who seems quite unmoved and unruffled." "A Plea For El the Bull," p. 234.

[3] This is assuming that Asherat's visit followed Anath's. Ginsberg places text 51 before the Anath text. See ANET, pp. 131-138.

And Ltpn,[1] God of Mercy, replies: [ ][2]
"The name of my son is Yw-El [ ]."

The question of whether this is a reference to Yahweh is discussed in Appendix III. Also preserved is a command of El authorizing the banishment of someone from a position of sovereignty:

Drive him out from the se[at of his kingship]
[From the dais, the throne,] of his sovereignty.[3]

The identity of this order's recipient is a mystery, as is that of the subject. Ginsberg suggests that it is Yam who is instructed to unseat Baal.[4] But whether the words are spoken in reference to Baal, Yam, or Mot, depends largely on where one places this text in the mythological cycle, and his interpretation of the mythology. The information provided about El in this fragmented text is that he enjoys a high place of authority, granting building permits to the gods, and issuing decrees to make and unmake kings in the divine realm.

The central theme of GORDON UH 51 (IIAB), which comes next in Gordon's sequence, is the building of Baal's house. In the first column of this text is the lament that Baal has no house like the gods, and also a description of the

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[1] Ltpn is another name of El.

[2] GORDON UH ʿnt, pl. ix:IV:14.

[3] GORDON UH ʿnt, pl. x:IV:24-25.

[4] ANET, p. 129.

skills of the divine craftsman, Koshar-wa-Khasis. Column II describes some exploits of Anath, which possibly include a visit to El on Baal's behalf, but the crucial lines of the text are missing or too obscure to decipher. Column III relates a consultation between Baal and Anath in which it is decided that the best strategy to secure El's approval for the building of Baal's palace is to have the petition brought to him by Asherah, who is (or has been) El's consort, and has a certain equality with him as the "Creatress of Gods."[1] It is Gaster's opinion that this round-about approach through Asherah comments "on the importance of petticoat influence in diplomacy!"[2] The plan is carried out in column IV where Qdsh-w-Amir ("Sir Holy-and-Blessed"[3]) hitches and saddles the donkey for Asherah's journey to El's abode. Her attitude in approaching El is a distinct contrast from that of Anath.

> She enters the abode of El
> And comes into the domicile of the King,
> Father of Snm.[4]
> At the feet of El she bows and falls
> Prostrates herself and honors him.
> As soon as El sees her
> He cracks a smile and laughs.

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[1]GORDON UH 51:III:30,35.

[2]T. H. Gaster, "A King Without a Castle--Baal's Appeal to Asherat," BASOR, CI (Feb. 1946), p. 21.

[3]Gaster, Thespis, p. 181.

[4]Driver's translation is "father of years," Canaanite Myths and Legends, p. 97.

His feet he sets on the footstool
And twiddles his fingers
He lifts his voice
And shouts:
"Why has Lady Asherah of the Sea come
Why came the Creatress of Gods?
Art thou hungry?
Then have [a morsel]!
Or art thou thirsty?
Then have [a drink]!
Eat!
Or drink!
Eat bread from the tables!
Drink wine from the goblets!
From a cup of gold, the blood of vines!
If the love of El moves thee
Yea the affection of Thor arouses thee!"[1]

When El extends his hospitality to Asherah, she makes the identical appeal as that of Anath.[2] El, who may have been hesitating in making his decision, grants the request, with the stipulation that he would take no part in the construction.[3]

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[1]GORDON UH 51:IV:21-39.

[2]Asherah's petition in GORDON UH 51:IV:40-57 is exactly the same as Anath's in GORDON UH ʿnt, vi:V:38-50 (see p. 40), so that no purpose is served in quoting it.

[3]El's reply to Anath's earlier request is not known. Baal's impatience to have construction begun would indicate that if Anath had been successful in her mission, Asherah's visit would have been unnecessary. According to Cassuto, it was Asherah's more reverent and respectful approach which achieved the desired result. "El received his wife benevolently, as Ahasuerus received Esther, and he willingly granted her request. The permission for the building of Baal's palace is given forthwith without any limitation." "The Palace of Baal," p. 54. This view is shared by A. S. Kapelrud, Baal in the Ras Shamra Texts (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Cad, 1952), pp. 111-114.

And Ltpn, God of Mercy, replied:
"Am I to act as a lackey of Asherah
And am I to act like the holder of a trowel?
If the handmaid of Asherah will make the bricks
A house shall be built for Baal like the gods
Yea a court like the sons of Asherah."[1]

The thesis that El was a god who was past his prime is strongly implied in the description of Asherah's visit. Pope interprets his laughter and finger twiddling as the actions of an old man who has lost his natural power, and that his words "the affection of Thor arouses thee" are amorous overtures which are probably little more than wishful thinking, or the recollection of better days.[2] If El had lost his potency, the legitimacy of his kingship might be brought into question.[3] On the other hand El's permission is seriously and persistently sought, and it does not proceed until El gives the necessary authorization.

El does not figure in the remainder of GORDON UH 51

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[1]GORDON UH 51:IV:58-V:64.

[2]Pope, El in the Ugaritic Texts, pp. 36-37. A. Van Selms shares this opinion that El has lost his sexual potency, and advances the opinion that the period of sexual intercourse between the father god and mother god was a thing of the past--occuring before the beginning of the present era with its multitude of younger gods and goddesses who were offspring of the old couple." Marriage and Family Life in Ugaritic Literature (London: Luzac and Co., Ltd., 1954), p. 65.

[3]This principle was involved in the episode of David and Abishag in 1 Kings 1.

which describes the building of the house,[1] a disagreement between Koshar-wa-Khasis about placing a window in it,[2] Baal's tour of his territory, and a celebration of the event[3] to which Mot is not invited.

The story of Baal and Anath continues in GORDON UH 67 (I*AB). The tablets on which this text were found are in very poor condition, and consequently about half the text is missing. It describes how Baal, because he had smitten the evil serpent, Lotan, is summoned by Mot, the god of death, into the underworld. Baal fears Mot, but it seems there is no choice but to obey. Before he does, he mates with a heiffer, possibly to assure himself of male offspring.[4] At this point the text breaks off, and Column VI, some thirty-five lines later, begins with the news that the body of Baal has been found prostrate on the earth, and the lament

> Dead is Aliyan Baal
> Perished is the Prince, Lord of Earth![5]

When El hears the news, he joins in the mourning.[6]

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[1]GORDON UH 51:V:105ff.

[2]GORDON UH 51:V:120-VI:8; VII:17-27.

[3]GORDON UH 51:VII:45-50.

[4]Kapelrud, Baal in the Ras Shamra Texts, p. 121.

[5]GORDON UH 67:VI:9-10.

[6]Kapelrud, who views the mythological material as cultic texts, notes that the mourning rites of El and Anath provided a pattern for those taking part in the cultic

Thereupon Ltpn, God of Mercy,
Goes down from the throne
Sits on the footstool
And from the footstool sits on the earth.
He pours the ashes of grief on his head
The dust of wallowing on his pate
For clothing, he is covered with a doubled cloak.
He roams the mountain in mourning
Yea through the forest in grief
He cuts cheek and chin
He lacerates his forearms
He plows (his) chest like a garden
Like a vale he lacerates (his back).
He lifts his voice
And shouts:
"Baal is dead!
Woe to the people of Dagon's Son
Woe to the multitudes of Athar-Baal!
I shall go down into the earth."[1]

These were the conventional mourning rites of the time, and the purpose of their elaboration, as noted by Pope, was to depict El as sympathetic.[2] He comments further that "when Baal perishes at the hands of Mot, El seems genuinely grieved, or at least makes quite a show of grief."[3] On this occasion there is no hint that El is guilty of double-dealing or is insincere in his concern for Baal.[4] The fact that in the next passage Anath goes through the same mourning rite as El is devastating to any theory that El's

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ritual performed most likely at the New Years festival. Kapelrud, op. cit., p. 123.

[1] GORDON UH 67:VI:11-25.

[2] El in the Ugaritic Texts, p. 45.

[3] Ibid., p. 92. [4] Ibid.

mourning was a sign of weakness or otiosity.[1]

The account of Anath's mourning is found in the opening lines of the next segment of the mythology, a combination of GORDON UH 62 and 49, designated by Virolleaud as IAB. Completing her mourning with an incredible array of sacrifices, Anath prostrates herself before El, calling for someone to rule in Baal's place. The choice is Athtar, who is unequal to the challenge.

> She lifts her voice
> And shouts:
> "Let Asherah and her sons rejoice
> The goddess and the band of her brood!
> For dead is Aliyan Baal,
> For perished is the Prince, Lord of Earth!"
> Aloud cries El to Lady Asherah of the Sea:
> "Hear, O Lady A[sherah] of the Sea!
> Give one of thy so[ns] that I may make him king!"
> And Lady Asherah of the Sea replies:
> "Let us make king one who knows how to govern!"
> And Lṭpn, God of Mercy, declares,
> "One feeble of frame will not vie with Baal
> Nor wield a spear against Dagon's son."
> When the parley is finished
> Lady Asherah of the Sea declares:
> "Let us make Athtar the Terrible king![2]

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[1]According to F. F. Hvidberg the violent mourning rites initiated by El and Anath had a cultic function. Weeping and sacrifices were needed to invigorate Baal for his resurrection, and these, therefore, were important elements in the early Phoenician-Canaanite autumn festival. Weeping and Laughter in the Old Testament (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962), p. 55.

[2]Athtar, as Gaster notes, is the genius of artificial irrigation who seeks to dominate the earth during the time of year when the rains (Baal) are absent. The fact that he is too small to occupy the throne of Baal is "a mythological way of saying that the genius of artifical irrigation is no equal to the natural force of the rain (Baal)! Thespis, p. 219.

Let Athtar the Terrible reign!"
Thereupon Athtar the Terrible
Goes into the heights of Saphon
That he may sit on the throne of Aliyan Baal.
His feet do not reach the footstool
Nor does his head reach its top.
And Athtar the Terrible says:
"I cannot rule in the heights of Saphon!"
Athtar the Terrible goes down
Goes down from the throne of Aliyan Baal
That he may rule over all the grand earth.[1]

This passage provides no fresh information about El, but it does reinforce the position that El had absolute authority in the matter of setting up kings--even substitute ones.

Following the account of Athtar's futile efforts to fill Baal's throne, the encounter between Anath and Mot is related where Anath seizes Mot and cleaves, winnows, burns, grinds, and plants him.[2] After a lacuna of some forty lines the narrative resumes with El dreaming a dream in which he is informed of the news that Baal is alive, causing the heavens to rain oil and the wadies to run with honey.[3] As he shared in the lamentation at Baal's death, he is likewise jubilant at the news of Baal's resurrection.

Ltpn, God of Mercy, rejoices.
His feet he sets on the footstool
He cracks a smile and laughs.
He lifts his voice
And shouts:
"Let me sit and rest
And let my soul repose in my breast
For Aliyan Baal is alive

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[1]GORDON UH 49:I:10-37. [2]GORDON UH 49:II:31-39.

[3]GORDON UH 49:III:4-13.

For the Prince, Lord of Earth, exists."[1]

El's rejoicing reflects the universal rejoicing which the revival of Baal occasioned,[2] and so is not too important in analyzing the character of El.

GORDON UH 49 continues with El's instruction to Anath to go out and search for Baal.[3] Several lines are missing between columns IV and V.[4] In Column V Baal smites the son of Asherah who attempted to rule in his place.[5] Column VI, which also is incomplete, describes a final battle between Baal and Mot. The conflict seems to be a stalemate until Sun warns Mot of the possible intervention of El.

Mot is strong, Baal is strong.
They gore like buffaloes
Mot is strong, Baal is strong.
They bite like serpents
Mot is strong, Baal is strong.
They kick like racing beasts
Mot is down, Baal is down.
Up comes Sun
She cries to Mot:

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[1]GORDON UH 49:III:14-21.

[2]Hvidberg, who sees the fertility motif predominate in the Baal cycle, relates El's laughter to the jubilation produced by the coming of the autumnal rains. The people's expressions of joy further strengthened the newly-revived rain-god. "With rejoicings and laughter the people who experienced Ba'al's changing fate with him, strengthened his honour and victory and increased his enemies' shame and defeat." Weeping and Laughter in the Old Testament, p. 56.

[3]GORDON UH 49:III:22ff.

[4]About thirty-five lines according to Ginsberg. ANET, p. 141.

[5]GORDON UH 49:V:1-3.

"Hear, O god Mot!
How canst thou fight with Aliyan Baal?
    How will Thor-El, thy father, not hear thee?
Will he not remove the support(s) of thy throne?
    Nor upset the seat of thy kingship?
        Nor break the scepter of thy rule?"
The god Mot is afraid,
    El's beloved, the Hero, is frightened.[1]

The next eight lines are defective or missing, but apparently Baal emerges victorious over his enemy. The combatants seem to be evenly matched until Shapsh (Sun) warns Mot of the consequences of El's displeasure. The impression one receives is that Mot was destined to lose this particular conflict. Miller is in agreement with Pope's theory that Baal had replaced El as the leading deity at Ugarit. "El is on the way down, and Baal, the young warrior, is on the way up."[2] He sees in Shapsh's warning to Mot evidence that while El has lost his power as a warrior, he still maintains his authority to establish kingdoms.

> In these lines the threat of El's hostility strikes fear into the heart of Mot. But El's power is confined largely to the matter of dispensing kingdoms, and Mot's fear is thus not of battle with El but of loss of his rule. One could not conclude from these lines alone that El was honored in any major way as a god of battle."[3]

El's defence of Mot in this battle could be interpreted as an indication of his waning power, and his attempts to re-

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[1]GORDON UH 49:VI:17-31.

[2]Patrick D. Miller, Jr., "El the Warrior," HTR, LX (1967), p. 411.

[3]Ibid., p. 412.

main in authority by siding first with one pretender to his throne, and then another.[1] But if El's so-called rivals represent various seasons of the year, his capriciousness may simply point to the fact of his rule over nature on a higher level. This conclusion is reached by Løkkegaard, who states that "El is the guarantee that the balance between the seasons is upheld."[2]

The Baal Cycle is completed with the final defeat of Mot by Baal. There are a few other fragmentary texts which possibly belong to the Cycle, although where they would come is highly doubtful. GORDON UH 76 and 132 describe erotic episodes, including the motif of bestiality, between Baal and Anath, but no information is provided about El. GORDON UH 75 tells of a conflict between Baal and some wild creatures in the desert, in which Baal seems to come out second-best. There is a reference to El laughing in his heart and chuckling in his liver.[3] The text is too broken to determine with precision what prompted El's laughter, but Pope sees in it an indication that El was contriving a plot against Baal.[4] The circumstances of

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[1]This basically is Pope's position. El in the Ugaritic Texts, p. 92.

[2]"A Plea for El the Bull", p. 235.

[3]GORDON UH 75:I:13-14.

[4]"In the poem BH . . . it is obvious that El wants to get rid of Baal and he laughs inwardly as he sets in motion a stratagem that results in Baal's undoing." loc. cit.

Baal's defeat are lost in a damaged piece of the text, but it resumes with a reference to a seven year sentence of some sort that has been imposed upon Baal, presumably by El.

> Seven years the god is abundant [ ]
> Even eight cycles, until [ ]
> For he is clad as in the garb of [his] bro[thers]
> As with the robe of his kinsmen.[1]

Driver translates "the god" as "El".

> for seven years El was filled [with wrath]
> and for eight revolutions of time [with anger].
> When [his] brethren were covered with blood
> like a garment,
> his kinsfolk with blood as a robe,[2]

John Gray sees the central theme of this passage to be the punishment imposed upon Baal by El for the crime of fratricide.[3] If Gray is correct in his interpretation, the position that El was absolute, rather than titular head of the gods, receives some confirmation from this text.

The Birth of the Gods

A legendary text that stands apart from the Baal Cycle is GORDON UH 52 (SS). Gordon points to this text as evidence that fertility was a dominant theme in Ugaritic

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[1] GORDON UH 75:II:45-48.

[2] Canaanite Myths and Legends, p. 73.

[3] "The main theme of this text we consider to be the punishment of the blood-guiltiness of Baʿal, who had unwittingly stained himself with the blood of his half-brothers, the brood of El and Aṯirat." "The Hunting of Baʿal: Fratricide and Atonement in the Mythology of Ras Shamra," JNES, X (1951), p. 154.

thought and that not all fertility myths are Baalistic.[1] Here, in contrast to the literature previously discussed El is the prime mover and Baal is not even mentioned. The text, which is incomplete, divides itself, as Gaster comments, into two parts.

> The first contains the rubrics and chants for a public ceremony in honor of two sets of gods named "the Gods Gracious" and "the Princes." The second contains a dramatic myth relating, in a markedly humorous tone, the conception and birth of those gods and describing how they came to be, respectively, tutelary patrons of the steppeland and translated to the stars. In this portion, the "Princes" are designated more specifically as Dawn and Sunset.[2]

Of present concern is the second, or mythological portion of the text.[3]

The narrative portion tells of how two women are impregnated by El and give birth to Dawn and Dusk. The account abounds in sexual references, the significance of which was understood directly, or more likely in the form of double-entendres.[4]

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[1] C. H. Gordon, The Common Background of Greek and Hebrew Civilizations (New York: The Norton Library, 1965), p. 171.

[2] Thespis, p. 406.

[3] For discussions of the dramatic significance of this poem, and interpretations of the first part, see the introduction by C. H. Gordon in Ugaritic Literature, pp. 57-58, and the treatments by T. H. Gaster in Thespis, pp. 407-427, and "A Canaanite Ritual Drama," JAOS, LXVI (1946), pp. 51-76.

[4] On this point it is of interest to compare various translations of the text. Pope's rendering of lines 37-38, "El, his rod sinks. / El, his love-staff droops," leaves

[ ] the shore of the sea
And roams the shore of the deep.
(El takes) two effigies
    Two effigies from the top of the fire.
Lo she from the bottom
    Lo she rises
Lo she cries "Father, Father!"
    Lo she cries "Mother, Mother!"
"Let El's hand[1] be long like the sea
    Yea, El's hand like the flood!"
El's hand became long like the sea
    Yea, El's hand like the flood.
El takes two effigies
    Two effigies from the top of the fire.
He takes and puts (them) in his house.
El lowers his rod
    El lets down the staff of his hand.
El raises, he shoots heavenward
    He shoots a bird in the heavens
        He cleans and sets it on the coal(s).
El tests the two women.
If the women will shout:
"O husband, husband!
Thy rod has fallen
    Lowered is the staff of thy hand!"--
While the bird roasts on the fire
    Broils on the coals--
The two women are wives of El
    Wives of El and his forever.
But if the women shout:
"O father, father!
Thy rod has fallen
    Lowered is the staff of thy hand!"--
While the bird roasts on the fire
    Even broils on the coals--

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little to the imagination as to the intended meaning (See El in the Ugaritic Texts, p. 38). Driver, Gordon, Gray, Gaster, use the terms "sceptre" and "staff," "rod" and "staff," "sceptre" and "staff," "baton" and "rod," respectively. Driver, Canaanite Myths and Legends, p. 123; Gordon, Ugaritic Literature, p. 60; Gray, The Legacy of Canaan, p. 100; Gaster, Thespis, p. 429. All of these agree that a ribald double-entendre was intended which would have readily amused a popular audience.

[1]"Hand" may have been a euphemism for the phallus as it sometimes was in Biblical Hebrew, e.g. Isaiah 57:8.

The two girls are daughters of El
    Daughters of El and his forever.
And lo the two women shout:
"O husband, husband!
Thy rod has fallen
    Lowered is the staff of thy hand!"--
While the bird roasts on the fire
    Even broils on the coals--
So the women are wi[ives of El],
    Wives of El and his forever.
He bends
    Kis[ses] their lips
Lo their lips are sweet
    Sweet as grapes.
From kissing there is conception
    From embracing there is childbirth
They go into tra[vail]
    So that they bear
Dawn
    And Dusk.[1]

Following the birth of these two gods the process is repeated with the result that El sires a series of gods.

There is a remarkably wide diversity of opinions as to how the text, GORDON UH 52, ought to be interpreted. Scholars cannot agree whether it is early or late, whether as drama it was serious or burlesque, and whether the presentation of El was intended to praise or ridicule him. Pope takes the position that El is ridiculed, being pictured as an old man who is unable to achieve and maintain an erection. From the reference to El's drooping rod he concludes that "El's member is represented as in a state of semi-tumescence and not full erection."[2] He notes that the ritual of roasting the bird was intended to produce a state

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[1]GORDON UH 52:30-53.

[2]El in the Ugaritic Texts, p. 39.

of sexual excitement.[1] He also raises the possibility that El did not impregnate the women in the normal manner, but is realistic enough to reject the likelihood of this.

> It is never stated that El's rod rises, but this may be simply a poetic lapse. At any rate, coitus apparently does not take place till l. 49 when El bends and with a hug and a kiss impregnates the females, which probably does not imply that it was a progess of adosculation rather than normal intercourse.[2]

On the question of date, Pope views the passage as early, from a time when the popularity of El had begun to decline. "The poem SS in which El appears as sexually active has been generally held, on other grounds, to be earlier than the other compositions, but even here El has to overcome his initial impotence by means of magic and this episode may very well represent his last fling and farewell to sex."[3]

Kapelrud agrees with Pope that the poem is early, but rejects any idea of a derogatory intention toward the position and power of El.

> One might for a moment be tempted by the idea that Il is given this leading rôle by the author with the intention that he is going to be laughed at and thus naturally recede into the background for Baal. In that case this text would be from a late stage in Ugaritic religion and not from an old one. But actually there is no support for this point of view in the text itself. Only a modern reader with strong prejudices would be able to see the text that way.--To this is added its markedly cultic character, showing that we have here no purely literary creation but a text really used in cultic life. There can be little or no doubt that it was connected with the hieros gamos, probably during the New Year festival. The text must

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[1] Ibid., p. 40. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., p. 42.

> then have originated in a period when Il played the principal rôle in the fertility cult, that is: in a time when he was not replaced by Baal.[1]

The opposite approach is taken by Gaster who classifies the poem as burlesque.[2] The present form suggests a later date, when the ritual drama has lost its functional significance.

> When once the ritual drama has lost its functional significance, it tends to survive only as popular entertainment, catering more and more to the ruder tastes of a holiday crowd. The basic plot is retained, but it comes to be treated in less serious vein, and elements of burlesque, farce, and ribaldry are freely introduced.[3]

Although Gordon agrees with Gaster that the text is the libretto of a religious drama with music, he regards it as a fertility myth which was taken seriously. The occasion of the drama, says Gordon, "is the close of one seven-year cycle and the beginning of another. The purpose of the performance is to assure that the new cycle will be one of abundance with

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[1]Kapelrud, Baal in the Ras Shamra Texts, p. 71.

[2]Thespis, p. 406. Gray supports Gaster's contention that El's role serves a burlesque purpose. "The quasi-domestic activity of El, who is generally depicted as an old man full of dignity, who influences affairs in nature and society by his final sanction rather than by his personal activity, has possibly a burlesque purpose, El becoming a figure of comedy, which, from the Greek analogy, we know to have been an essential feature of the fertility myth and ritual. In this respect El's rôle is analogous to that of Herakles in Attic comedy." The Legacy of Canaan, p. 99.

[3]Thespis, p. 406.

bread to eat and wine to drink."[1] He sees in the drama an element of suspense which centers about the question of whether the women's relationship with El will be that of wife or of daughter. Commenting on lines 39-49 he says: "The force of this passage is that the rite will result in enduring fertility (with a virile god impregnating his permanent wives) or in enduring sterility (with an impotent god with whom the girls must remain permanently as daughters.)"[2] Gordon also sees in this passage evidence that El is undergoing a period of decline--not from the date of the passage, but because "the quantitative prominence of Baal and Anath vis-à-vis El in the fertility myths is simply an aspect of their quantitative prominence vis-à-vis the older El in general."[3]

It is an unresolved problem whether GORDON UH 52 presents a noble picture of El as the Creator of Creatures, or if he is regarded with contempt filling the role of the buffoon. Løkkegaard, convinced that the former interpretation is correct, asserts that scholars who see El as an otiose deity have stooped to desperate means to prop up their arguments.[4] The

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[1]Gordon, Ugaritic Literature, p. 57.

[2]Gordon, Ugarit and Minoan Crete, p. 96, n. 45.

[3]Gordon, The Common Background of Greek and Hebrew Civilizations, p. 172.

[4]"When it becomes necessary to maintain that the texts BH and SS (Birth of Dawn and Dusk) are older texts, revealing another state in the pantheon, it shows that

poem may or may not confirm El's position as head of the pantheon, but it definitely does not provide any support for the hypothesis that rationality and morality were essential elements of his nature.[1]

The Legends

Included in the literature of Ugarit are two legends, Kret and Aqhat. The central figures in these are mortals, but there are occasions when the gods take an active part in the events. The Epic of Kret shares with Greek legend the Helen of Troy motif. As the story opens, Kret's bride has been abducted from him before she had borne him any children to carry on the line. He implores El to help him, and by following the god's instructions receives back his bride and is blessed with eight children. In the course of events Kret falls ill, because he had failed to keep a vow made to Asherah. When all else fails, Kret is restored to health by El. The legend ends with Kret's malediction on Yaṣṣib his son for his attempt to take his father's place upon the royal

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desperate means have to be applied in order to rescue a tottering hypothesis. Sound method is to give up a hypothesis if it does not tally with the given material, not to curtail the material. And the truth is that before there is a complete interpretation of our texts (perhaps new finds) it is no sound method to start with literary criticism." "A Plea for El the Bull," p. 235.

[1]As argued by MacLaurin in "The Development of the Idea of God in Ancient Canaan," JRH, II, No. 1-4(1962-63), p. 283.

throne. There are a few references to El which deserve some comment.

When Kret laments the loss of his bride and his hope of progeny, El appears to him in a dream.

> And in his dream El descends
> In his vision the Father of Man,
> And he draws near while asking Kret:
> "Who is Kret that he should weep
> The Good One, Lad of El, that he should shed tears?
> Does he wish the kingship of [Th]or, his Father?
> Or sovereignty, li[ke the Fa]ther of M[an]?[1]

In the vision Kret is instructed what he must do to save himself from his predicament. Among other things he is required to offer sacrifices to both El and Baal.[2] The significance of these brief passages for our study is that El is acknowledged, more or less in passing, as being dominant in the pantheon, by the references to him as "Father of Man,"[3] and to his kingship. It should also be noted that there is no hint of enmity between El and Baal in the reference to Kret's sacrifice.[4]

The next time El appears in the legend is in the account of an assembly of the gods where Baal petitions El

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[1]Krt: I:36-42. [2]Krt: I:77-79.

[3]The Ugaritic phrase "Father of Man" is ab adm, the same as in Hebrew.

[4]This fact tends to confirm Gray's assertion that "in their [El and Baal] integration in the main myth of the fertility-cult at Ras Shamra it must be admitted that harmony and not discord between the two is the prevailing impression." "Social Aspects of Canaanite Religion," p. 178.

to grant protection to Kret.

> There arrives the assembly of the gods
> [And] Ali[yan] Baal declares:
> "[ ] depart, O Ltpn, [God] of Mercy,
> Wilt thou not bless [Kret] of Thaᶜ
> Nor protect the Good One, [Lad] of El?"
> A cup he takes [in] (his) hand
> A goblet in [the right]
> El indeed blesses Kret [of Thaᶜ]
> [Protects] the Good One, Lad of El:
> "The wi[fe thou take]st, O Kret,
> The wife thou takest to thy house
> The girl thou causest to enter thy court
> Will bear thee seven sons
> And an eighth [daughter]: Octavia
> To thee she will bear the lad Yaṣṣib
> One who sucks the milk of Asherah
> Who suckles the breasts of the Virgin (Anath)
> The wetnurs[es of the Good and Fair Gods].[1]

The preeminence of El is obvious in this passage, indicated by the power to bless Kret, which seems to be his right alone. The same point is evident in the account of Kret's healing, which can be effected by none other but El.

> Ltpn, [God of Mercy, declares]:
> "[Who] among the gods [will drive out the disease]
> Exorcizing the i[llness]?"
> [None among the gods] answers him.
> A [fourth time] he says:
> "Who among [the gods will drive out] the disease
> Exorcizing the illness]?"
> None among the gods an[swers him].
> A fifth time he says:
> "[Who among the gods]will drive out the disease
> Ex[orcizing the illness]?"
> None among the gods answer[s him].
> A sixth, a seventh time he says:
> "[Who] among the gods will drive out the disease
> Exorcizing the illness?"
> None among the gods answers him,
> And Ltpn, God of Mercy, declares:
> "Return, my sons, to your seat[s]

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[1]GORDON UH 128:II:11-28.

Yea to the thrones of yo[ur] excellencies!
I will perform magic
Verily to stay the hand of the disease
Exorcizing the illness."[1]

The text breaks off at this point, but apparently El brings about Kret's healing through the application of a compress of clay or dung.[2]

El plays no further active part in the epic, but the accusation of Kret's son that he has forfeited the right to rule may indirectly throw some light on the nature of El.

The lad Yaṣṣib departs
Into his father's presence he enters.
He lifts his voice
And shouts:
"Hear, O Kret of Thaʿ!
Listen
And be alert of ear!
Dost thou administer like the strongest of the strong
And govern (like) the mountains?
Thou hast let thy hands fall into negligence
Thou dost not judge the case of the widow.
Nor adjudicate the cause of the broken in spirit
Nor drive away those who prey upon the poor!
Before thee thou dost not feed the fatherless
Nor behind thy back the widow.
For thou art a brother of the bed of sickness
Yea a companion of the bed of disease.
Descend from the kingship that I may rule
From thy sovereignty that I may be enthroned thereon![3]

It was the traditional duty of the king to rescue the help-

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[1]GORDON UH 126:V:10-28.

[2]Driver suggests that "dung" is a more accurate translation than "clay." Canaanite Myths and Legends, p. 45, n. 3.

[3]GORDON UH 127:39-53.

less and weak.[1] Kret is referred to as the son of El[2] and his duties to establish justice and show compassion reflect the qualities of El. John Gray alludes to this point in his discussion of El's kingship:

> While El's title "king" (mlk) is not at all distinctive since it was the title also of Baal, the protagonist in the fertility-cult, and indeed of the other gods among the ancient Semites, the Krt and Aqht texts do indicate that it had a peculiar significance in the case of El. Just as the king is peculiarly the son of El it is natural to see in the specific function of the king a reflection of the function of El. Now in the Krt and Aqht texts the king is guarantor and sustainer of justice in the community.[3]

In the legend of Aqht the goddess Anath plays a leading role. The plot of the story revolves around Anath's desire to possess the bow of Aqht, King Danel's son. The bow was a gift to Aqht from Koshar-wa-Khasis on the occasion of Danel's hospitality to the divine craftsman. El plays a minor role in the tale, as he does in the Legend of Kret. The story begins with Danel petitioning the gods for a son. Baal appears to Danel on the seventh day of his incubation[4] and assures him that his petition will be taken before El:

> "The gods eat the offerings
> The deities drink the offerings

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[1]Gordon, Ugarit and Minoan Crete, p. 119, n. 73.

[2]e.g. GORDON UH 125:10,20-23.

[3]"Social Aspects of Canaanite Religion," p. 172.

[4]The practice of incubation is discussed in detail by J. Obermann in "How Daniel was Blessed with a Son: An Incubation Scene in Ugarit," JAOS Supplement 20, 1946.

Will they not bless him to Thor-El, my father,
Nor defend him to the Creator of Creatures
So that a son of his may be in the house
A root in the midst of his palace?"[1]

The blessing which enables Danel to beget a son is bestowed upon him by El.[2] The fact that Danel's petition is taken by Baal to El who grants it suggests that to the writer of the legend El held the highest position of authority and power among the gods.[3]

El appears once more in this story. When Anath is unable to persuade Aqht to relinquish his bow, she brings the matter before El. Prostrating herself before him, she makes accusation against Aqht.[4] Unfortunately, the text is damaged at this point, and El's response is unknown. Possibly he did not take her seriously, for the narrative resumes with Anath persuing her request by threats to make his gray hair flow with blood.

"I shall make [thy gray hair] flow [with blood
The gray of] thy [beard] with gore.
And [then] will Aqht save thee
Or will [Danel's] son rescue thee

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[1] 2 Aqht: I:23-26. [2] 2 Aqht: I:35-38.

[3] On Baal's intercession to El on behalf of Danel, Gaster comments, "Indeed, it is to be observed throughout the Ugaritic texts El occupies the position of what anthropologists have called "the remote high god," whereas Baal is the demiurge, who actually rules over gods and men and who ranks as the more prominent figure in cult and myth." Thespis, pp. 332-333.

[4] 2 Aqht: VI:47-55.

From the hand of the Virgin [Anath]?"
And Ltpn, God of Me[rcy], replies:
"I know thee, my daughter, that thou art impetuous
And there is n[o forbearance] among goddesses.
So depart, my daughter - - -
Evil is [thy] heart [ ]
The joy that there is in thy liver
Thou shalt put in [the midst] of thy breast.
Let thy heels surely thresh."[1]

It is not clear from line 19 of Gordon's translation whether El authorized Anath to deal violently with Aqht, but according to the translations of Driver and Gaster El complied with her request.[2] The general impression given by this passage is that El, the high god, grants Anath's request, not so much in the interests of justice, but because he was bullied into it.[3]

El plays no further active part in the legend.[4]

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[1]3 Aqht: "rev." 11-19

[2]Driver's translation is, "He that defrauds thee shall indeed be struck down." Canaanite Myths and Legends, p. 57. Gaster's is similar, "He that has defrauded thee must surely be crushed!" Thespis, p. 350.

[3]It should be noted that in all probability El did not authorize the slaying of Aqht, nor did Anath intend it (3 Aqht:"obv." 26-27; 1 Aqht:15-17), but it was a result of the way Anath's bungling henchman, Yatpan carried out his mission. In like fashion he dropped the highly-coveted bow into the sea. Gaster, Thespis, p. 356. It is Ginsberg's opinion that El stipulated that Aqht's breath of life must be restored to him. "The North-Canaanite Myth of Anath and Aqht," BASOR, XCVIII (April, 1945), p. 23.

[4]Gordon connects texts 121-124 with the Aqht Cycle. Driver classifies them under the title of "Rephaim." In these texts, which are very fragmentary, there are a few references to El. He invites the "shades" to come to his house (GORDON UH 122:7-10). Their response to the invitation is not recorded. El is also mentioned in connection with some heroes who call upon El for his blessing (GORDON UH 124:5-7).

There is a reference to Danel judging the case of the widow and adjudicating the cause of the fatherless,[1] the implications of which have been noted in our discussion of similar passages in Kret.

Prose Texts

In addition to the poetic texts there are a number of the smaller tablets from Ugarit that are of a religious nature, containing lists of gods, sacrifices, and rituals. The text GORDON UH 17 is a list of deities in which El is included along with Astarte, Baal, Dagon, and a number of obscure deities.[2] A more important text is GORDON UH 107 which, in Gray's opinion, is an invocation to El, his family, assembly, attendants, his consort, and possibly even certain of his attributes which had become abstracted and hypostatized.[3] The following translation is that of Gray.[4]

(1)	ʾel bn ʾel	El, the gods, (or "sons of El")
(2)	dr bn ʾel	The family of the gods (or "the family of El"),
(3)	mphrt bn ʾel	The assembly of the gods,
(4)	ṯkmn wšnm	The Lofty and Exalted,
(5)	ʾel wʾaṯrt	El and Aṯerat,

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[1] 1 Aqht: 24-25.

[2] For the complete text see Gordon, Ugaritic Literature, p. 108.

[3] Gray, "Social Aspects of Canaanite Religion," p. 182.

[4] Ibid., pp. 182-183. Gray attempts translations of a number of terms which Gordon only transliterates in Ugaritic Literature, p. 109.

(6)	hnn ʾel	The Mercy of El,
(7)	nṣbt ʾel	The Exaltation of El,
(8)	šlm ʾel	The Perfection of El
(9)	ʾel hš	O El, hasten!
	ʾel ʾadʾu	O El, come swiftly.
(10)	bʿd ṣpn	On behalf of Ṣapan,
(11)	bʿd ugrt	On behalf of Ugarit!
rev.		
(12)	bmrḥ ʾel	By the Mercy of El,
(13)	bnʾet ʾel	By the Transcendence of El,
(14)	bṣmd ʾel	By the Eternity of El,
(15)	bdtn ʾel	By the ( ) of El,
(16)	bšrp ʾel	By the Nobility of El,
(17)	bknt ʾel	By the Stability of El,
(18)	bġdyn ʾel	By the Purpose of El

If Gray's translation were undisputed, his contention that the dominance of El is emphasized in the passage could not be challenged. There is not agreement, however, on the proper rendering of a number of crucial passages. Where Gray translates mrh in line 12 as"mercy," Gordon uses "spear."[1] Gray renders smd as "eternity," Gordon, "club."[1] Gray interprets šrp as "nobility," Gordon as "burning."[1] The wide divergence of opinion as to how GORDON UH 107 should be interpreted[2] prevents it from being the authority for any dogma.[3]

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[1]Gordon, Ugaritic Literature, p. 109.

[2]An informative history of the interpretation of this text is provided by Pope in El in the Ugaritic Texts, pp. 85-90.

[3]The problem is illustrated by Pope's attack of Eissfeldt's conclusion, on the basis of texts 2 and 107, that there was a society of El monotheists at Ugarit. El in the Ugaritic Texts, p. 89. Noting the wide variety of information gleaned from this short passage, Edmond Jacob has described it as "Un texte dans lequel certains voient une invocation, d'autres une incantation, d'autres une ordonnance sacrificielle, réunit en El toute la potentialité du divine: El y est non seulement le bn El, fils de El et le Ab bn El, le père des dieux, il est la totalité du

According to Ringgren the epithets in ll. 6-8 seem more certain than those in ll. 12-18. The latter may be either a list of cult objects or cult actions, or a series of personified qualities and other divine beings.[1] Gray acknowledges that this is "a notoriously controversial text" but that there should be no substantial disagreement on the first three elements--Mercy, Exaltation, and Perfection.[2]

GORDON UH 2 is a ritual text describing sacrifices made on behalf of the king and community, and the admission of sins which resulted in military defeat.[3] It is probably El who is referred to by the expression "Father of the gods" which occurs a number of times.

> [Our] sac[rifice] is sacrificed.
> If is the offering offered
> It is the libation poured
> It is carried [to the father of the gods]
> It is carried to the assembly of the gods
> To the totality of the go[ds].[4]

This "elevation formula" confirms the fact made abundantly

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divin." Ras Shamra-Ugarit et L'Ancien Testament (Paris: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1960), p. 90. In addition to the interpretations listed by Jacob must be added that of Obermann who identified text 107 as an antiphonal psalm. "An Antiphonal Psalm from Ras Shamra," JBL, LV (1936), pp. 21-44.

[1]Helmer Ringgren, Word and Wisdom (Lund: Hăkan Ohlssons Boktryckeir, 1947), pp. 77-78.

[2]The Legacy of Canaan, p. 191.

[3]Ibid., p. 206

[4]GORDON UH 2:16-18. The formula is repeated in ll. 24-26 and 33-35.

clear in the poetic texts that El was regarded as the father of the gods.[1] But more is read into the text than is actually there when it is argued from the phrase "totality of the gods" (mphrt bn el) that El "comprehends or subsumes his entire family"[2] and therefore the religion of Ugarit was monotheistic.

There are other religious tablets where El is mentioned by name, but extremely little about the nature of El can be learned from them. GORDON UH 1 contains a list of sacrifices to the gods and the name of El comes first:

A head of large (and) small cattle for ʾIl.[3]

The same phrase appears in GORDON UH 3:14. In GORDON UH 9 the name of El precedes those of Baal and Dagon in a list of offerings:

A head of small cattle: ʾIl
A head of small cattle: Baal
A head of small cattle: Dagân
A head of small cattle: [ ][4]

New Texts

As the excavation of Ras Shamra continues, new texts are becoming available which will aid in unravelling the mysteries of the life and thought of ancient Ugarit. Some of the unpublished texts have relevance to our study. Astour

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[1] Pope, El in the Ugaritic Texts, p. 89.

[2] Ibid. [3] GORDON UH 1:2.

[4] GORDON UH 9:2-3.

has made a study of the divine names that appear in the tablets unearthed in the 24th Excavation Campaign of Ras Shamra (1961).[1] Tablet RS 24.643 is a sacrifical text in which several hypostases of El appear.

> The first four entries of the restored list are Il Špn (not preserved in the Akkadian version), Ilib (Akk. Il-a-bi), Il (Akk. Ilum) and Dgn (Akk. Dagan). These are four hypostases of the head of the Ugaritic pantheon."[2]

The implication that El and Dagan were the same deity has been advanced by Fontenrose,[3] and this text would seem to support that hypothesis. Astour has summarized the arguments for and against this theory.

> The position of Dagân with regard to El in the pantheon of Ugarit was ambiguous. On the one hand, Baal is called bn Dgn in the Ugaritic poems, but Dagân never appears there as an acting character. One of the two great temples of Ugarit was dedicated to Baal, the other to Dagân (not to El). Baal is never presented in the Poems as son of El, but he is the brother of Anath, and the latter is clearly a daughter of El. These circumstances would suggest that Dagân was the real personal name of the supreme god, and El ("god"), his surrogate designation. On the other hand, however, in RS 24.244 and RS 24.251 El and Dagân are invoked separately and are treated as two distinct personalities, not just names.[4]

El is the central figure in an unpublished mythological text, RS 24.258. This text describes a banquet

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[1]Michael C. Astour, "Some New Divine Names from Ugarit," JAOS, LXXXVI (1966), pp. 277-284.

[2]Ibid., p. 279.

[3]J. Fontenrose, "Dagan and El," Oriens, X (1957), pp. 277-279.

[4]Astour, op. cit., p. 279.

which El held for his seventy sons.[1] They assemble in his house, or the precincts of his palace and he urges them to eat and drink. During the banquet Anath and Asherah arrive, neither of whom had been invited, and immediately begin to quarrel about what kind of a sacrifice to offer to their father. When the argument continues, El tires of it, retires to his private quarters where he imbibes until he is drunk. In this condition he meets a being with two horns and a tail, a possible prefiguration of Satan.[2] El's meeting with the devil, following his previous excesses, has very disagreeable consequences for him, namely, the loss of control over his bodily functions[3] and the inability to speak.[4] The same vicinity where the text was found has also yielded fragments of a vase on which is featured a banquet scene. El's goblet is continually being replenished by

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[1]The events described in this text are outlined by Ch. Virolleaud, "Les nouveaux textes mythologiques de Ras Shamra," CRAIBL, (1962, Avril-Decembre), pp. 111-113.

[2]Miller identifies this figure as a "bull man" which, he states, is the most obvious explanation of his appearance. "El the Warrior," HTR, LX (1967), p. 419, n. 28.

[3]According to Virolleaud, El's affliction is best translated by "flux de ventre et incontinence d'urine." Ibid., p. 113.

[4]"Et le conteur ajoute que la voix du dieu était alors aussi faible que la voix de ceux qui descendent ou sont déjà descendus dans la terre: yrdm ars. Ibid.

his servants.[1] No judgment of El's ethical character can be made on the basis of either the text or the picture.

It is probably not possible to reconstruct all of the references to El in Ugaritic Literature so that they form a consistent whole. From our analysis of the various passages we can safely conclude that El was the head of the Ugaritic pantheon, with the power and authority that went with the position. His permission was required by the other gods before they could undertake any major venture, but it was not impossible to receive such permission through deceit or threat. There is no doubt that he was less popular than the younger deities Baal and Anath, but this does not establish any plot to displace him.[3] While he has an interest in justice and morality, he also is the controlling force behind the fertility myth,[4] and on one occasion an active

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[1]Claude F. A. Schaeffer, "Le Culte d'El à Ras Shamra-Ugarit et le veau d'or," CRAIBL, (April-June, 1966), p. 328.

[2]Regarding this text, Pope ponders, "It will be interesting to see how this text may be used by those who are concerned with upholding the authority and dignity of El." Review of The Legacy of Canaan, JSS, X (1966), p. 239.

[3]This point can be illustrated by the fact that in certain cults or sects of Christianity Jesus is more popular than God, or Mary, the mother of God has a larger following than her son. The conclusion does not follow, however, that there is a plot to unseat God.

[4]This interpretation is defended by T. Worden who has written: "a whole host of deities, Atrt, Šps, and most important of all, Baal and Mot, must yield to the will of

participant. Like the other gods, he is not exempt from being endowed with human qualities, not even the basest of them.

Il which maintained the inevitable changes of the seasons; all had their task to perform, in order that rain might come to the earth and the earth bring forth its fruit." "The Literary Influence of the Ugaritic Fertility Myth on the Old Testament," VT, III (1953), p. 297.

CHAPTER II

THE ATTRIBUTES OF EL

Having examined the passages from Ugaritic literature where there are significant references to El, it is necessary now to make an attempt to summarize the attributes accorded to him and evaluate their importance. As El's role in the majority of the texts is secondary and usually quite passive in nature, it is necessary to depend, as far as Ugaritic material is concerned, upon various epithets that are used either in apposition to his name or vocatively, in making a character study of the high god. As there is wide disagreement on the translation and interpretation of a number of these terms, any study of the attributes of El must be regarded as tentative. The most thorough analysis of El's nature has been made by Marvin Pope,[1] whose contention is that the literature comes from a period when El was in a period of decline, being replaced by his young rival, Baal. The question to be reckoned with in assessing Pope's treatment is whether he deduces his theory from the attributes of El as they are found in the texts, or if he deduces the attributes of El from his theory.[2] The

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[1] El in the Ugaritic Texts, Chapter IV, pp. 25-54.

[2] For example, Pope sees in Yam's demand that Baal be

discussion of El's character will necessarily be limited by the facts that in a number of crucial passages the primary sources are ambiguous and the commentators biased.

El as "Bull"

One of the most common designations of the high god is tr ʾel.[1] tr is translated by Gordon as "Thor", but other translators use "Bull." Two qualities were generally associated with the bull--strength and procreative power. Albright sees the term as a fitting appelation of El whose name once implied the idea of power.

> The name El meant originally "the strong one," or "the leader." Thus "the Bull" was an appropriate designation, since among wild cattle, horses, etc., strength and precedence are almost synonymous, the leader being the bull or stallion strong enough to vanquish all rivals.[2]

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turned over to him (GORDON UH 137:15-37), a sign of El's weakness, that he is helpless in a brawl between Baal and his enemies, and that he was not the master of the situation. Ibid., p. 28. Whether El was, or was not, "master of the situation" is a matter of interpretation. Pope's discussion of El's abode also betrays the suspicion that he reads more into the text than he reads out of it. His conclusion, erected primarily on one unclear text (GORDON UH 137:19-31) where El's abode is not described as being at the Source of Two Rivers, that El was banished from his holy mountain to the infernal regions, staggers the imagination. Ibid., pp. 95-96.

[1] e.g. GORDON UH 129:16ff; 137:32-37; ʿnt. pl. vi:V:8-24,43; 49:IV:34, VI:27; Kret I:41, 59, 76, 169; 2 Aqht I:24, etc.

[2] F. W. Albright, Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan (Garden City, N.Y. Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1968), p. 120.

There are no clear references in the extant texts to the strength and power associated with the bull image of El.[1] But it seems quite logical that he would not possess the title without the accompanying attributes. This line of reasoning is followed by Miller who accepts Pope's view that El is pictured in the Ugaritic texts as a basically powerless deity, but argues that there is evidence for a tradition "which portrayed El in part as a warrior deity or a deity whose might and power was recognized and acclaimed."[2] He finds some support for this interpretation in the use of the Bull epithet for El. In the literature of Mesopotamia the Bull image was a symbol of might and strength as well as fertility,[3] e.g. the description of Gilgamesh as a wild ox.[4] He concludes that "the bull symbol functions as strongly to indicate might and strength as it does to indicate fertility, and may in fact be much more indicative of the former than the latter. El's appellative, "Bull," is reflective of this state of affairs."[5] Miller points out also that when the

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[1]The badly fragmented GORDON UH 75 may contain an account of a fight between El and Baal. According to Lokkegaard we see in this text "how El by stratagems reduces Baal to a state of helplessness." "A Plea for El the Bull," p. 234.

[2]Patrick D. Miller, Jr., "El the Warrior," p. 412.

[3]Ibid., p. 424.

[4]"The Epic of Gilgamesh," ANET, p. 73.

[5]Miller, op. cit., p. 425.

Ugaritic words for "bull" and/or "buffalo" (tr, ibr) are used in a descriptive way they have nothing to do with fertility but are indicative of strength and combat instincts.[1] This point is supported by GORDON UH 75 in which horns and humps are used as symbols of strength and power.

According to Pope, it is El's procreative powers which are symbolized by the epithet tr. His discussion of this subject is related primarily to an exposition of text 52 where El's "amative propensity" is vividly portrayed.[3] It should be noted in this particular text that El is neither referred to, or depicted as, a bull. This fact may add weight to Miller's suggestion that the procreative power is a secondary feature of the Bull image.[4] The procreative aspect cannot be dismissed, however, as is attested by the fact that El is referred to as the father of the divine family.[5] The numerous references to El as "Bull" would indicate that when the Ugaritic texts were written El was regarded as

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[1] Ibid., p. 419.

[2] El in the Ugaritic Texts, p. 35. [3] Ibid., pp. 35-42.

[4] Miller also finds support for his thesis in the fact that the title "Bull" is used exclusively for El. "Baal is the fertility god par excellence and in one case (UT 76) begets a bull (ibr) by a cow. Yet Baal is not called "Bull," as is El, which would be strange if the appellative connoted primarily procreative prowess." Miller, op. cit., p. 419.

[5] Gray, The Legacy of Canaan, p. 158.

the embodiment of strength and procreative power, or else he had once been so thought of and still retained the title without the attributes it implied.

El as "King"

An epithet which is applied directly only to El in the mythological texts[1] is mlk, "king."[2] All that can be concluded from the references to El as "King," according to Pope, is that he was no more than nominal king, or ex-king of the gods.[3] While this view may be correct, Gray's observation should be noted that except for the treatment received from Anath, El is always respectfully addressed, and accorded the dignity of kingship.[4] Key passages in the controversial question of the authenticity of El's kingship are GORDON UH ʿnt: pl.vi:V:40-43 and 51:IV:43-46 in which Anath and Asherah seek El's permission for the building of Baal's palace, acknowledging in so doing El's kingship. It is possible to infer from these texts that Baal is usurping El's position and that Anath and Asherah have rejected El as king. The conclusion is also possible that Baal is El's vassal. The latter interpretation is consistent with the translations of

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[1] Pope, El in the Ugaritic Texts, p. 158.

[2] e.g. GORDON UH 49:I:8; 51:IV:25,48; ʿnt: V:16,44; 2 Aqht: VI:49.

[3] Pope, op. cit., pp. 25-32.

[4] Gray, op. cit., p. 159.

Driver, Ginsberg, and Gaster, while Gordon's is ambiguous, allowing either interpretation.[1] Driver emphasizes that it is for Anath and Asherah that Baal is king and it is they who will serve him.[2] Furthermore, Baal's kingship had been destined by El.

> "The victor Baal is our king, our judge,
> "over whom is none. Both of us will carry
> "his chalice, both of us will carry his cup."
> At that moment verily the bull El his father,
> the god who destined him (for) king, cried out. . .[3]

According to Ginsberg, it is El's decree that Baal be served as sovereign.

> "Thy decree, O El, is wise:
> Wisdom with ever-life thy portion.
> Thy decree is: our king's Puissant Baal,
> Our sovereign second to none,
> All of us must bear his gi(ft),
> All of us (must b)ear his purse."[4]

Gaster reconstructs the passage more directly as Baal's petition:

> Then up speaks Queen Asherat-of-the-Sea:
> "He sends thee word, O El,
> thou who art ever so wise
> (mayest thou thrive and prosper forever!),
> Baal Puissant sends thee word,
> even he who is now our king,
> our ruler with none above him,
> our . . . to whom we bring . . . in tribute
> our . . . to whom we bring . . . in tribute:
> Hearken, thou Bull-god, his father,
> O sovereign El who didst call him into being,

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[1]For Gordon's translation see above, p. 40.

[2]Driver, Canaanite Myths and Legends, p. 91, n. 5.

[3]Ibid., pp. 91, 97. [4]ANET, p. 133.

hearken what they are saying,[1]

It is hard to escape the impression that Baal's kingship is limited and subject to the authority of El. Pope's major arguments that El's authority is nominal are Asherah's flattery and Anath's threat.[2] Over against this, however, must be set the fact that El's authority was regarded as absolutely necessary before construction could begin. That El bore the title mlk also should not be dismissed lightly.[3] Furthermore, not only is concern expressed throughout Ugaritic literature that El's authority be granted in matters pertaining to kingship and castle building, but there is also genuine fear that El might upset thrones and break scepters.[4] The weight of evidence seems to support the view that El's position as king of the gods was something more than nominal.[5]

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[1]Thespis, p. 184. [2]Pope, op. cit., pp. 27-28.

[3]Commenting on mlk, Gray notes that "the term in its actual context expresses regular government, order as against disorder, and signifies the supremacy of El among the various gods of Ras Shamra." The Legacy of Canaan, p. 156.

[4]See GORDON UH 49:VI:25-31 where the possibility of El taking away his sovereignty strikes terror into the heart of Mot. The same fear is expressed by Yam in GORDON UH 129: 15-20.

[5]The significance of El's kingship is one of many problems on which Ugaritic scholars are divided, and it is of interest to note that the same fact can be cited as evidence for interpretations that are quite opposite to one another. On El's remoteness Pope states that "El appears somewhat aloof and remote from the center of activity in the mythological texts. The gods and goddesses come to him with their entreaties and demands or send their messengers. The actual rule of the world, however, appears to be divided be-

El as "Creator"

There is no extant Ugaritic creation story, but there are a number of epithets accorded El which indicate a tradition that El was the active force in creation. To be noted particularly are the references to him as "father" and "creator of creatures." El is frequently addressed as ab, "father," by the other gods, and he is generally acknowledged to be the father of men as well.[1] He and his consort Asherah are represented as the parents of the gods who are referred to collectively as the "seventy children of Asherah."[2] The gods are designated also as dr ʾel, "generation (circle, race) of El,"[3] and dr bn ʾel, "race of the sons of

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tween Baal in the heavens and on the earth's surface, Mot in the netherworld, and Yam in the sea. These three gods are at times in conflict and El seems to vacillate in his favor of now one and now another of the rivals." El in the Ugaritic Texts, p. 29. For Gray, El's remoteness is a corollary of his supremecy:

"Matters affecting the cosmic order, the question of a palace for Yamm or Baal or the substitution of Attar for Baal as the chief power of fertility, are referred to the final authority of El, who is approached in these matters with deference in his remote palace, as for instance by the Mother-goddess, his consort Aṯerat." The Legacy of Canaan, p. 156.

[1]El is addressed as "father" by other deities in GORDON UH 49:IV:34, VI:27; 51:IV:47; ʿnt: pl.vi:V:18, 43; 2 Aqht: I:24. He is called ab adm, "Father of Mankind," in Krt: 37, 43, 136, 151, 278.

[2]GORDON UH 51:VI:46.

[3]GORDON UH 128:III:17-19 (III K.III 17-19).

El."[1] Pope notes that with one exception all the gods consistently regard El as their father.

> With the possible exception of Baal, who is commonly called Dagan's son, IAB I 24, 6*; 1K 78, there is no evidence in the Ugaritic texts that any of the Semitic gods stand outside the family of El. It is, of course, possible that some of the gods may have been adopted or otherwise engrafted on the family tree.[2]

El as the father of the gods may be implied in the phrase ʾab.šnm which Gordon transliterates as "Father of Šnm,"[3] and Driver as "father of years."[4] Driver's translation suggests a parallel with the Biblical expression "Ancient of Days," of Daniel 7:13. It is Gray's opinion that the proper translation should be "Father of the Exalted Ones." He justifies this interpretation with the assertion that the Ugaritic plural of the word for year is šnt and not šnm,[5] and concludes that the phrase refers to El's status as the father of the divine family.[6]

It is not certain in what sense El is the "Father of Mankind." It may imply his role in creation and be synonymous with the frequently used title "Creator of Creatures."[7] There is some evidence that El was thought to be the source of human life in granting or withholding pro-

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[1]GORDON UH 107:2. [2]Pope, op. cit., p. 47.

[3]GORDON UH 51:IV:25.

[4]Canaanite Myths and Legends, p. 97.

[5]The Legacy of Canaan, p. 156. [6]Ibid.

[7]e.g. GORDON UH 51:II:11; 49:III:11, 2 Aqht: I:2.

creative power and Pope has noted that "El bestows fecundity on Danel and Keret and presumably he was thought to do the same for humanity at large both in normal and abnormal cases, just as in the Old Testament YHWH grants and withholds fertility."[1] For Gray, the title *ʾab ʾadm* does not indicate El's procreative powers, but rather the social relationship between the high god and mankind. The term *ʾadm* may mean simply "community," and the phrase *ʾab ʾadm* would therefore imply "He in whom the community is integrated."[2] Gray also sees a relationship between El's title as "Father," and ethical qualities suggested by El's designations as "the Kindly, the Compassionate" (*ltpn ʾel dpʾed*).[3] While such a relationship is possible, it does not provide any reason to dismiss El's role as begetter as far as mankind is concerned. Unless some solid argument is offered for a contrary conclusion, the term *ʾab* should imply the same relationship when used in reference to men as it does for gods. Considering the facts that the only text (GORDON UH 52) where El plays a clearly active part is a theogony of the minor gods who are sired by El, and El as begetter and father are used in parallel,[4] one must conclude that El

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[1]Pope, *op. cit.*, p. 47

[2]*The Legacy of Canaan*, p. 159.

[3]"Social Aspects of Canaanite Religion," p. 181.

[4]GORDON UH *ʾnt*: pl.ix:II:17-18.

was regarded as a Creator-deity. The references to El as "father," by both gods and men, and "Creator of creatures," indicate that in Ugaritic thought ultimate origins were associated with El. Fisher has discerned different types of creation at Ugarit,[1] and would limit El's creative power to the original formation of the cosmos. But there are hints that El's creative ability extended beyond this. In the Legend of Aqht Baal is represented as having creative power in being able to restore to life the eagles he had gutted in the search for Aqht's remains.[2] In the Legend of Kret, however, it is El who possesses healing power, and he alone is able to exorcize Kret's illness.[3] In this instance it would seem that El possessed greater creative ability of the Baal type, to use Fisher's term,[4] than did Baal.

The Wisdom of El

There are a few references to the wisdom (hkm) of

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[1] L. R. Fisher distinguishes between two types of creation in Ugaritic mythology in his article "Creation at Ugarit and in the Old Testament," VT, XV (1965), pp. 313-324. There is creation of the El type, or theogony, which has to do with ultimate origins, and creation of the Baal type which has to do with the ordering of the cosmos. Fisher's thesis is that creation of the Baal type had a greater practical interest in the East Mediterranean world, and that it was the Baal type of creation which the Hebrews adopted.

[2] 1 Aqht: 107-146. [3] GORDON UH 126:V:7-30

[4] Fisher, op. cit., p. 320.

El . Pope points out that wisdom is an attribute of the gods in general, but only El is singled out for this quality in the Ugaritic texts.[1] Both Anath and Asherah praise El for his wisdom in making their petition.

> "Thy bidding, El, is wise, thy wisdom
> "everlasting, a life of good luck (is) thy bidding."[2]

El's wisdom may have been a natural by-product of his mellow age, as is hinted in Asherah's remark, "thy gray beard instructs thee."[3] The inference that El was the epitome of wisdom might be made from the reference in Kret where someone is complimented by being as "wise as El, as the bull Luṭpan."[4] Any further information about the wisdom of El is speculative, for it is not mentioned elsewhere than in the passages quoted. It is not, as Pope points out, "conspicuously illustrated in any of his actions."[5] According to Gordon the root ḥkm means simply "to be wise."[6] Gray speculates that it may have the nuance of the Arabic word "to decide," supporting the position that El held a place of

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[1] El in the Ugaritic Texts, p. 43.

[2] GORDON UH ʿnt: pl. vi:V:38-39; 51:IV:41-42, Driver's translation, Canaanite Myths and Legends, pp. 91, 97.

[3] GORDON UH 51:V:66.

[4] GORDON UH 126:IV:2-3 (IIK IV:2-3), Driver's translation, Canaanite Myths and Legends, p. 43.

[5] Pope, op. cit., p. 43.

[6] Gordon, UT, p. 396, paragraph 859.

absolute authority over the gods.[1] While this accords with Gray's interpretation of Canaanite religion generally, there are not sufficient references to El's wisdom to draw any conclusions one way or the other.

The Mercy of El

Some of the most frequently used epithets of El, and which are reserved exclusively for him,[2] allude to El's benevolence, mercy, kindness, benignity, etc. The name "Loṭan," alone or in combination, is often used in parallel with the name "El." The meaning of ltpn, as given by Gordon, is "kind, fine."[3] Pope's suggestion is "friendly," "one who has a heart."[4] In combination it appears as ltpn il dpid.[5] The meaning of pid is "heart, mind, kindness, etc."[6] pid is frequently used alone as an epithet for El in the expression

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[1]Commenting on GORDON UH 51:IV:41-42, Gray argues that the statement signifies Baal's role "to actualize the Order of El the creator by his repeated conflict wih, and victory over, the forces of Chaos. Baal but maintains what El has decided and decreed." "Social Aspects of Canaanite Religion," p. 178.

[2]Dussaud points out that no other god in the texts of Ras Shamra is qualified by the terms "bienveillant" and "compatissant," "Les combats sanglants de ʿAnat," p. 154.

[3]Gordon, UT, p. 428, #1373.

[4]El in the Ugaritic Texts, p. 44.

[5]GORDON UH 49:I:21-22, III:10,14.

[6]Gordon, UT, p. 466, #1996.

"God of Mercy," or "kindly El."[1] When it appears with ltpn, El's benevolence is doubly expressed. El is also referred to in the Kret legend by the combination ltpn.wqdš which translated would be "Beneficent and Holy."[2]

There may be reference to the mercy of El in the highly obscure text 107 in the phrase ḥnn ʾel (line 6). Gray translates this as "Mercy,"[3] following Eissfeldt and Obermann.[4] Gordon gives the meaning of the root as "to be gracious, to favor."[5] In Hebrew ḥnn has the meaning "to be inclined,

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[1]e.g. GORDON UH 51:II:10, IV:58; 67:VIII1; 49:III,4, 10,14; 77:45; 126:IV:10; 3Aqht; "rev." 10, etc.

[2]GORDON UH 125:11, 21-22. There is considerable disagreement as to the translation and interpretation of this expression. Gordon sees Qdš to be a reference to Asherah. The significance of the phrase is that Kret was accepted as the son of the chief god and goddess, Ugarit and Minoan Crete, p. 113, n. 69. Driver's translation would suggest that two deities are involved but Kadesh is not identified:

". . .'Is then
'Keret the son of El, the progeny
'of Lutpan and Kadesh?' . . ."

Canaanite Myths and Legends, p. 41. Ginsberg translates both terms, and whether one or two gods are meant is ambiguous:

"'Is then, (Ke)ret a son of El,
An offspring of the Kindly One, and a holy
being?'--"

ANET, p. 147. Pope suggests that ltpn wqdš is a double-barreled name like Koshar-wa-Khasis. El in the Ugaritic Texts, p. 44.

[3]"Social Aspects of Canaanite Religion," p. 183.

[4]Eissfeldt's translation is "El is Mercy," which follows from his assumption that the terms are predicates of nominal sentences. El im ugaritischen Pantheon (Berlin, 1951), p. 61. Obermann, regarding the words as verbs renders the phrase "Pity us, O El!" "An Antiphonal Psalm from Ras Shamra," JBL, LV (1936), p. 44.

[5]Gordon, UT, p. 398, #882.

favourable, kind, gracious, to pity, to have mercy, to bestow, etc.[1] Gray also sees a reference to El's mercy in line 12, bmrḥ ʾel which he translates "By the Mercy of El," citing an Arabic parallel as his authority.[2] Gordon identifies mrḥ as "spear,"[3] however, and interprets lines 12-18 as a list of El's weapons.[4]

The mercy and benignity of El is attested in the Ras Shamra texts by the use of the terms ltpn, pid, and possibly ḥnn. That mrḥ conveys this meaning is highly speculative and doubtful. To interpret mercy and other ethical qualities as hypostases of El on the basis of text 107 alone is to build a theory on a very uncertain foundation. El is described as merciful, but not as frequently or as absolutely as Gray would maintain.[5] Løkkegaard may also exaggerate the significance of the references to El's mercy when he attributes to him the quality of ḥilm, the highest virtue the

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[1]As defined by Karl Feyerabend in Langenscheidt's Hebrew-English Dictionary, 10th ed. (Berlin, 1958), p. 104.

[2]Gray, op. cit., p. 183, n. 4; Legacy of Canaan, p. 191, n.1.

[3]UT, p. 437, #1547. According to Gordon, mrḥ means "spear" in 49:I:23; 125:47, 51. Ginsberg agrees with this interpretation, ANET, pp. 140, 147. Driver renders it variously as "unguents" (Canaanite Myths and Legends, p. 111), "windpipe" (Ibid., p. 41) and "fan" (Ibid.).

[4]Ugaritic Literature, p. 109.

[5]e.g. as in his affirmation that El was hypostatized as Mercy. The Legacy of Canaan, p. 191.

Arabs knew in a ruler, being "a mixture of goodness, friendliness and wisdom, which results in moderation and tolerance, but after all is based on self-reliance and belief in one's own power, so that one is able to let the forces have free scope while standing in the point of balance."[1] While Gray and Løkkegaard may make too much of El's mercy, Pope errs on the other extreme by discounting it. Following a questionable philosophy that mercy and compassion are indicative of weakness he connects these qualities with El's senility. Commenting on El's epithet tr ʾel dpid,[2] he says "Benignity is not a quality commonly associated with the bull, but El is apparently an old bull and not very spirited."[3] El's mercy, according to Pope, is not related to any ethical ideas, but only to El's otiosity and cowardice. "Nowhere in the Ugaritic texts does El exhibit the violence of Kronos who castrated his father, murdered his son, and beheaded his daughter, but he may have been capable of such deeds in his earlier years."[4] The one instance where El's mercy may be actively expressed is in the healing of Kret, and here it is connected with his creative power.[5] El's mercy is probably not as absolute an attribute as advanced by

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[1] "A Plea for El the Bull," p. 233.

[2] GORDON UH 51:II:10.

[3] El in the Ugaritic Texts, p. 44.

[4] Ibid., pp. 44-45. [5] GORDON UH 126:V:7-30.

Gray, nor as negative a quality as expressed by Pope.

The Justice of El

Justice is not specifically mentioned as an attribute of El but there are some hints of it in the legendary material. In both Kret and Aqht one of the responsibilities of the king is the dispensing of justice. Yaṣṣib declares to his father that he has relinquished his right to rule by failing to judge the case of the widow and to feed the fatherless, etc.,[1] for which reproof he is soundly cursed by Kret. Similarly, it is King Danel's function to sit in the gate of the city to judge the case of the widow and adjudicate the cause of the fatherless.[2] According to Gray, these passages indicate that justice was a concern of El. "Just as the king is peculiarly the son of El it is natural to see in the specific function of the king a reflection of the function of El."[3] The validity of this conclusion rests on the relationship that was thought to obtain between El and the King. If the references to Kret as a son of El[4] indicate that his kingship was bestowed upon him by El, there is some support for the proposition that justice was a function of El. The argument would be strong-

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[1] GORDON UH 127:42-54.

[2] 2 Aqht: V:5-9.

[3] "Social Aspects of Canaanite Religion," p. 172.

[4] e.g. GORDON UH 125:10, 21, 110.

er if there were some reference to El actually dispensing justice, or if there were a prophetic passage in which he called for it. The closest allusion there is to El hearin the claim of a wronged party is Anath's demand that Aqht be punished for his refusal to relinquish his bow to her.[1] El's decision is

> . . . "He that defrauds thee shall indeed be struck down."[2]

This passage suggests that El's "justice" is misdirected if not entirely capricious.[3]

Having noted the attributes of El associated with his various epithets, some evaluation can be made of their relative importance in Ugaritic Literature. They fall into two categories--those which are depicted in the roles assigned to El in myth and legend, and those which are peripheral in respect to the main action of the narratives. In the first category must be placed the attributes of strength and fertility associated with the Bull image, his authority and power as king, and his creative ability. Without these, he could not dispense kingdoms, authorize castle building, beget other gods, or answer the prayers of Kret and Danel. The ethical attributes--wisdom, mercy, justice, must be included

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[1]3 Aqht: "rev." 10-19.

[2]Driver's translation, Canaanite Myths and Legends, p. 57.

[3]It should be noted that the episode is not concerned with the justice of El, but the fierceness of Anath. See above, p. 18.

among the second type. Some of El's actions betray their absence rather than presence. Furthermore, in every instance where El has an active part to play, the attributes implied in phrases like "Lotan, God of Mercy," are quite irrelevant to any action he takes. It is possible that El's compassion is expressed in granting progeny to Kret and Danel, but the conditions imposed upon Kret,[1] and the sacrifices required of Danel,[2] do not suggest that benevolence was the prime quality of El. It is to be concluded that the epithets attributed to El which have an ethical significance were of secondary importance in the literature and religion of Ugarit. That they are used may imply that there was some insight or hope on the part of some Ugaritic thinkers that the highest deity ought to possess some moral qualities. All of the references to the wisdom and mercy of El could be struck out and the basic nature of the extant literature would not be changed. The most that these expressions could indicate is that some speculative thinking was taking place that ethical attributes and deity ought to be related. El, as he is portrayed in Ugaritic literature is accorded certain ethical attributes, but there is no indication that he was thought to embody them, nor is there any expectation that they be expressed in

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[1] Krt: 62-153.

[2] 2 Aqht: I: 2-17.

his activities. There is a dramatic contrast, in regard to moral and rational qualities, between this conception of deity in Ugaritic literature and that of the eighth-century prophets of Israel who portrayed Yahweh as the god who preferred justice and righteousness to sacrifices and burnt offerings. [1]

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[1] e.g. Amos 5:24, Isaiah 1:12-17.

CONCLUSION

From the examination of descriptions of El in Ugaritic literature the following points are established.

1. The canaanite high god El was considered the head of the pantheon and possessed the power and authority of that position. In the literature that has been preserved he is not the most popular deity, and has a far less active part to play than either Baal or Anath. Although he is subject to flattery, trickery, and threat, and on occasion behaves in very human ways, his position as king of the gods is never questioned, and his permission is required for any major activity in which they engage.

2. As the head of the pantheon, El is addressed by every superlative epithet. Some of these--Bull, King, Creator, etc., extol his power and authority. Some can be described as ethical--wisdom, mercy, justice. In the active parts he plays in myth and legend, El's attributes of power and authority are confirmed by his role. There is not such confirmation of the ethical epithets. Therefore, while these epithets offer some indication that El was conceived as a moral and rational deity, there is not sufficient evidence, in the mythic and epic literature, to establish such a view with any high degree of certainty.

3. There is not good evidence, from extant Ugaritic material, for the theory that Yahweh had a Canaanite origin, if the major premise of that theory is that El was a moral

and rational deity.

In further studies dealing with the more complex question of the influence of Canaanite thought on the Israelite conception of deity, the fact that ethical qualities were not primary attributes of deity must be taken into consideration. Some of the theories advanced to show the relationship between El and Yahweh have failed to do this. MacLaurin, for example, who argues that El was defeated by Baal at Ugarit but in Israel triumphed as Yahweh, works from the untenable assumption that El was the moral, rational God of Ugarit.[1] Løkkegaard has asserted that Yahweh's disposition as a desert god was characterized by "sternness," but was mellowed by El's wisdom and compassion,[2] giving the impression that El was the embodiment of these qualities.

There is abundant evidence that the cultures of Canaan and Israel freely mingled for nearly a millenium--from the time of Abraham to Elijah.[3] The Hebrews appropriated, among other things, Canaanite shrines, institutions, and religious poetry.[4] It is an attractive temptation to assume

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[1]MacLaurin, op. cit., p. 283.

[2]Løkkegaard, "A Plea for El the Bull," p. 232.

[3]It was Elijah who first declared that co-existence between Yahweh and Baal was no longer possible. 1 Kings 18:21.

[4]For discussions of Canaanite influences on Israelite religion and culture see Elmer A. Leslie's study Old Testament Religion in the Light of Its Canaanite Background (New York: Abingdon Press, 1936). Leslie dis-

that they were also in debt to the Canaanites for their conception of deity. Such an assumption should not be made, however, without establishing that there actually was a link between the Canaanite El and the Israelite Yahweh. Such a link might exist if the two deities shared the same essential attributes. However, the ethical qualities which became predominate in the Israelite conception of Yahweh were only of secondary importance in the Ugaritic understanding of El. That the Canaanites contributed to the Israelite conception of deity could be a tenable proposition if there were some indication that Yahweh had originally belonged to the Canaanite pantheon. No convincing evidence for such a theory has yet been offered.[1] Another approach that might be taken in relating Canaanite and Israelite conceptions of deity is the attempt to trace certain ideas which originated in Canaan and were perfected by Israel. The relationship between ethical qualities and deity is such an

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cusses the process of syncretization, emphasizing the positive contributions of the Canaanites over the more usually mentioned negative ones. Norman C. Habel in Yahweh Versus Baal: A Conflict of Religious Cultures (New York: Bookman Associates, 1964), takes the position that the encounter of the two cultures was primarily one of conflict. Frank E. Eakin suggests that the term which best describes the encounter is Kulturkampf--"two essentially differing cultures attempting to dominate each other." "Yahwism and Baalism Before the Exile." JBL, LXXXIV (1965), pp. 407-414.

[1]There is one reference to "Yw" in Ugaritic literature. The question of whether this is an early form of Yahweh is discussed in Appendix III.

idea. It could be argued that the association of ethical qualities with deity which was only a speculative suggestion in ancient Ugarit was appropriated by Israel, and largely through the efforts of the eighth century prophets, emerged as a central concept of Hebrew religion.[1] In order to prove such a theory it would be necessary first of all to demonstrate that the original speculative idea had its source in Canaan, and not as independant thought in early Israel. In the second place it would be necessary to provide some specific, concrete evidence--historical, linguistic, archeological--to indicate that the idea actually did pass from one culture to another. It may be even a more difficult problem to agree on what sort of evidence is required as proof of the transference of an idea. But without such evidence, all that remains is an example of two unrelated religious concepts being united by a philosophical theory, and the concepts so united being offered, in turn, as proof of the philosophical theory.

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[1]This is an application of Whitehead's theory of ideas which is outlined in Appendix I.

APPENDIX I

EL, YAHWEH, AND WHITEHEAD

It is possible that the link between El and Yahweh is to be found in the theory of ideas propounded by Alfred North Whitehead who has described the process by which an idea evolves from the speculative thought of a few individuals to a universal principle regarded as a law of human society.[1] The ideas that are central in the values of mankind today were once peripheral. Whitehead describes this process as follows:

> There will be a general idea in the background flittingly, waveringly, realized by the few in its full generality--or perhaps never expressed in any adequate universal form with persuasive force . . . But this general idea, whether expressed or implicitly just below the surface of consciousness, embodies itself in special expression after special expression. It condescends so as to lose the magnificence of its generality, but it gains in the force of its peculiar adaption to the concrete circumstances of a particular age. It is a hidden driving force, haunting humanity, and ever appearing in specialized guise as compulsory on action by reason of its appeal to the uneasy conscience of the age.[2]

There are, as Whitehead analyzes it, three distinct stages in the introduction of great ideas:

I. They start as speculative suggestions in the minds

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[1]Alfred North Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas, Mentor Books (New York: Macmillan Co., 1955).

[2]Ibid., p. 23.

of a small gifted group and acquire a limited application to human life, but the social system is not immediately affected by them.

2. Because the general idea is a threat to the existing order it is resisted and suppressed and given a place among "the interesting notions which have a restricted application."

3. The idea, however, emobdies within it a program of reform and "at any moment the smouldering unhappiness of mankind may seize on some such program and initiate a period of rapid change guided by the light of its doctrines."[1]

Whitehead uses as an example of this process the idea of the dignity of man which culminated, after a two-thousand year "smouldering" period, in the abolition of slavery. The Athenians were slave-owners but they humanized the institution. Plato and the Stoics believed that human nature had its essential rights. "But neither the humane slave-owners, nor the inspired Plato, nor the clear-headed lawyers, initiated any campaign against slavery."[2] The institution was presupposed in the structure of their society. However, the idea that humanized the institution of slavery in their day was seized upon two millennia later as the principle which justified and demanded its abolition.

These three stages outlined by Whitehead are discernible (particularly to disciples of Whitehead) in the

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[1] Ibid., p. 22. [2] Ibid.

literature of Ugarit and Israel, in the introduction of the idea that ethical principles are necessary attributes of deity.

1. As demonstrated in the thesis, the ethical attributes of El were not of the essence. The fact that they are mentioned in the literature indicates that at Ugarit the connection of ethical qualities and deity was a speculative suggestion.

2. The second stage, where the idea is suppressed or limited, can be discerned in the movement to replace El by Baal as the chief deity,[1] and also by restricting the use of ethical terms to the High god who usually maintains a remote distance from the realities of human existence.

3. The third stage in the introduction of the idea that ethical qualities belong to the essence of deity is to be seen in the reform initiated by the eighth century prophets in Israel. The reform picked up momentum with the decline of the social order in Israel, and out of the disruption and disillusion of the exile it emerged as a fundamental tenet of Judaism.

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[1]The reasons for thinking that a movement existed to replace El with Baal are discussed by A. S. Kapelrud, Baal in the RasShamra Texts, pp. 63-64, 89 ff., 137, and by M. H. Pope, El in the Ugaritic Texts, pp. 27ff.

APPENDIX II

PROBLEMS OF UGARITIC STUDY

Anyone who attempts to solve a particular problem in the field of Ugaritic studies is subject to the limitations imposed by a variety of other unsolved problems. It is not possible to discuss these problems in depth. Any one of them could constitute a major area of research. It is necessary to cite them in order to fully appreciate how tentative any theory related to Ugaritic studies must be. The only thing that can be said with certainty about Ugaritic religion and culture is that nothing can be said with certainty. This should be evident from the following unanswered questions and unresolved problems.

One of the questions that has not yet been answered is in regard to the nature of the literary material itself. First, it should be obvious that any fundamentalist approach

which regards the texts as direct revelation from the gods themselves should be disregarded. The texts are human productions, and errors that occur in divine genealogies should not be matters of undue concern.[1] Yet scholars have reached rather startling conclusions by their failure to appreciate this fact.[2] The more serious debate centers around the question of whether the myths and legends were purely literary productions, i.e. art for art's sake, or if they were produced by the cult for the use of the cult. The evidence that they are cult-texts is presented by A.S. Kapelrud,[3] and is quite convincing. The more troublesome problem,

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[1] Johs. Pedersen offers sound advice in his discussion of the differences of the descriptions of Baal given in Philo Byblius and the Ugaritic material when he says of Baal "That he is called the son of Dagan, though he should rather be called the father of the corn, and though he is a son of El, is immaterial. Genealogical relations in the world of the gods are often changing and accidental." "Canaanite and Israelite Cultus." Acta Orientalia, XVIII (1939), p. 4.

[2] For example, J. Fontenrose arrives at the conclusion that Dagon and El were the same god. From the point of view of logic, his reasoning is irrefutable. Baal was a son of Dagon. Anath was a daughter of El. Baal and Anath were brother and sister. Therefore Dagon and El were identical. "Dagon and El," Oriens, X (1957), pp. 277-279.

[3] A.S. Kapelrud, Baal in the Ras Shamra Texts, pp. 15-23. In support of his argument, Kapelrud cites the fact that the two things necessary for the maintenance of a cult were found at Ugarit--a temple and a literature, and these complemented each other. "A temple needed its cult texts, and cult texts need a temple. In Ugarit we find both--and both of them with Baal as the central figure." Ibid., p. 18.

as De Langhe sees it, is the determining of the Sitz im Kult. "What ends did these chants serve? At what occasions were they recited, prayed, chanted, declaimed, perhaps even acted?"[1] T. H. Gaster has developed the thesis that the Ugaritic literature is composed of cult-texts which were in fact the librettos of the ritual drama performed on the holy days of each year in which the king, representing the god, took the leading part.[2] Goetz, on the other hand, has declared that they are not "librettos for dramatic performance."[3] It may safely be assumed that the mythological and legendary literature from Ugarit was produced and used by the cult, but the questions of how and when it was used have yet to be answered with certainty.

There are a number of practical problems connected with the texts and the use of them. These are all related to the accidents of history that are so frustrating to the student of the Ancient Near East, but with which he must learn to live. The most obvious difficulty is the fragmentary nature of the texts. It is fortunate that the Ugaritians wrote on clay tablets rather than papyrus or vellum,

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[1]R. De Langhe, "Myth, Ritual, and Kingship in the Ras Shamra Tablets," in Myth, Ritual, Kingship, ed. by S. H. Hooke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 129.

[2]T. H. Gaster, Thespis. His thesis is summarized on pp. 17-19.

[3]A. Goetze, Review of The Loves and Wars of Baal and Anat by C. H. Gordon. JBL, LXIII (1944), p. 430.

else none of their literature would be available to us. But even clay is subject to the ravages of time and abuse, and there are great gaps in the narratives where a tablet has been broken or the script damaged. Consequently, some of the key sections of the epics are lost. For example, in the poem of Baal and Anath the account of Baal's descent into the realm of Mot is described in a section where about thirty lines are missing. This is also the case with the conclusion of the Aqht legend. The gist of what happens in some of the missing sections can be guessed at, but there is always the peril of reading into them what the interpreter would like to find there. The criticism has been levelled at Gaster that he has filled in the gaps in accordance with his theory of myth and drama in the Ancient Near East.[1] But Gaster is not alone, for one of the factors that must always be considered in the reconstruction of a damaged passage is the bias and point of view of the interpreter. All Ugaritic studies, therefore, must be considered as tentative and incomplete because of the fragmentary nature of the original sources.

Another problem complicating Ugaritic studies has been a lack of uniformity in the designation of the tablets. Virolleaud numbered them according to the sequence of their discovery. But he departed from this practice and labelled

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[1]DeLanghe, op. cit., p. 134.

the larger mythological tablets according to their subject matter. Gordon, on the other hand, remained consistent with the numerical system. Other scholars labelled the texts according to the facts as they saw them, with the result that a given tablet may be referred to in half-a-dozen different ways. For example, what is text 49 for Gordon is IAB for Virolleaud, Eissfeldt, and DeLanghe, A for Bauer, Baal III for Driver, and 6(IAB) for Herdner. What is text 54 for Gordon is 52 for Baurer, 55 for DeLanghe, and 53 for Herdner. It further adds to the confusion to note that text 52 in Gordon's reckoning is not the same tablet that Eissfeldt and DeLanghe label as 52. These discrepancies in ennumeration present only a minor problem in comparison to the one previously mentioned, and can be quickly solved by reference to a comparative table.[1]

Also a difficulty of a practical nature is the arrangement of the mythological texts in their proper sequence. A comparison of the order of the texts comprising the Baal myth as found in the translations of Gordon, Ginsberg, Gaster, and Driver, is sufficient to illustrate the

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[1]John Gray has included a concordance of Ugaritic texts in The Legacy of Canaan, second ed. rev., pp. 326-329. A useful comparative table is also available in O. Eissfeldt's article, "The Alphabetical Cuneiform Texts from Ras Shamra Published in 'Le Palais Royal D'Ugarit'" in JSS, II (1957), pp. 1-49.

problem.[1]

Gordon	Ginsberg
129 (IIIAB,C)	ʾnt:Pl,ix-x (VIAB)
137 (IIIAB,B)	129 (IIIAB,C)
133	137 (IIIAB,B)
68 (IIIAB,A)	68 (IIIAB,A)
ʾnt:i-vi (VAB)	51 (IIAB)
ʾnt:Pl, ix-x (VIAB)	ʾnt:i-vi (VAB)
130	67 (I*AB)
131	62 {IAB}
51 (IIAB)	49 { }
67 (I*AB)	
62 {IAB}	Unplaced
49 { }	76 (IVAB)
76 (IVAB)	75 (BII)
132	
75	
136	
100	

Gaster	Driver
129 (IIIAB,C)	ʾnt, pl. (VI)
137 (IIIAB,B)	129 (III*C)
68 (IIIAB,A)	137 (III*B)
51 (IIAB,A)	68 (III*A)
67 (I*AB)	ʾnt (V)
67 obv.↓49↓62 rev.(IAB)	51 (II)
ʾnt:i-iii (VAB)	67 (I*)
	62,1-29 (Ii)
Unplaced	49 (III)
76 (IVAB)	62, 38-57 (Ivi)
ʾnt:Pl.ix-x (VIAB)	76 (IV)

How one interprets the mythology depends in large measure on what he considers to be the proper sequence of events described in it. For example, Gaster places the tablet ʾnt (VAB) at the end of the cycle because he sees in it a description of the ritual combat, the reinstatement of the King,

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[1] C. H. Gordon, Ugaritic Literature; Ginsberg, "Ugaritic Myths, Epics, and Legends," in ANET; Gaster, Thespis; G. R. Driver, Canaanite Myths and Legends.

and the Feast of Communion which would be the logical conclusion to the dramatic presentation of the seasonal myth.[1] He does not include columns iv-vi of the tablet in his translation as they are only a varient of text 51(IIAB).[2] It is because there is a parallel between the two that Gordon, Ginsberg, and Driver place ʾnt either immediately after or before 51. (Texts 130 and 131 which Gordon places between ʾnt and 51 are short and fragmentary and quite similar in style and content to ʾnt).

The question of how the texts should be arranged has some relevance to the discussion of El's position and power in the pantheon. Obermann, for example, has maintained that ʾnt:Pl.ix-x (VIAB), which is a building narrative, is earlier than ʾnt:i-vi (VAB), and is possibly even from a different narrative.[3] As El is the central figure in this building episode,[4] and Baal the hero of the later account, a rivalry between the two cults is indicated. The cult of Baal had probably increased in popularity by the time of the composition of the second account. The placement of these tablets is also important to Obermann as his theory that the

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[1]T. H. Gaster, Thespis, pp. 231-234. [2]Ibid., p. 242.

[3]Obermann, Ugaritic Mythology, pp. 12-14.

[4]In evaluating Obermann's hypothesis, it should be kept in mind that the text in question is of such a fragmentary nature that Ginsberg does not feel qualified to attempt a translation. ANET, p. 129.

mythology reflects the introduction of the age of metallurgy is one of the issues at stake.[1] Many problems of interpretation would be quickly resolved if agreement on the sequence of the texts were possible. That is not the case, however, and a limiting factor in the study of Ugaritic literature is our uncertainty of the order of the events described in the mythological epics.

Another handicap under which anyone must work in doing research on Ugaritic literature is the complex of problems connected with the translation of the material. Ugaritic, as a language, was unknown to modern scholars before 1930. The number of documents available for study in that language is relatively small in contrast with others, and they were written during the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C. Taking these facts into consideration, C. H. Gordon comments that "perfect translation is not attainable, even from well-known modern languages, let alone a newly-discovered language like Ugaritic, where the last word, on

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[1]Commenting on the tablet in question, Obermann states that "in 6AB, it is El and not Baal who appears to be the hero in search of an extraordinary kind of house who summons the master-builder Hayin to help him achieve his objective. Are we not therefore faced here with a rivalry between two schools of Ugaritic etiology--say between the priests of El and those of Baal--as to which of these two gods has inaugurated the age of metallurgy by appointing the Egyptian Hephaistos to build for him a house of precious metals?" Ugaritic Mythology, p. 14.

many points (some, quite basic), remains to be said."[1] The pioneer work in the decipherment of the cuneiform alphabetic tablets from Ugarit was done independently and almost simultaneously by H. Baurer, E. Dhorme, and Ch. Virolleaud.[2] The assumption from which they began was that the language belonged to the Semitic family. The affinities with the Semitic tongues, and the identification of words that could be interpreted on an internal basis from the parallelistic structure of poetic texts, made it possible to interpret a large number of the literary texts. An accurate translation of other texts cannot be given, but the difficulties connected with these are gradually being solved, as Gordon notes "(1) by new tablets, (2) by the internal analysis of previously known Ugaritic texts, (3) by comparative Semitic grammar, lexicography and idiom, and (4) by comparative literature: Hebrew, Accadian, Egyptian, Hittite, etc. even as far afield as the Homeric Epics."[3]

One of the temptations facing translators of Ugaritic literature has been to place more emphasis on the similarities between Ugaritic and other Semitic languages than on the differences. Commenting on this practice, Young states that as a method it must be used secondarily to contextual study.

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[1]Gordon, Ugaritic Literature, p. xi.

[2]Gordon, Ugaritic Textbook, p. 1. [3]Ibid., p. 3.

> In the early days translators were wont to approach the problem with a mass of Semitic dictionaries before them, endeavoring to find a word approximating the Ugaritic one in the other languages. This practice is a dangerous one when it is remembered, for instance, that in the Arabic dictionaries alone around 30% of the words are inventions of the lexicographers! On this method one can make almost any passage say several different things. Dictionaries are helpful but the contextual method is to be preferred.[1]

The translation of Ugaritic is a field where much research must yet be done, and the non-specialist is cautioned by one scholar that "comparative shopping among the offerings of other scholars is both necessary and rewarding."[2] Pope illustrates the difficulties of translation by a comparison of his own translation of a passage from UH 52 (SS) with that of Gray. According to Pope the passage tells about El roasting a bird on a fire, but for Gray it is two women who are roasted.[3] The comparison of any two translations of the

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[1] C. D. Young, "The Present Status of Ugaritic Studies," Jahrbuch Fur Kleinasiatische Forschung, II (1952-53), p. 239.

[2] Marvin H. Pope, Review of The Legacy of Canaan, second rev. ed., 1965, JSS, X (1966), p. 237.

[3] Pope sees Gray's translation to be a result of mistaken stichometry. The textual construction and translation of Gray is:

h [l] ʿṣr tḫrr lišt	Lo, the bird is being roasted at the coals,
ṣḫrrt.lpḫmm a[t]tm	But what are being inflamed at the coals are two women,
att.il.att.il wʿlmh	The wives of El, the wives of El, even the eternal.

The more likely stichometry is:

hl ʿṣr tḫrr lišt	Lo, the bird heats on the fire,
ṣḫrrt lpḫmm	Roasts on the coals,
attm att il	The women are El's wives,

same passage will reveal similar differences in interpretation. The student of Ugaritic literature must exercise even greater care than the student of Biblical writings to distinguish between what is in the text and what is in the mind of the translator.

A final problem to be noted that must also be acknowledged as a limiting factor in any study, is the widespread disagreement as to how the literature should be interpreted. This is particularly true of the mythological material commonly referred to as the Baal Cycle. What meaning did the activities of the gods have for the people of Ugarit? What was symbolized in the house-building episode, in Baal's defeat of his rivals, in Anath's "threshing" of Mot, etc? What natural or cosmic forces were personifed in Baal and Mot, and what reality did their enmity represent? The weight of scholarly opinion favors the view that the fertility motif is dominant in the mythology. In the conflict between Baal and Mot can be detected the hopes and fears of an agricultural society whose survival is depend-

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att il w ʿlmm El's wives and forever.
Ibid., p. 235.

ent upon the productivity of the soil. Gaster is the leading exponent of the view that the Poem of Baal is a seasonal myth. Baal is the god of rain, Yam is the god of the sea,[1] and Mot, whose name means "Death," is the god of all that lacks life and vitality. "Their three-cornered contest for dominion over the earth represents, however, more than a mere conflict of natural forces," says Gaster, "what it symbolizes and allegorizes is, specifically, the alternation of the seasons in the Syro-Palestinian year."[2] The seasonal interpretation is defended also by Vivian and Isaac Rosensohn Jacobs who have attempted to vindicate the character of Mot whom they feel has been misjudged as the god of death. He is not the god of aridity and sterility but represents another principle of fertility. He is the grain-god who must absorb the rain into his dominion before the growth of the crop can take place.[3]

C.H. Gordon agrees that the fertility theme underlies the myth but rejects the seasonal interpretation, the evidence for which he judges to be of "the most specious character."[4]

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[1]Gaster interprets the sea in an extended sense, so that it includes all lakes, rivers, and other inland expanses of water. Thespis, p. 125.

[2]Ibid., p. 126.

[3]Vivian and Isaac Rosensohn Jacobs, "The Myth of Môt and ʾAlʾeyan Baʿal," HTR, XXXVIII (April, 1945), No. 2, pp. 77-109.

[4]Gordon, Ugaritic Literature, p. 4.

The facts simply do not support this interpretation:

> The texts tell us nothing of any annual death and revival of Baal. Indeed the widespread notion that the year in Canaan is divided into a fertile and a sterile season is false. No part of the year is sterile; thus, figs and grapes ripen toward the end, and hence worst part, of the long summer drought; and much is made of the summer fruits in Ugaritic and in other sources from Canaan such as the Gezer Calendar to say nothing of many biblical passages.[1]

Gordon, therefore, rules out a yearly cycle, and postulates instead a longer cycle which included both years of want and years of plenty. Famine was not a seasonal phenomenon and what the people feared was not related to the seasonal cycle. "It was the abnormally bad year; or, worse still, a series of bad years, that reflected the failing of Baal. Moreover, drought and famine are regularly represented as seven-year scourges in the Ugaritic texts."[2] Gordon agrees that fertility is the main concern of the Ugaritic myths, but he favors a "sabbatical" rather than an annual cycle of fertility and sterility.[3]

The fertility motif has been rejected by U. Cassuto as the key for understanding Ugaritic mythology. Baal

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid.

[3] Gordon's interpretation is not entirely free from inconsistencies. He argues, for instance, that Baal, who grants both rain and dew, functions as a water-giving god during all the twelve months of the year, The Common Background of Greek and Hebrew Civilizations (New York: Norton Library, 1965), p. 171. But he also identifies Tallai, one of Baal's daughters, with rain and dew, ibid., p. 185. Why could not Tallai be the provider of dew when Baal is in the underground dominion of Mot?

personifies much more than the rainy season of the year, and to identify Mot with the hot season is to miss the point completely. From the speeches and descriptions of Mot[1] Cassuto concludes that "Mot is certainly not to be regarded as the god of fertility, but as the exact opposite--the god of death, the symbol and personification of the powers of destruction and dissolution, of all those manifold forces that are opposed to life and intent on stopping and destroying it."[2] Baal, on the other hand is the god of life, the personification of the life-giving, life-preserving and life-renewing forces. Cassuto's conclusion is that the war between these two great rivals is an allegory of the clash between the forces of life and existence and those of death and dissolution. After great setbacks it is the forces of life which are finally victorious. The world view that is thus portrayed, concludes Cassuto, is an optimistic one. "The life force prevails in the world and, though opposed and checked in all manner of ways, and sometimes even temporarily forced to surrender, it eventually emerges triumphant and rules for ever."[3] S. E. Loewenstamm agrees that this view has greatest validity, and has suggested that the

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[1]e.g. GORDON UH 67, col. i,ll. 14-22; UH 49, col.ii, ll. 15-23; UH 51, col. viii, ll. 15-20.

[2]U. Cassuto, "Baal and Mot in the Ugaritic Texts," Israel Exploration Journal, XII (1962), No. 2, pp 83-84.

[3]Ibid., p. 86.

fertility interpretation is a result of the mistranslation of the Ugaritic word dr^{c} which means "to disperse" as well as "to sow."[1]

Another approach is taken by Obermann who attempts to see certain important historic events revealed in the mythology. The building epic symbolizes great strides forward in architecture and technology which followed the introduction of new metallurgical processes. The theme of the building epic, he declares, "may have grown out of the effort to explain, etiologically, how the simplicity of the old had been replaced in Ugaritic temples, by new fashions,--particularly fixtures, furnishings, vessels, produced by the new process of metallurgical smelting and molding."[2] He also sees in the conflict between Baal and Yam evidence for a historical battle in which invaders from the sea were repulsed. This victory was possible because of the Ugaritians superior weapons which they had devised by the new metallurgical processes.[3] While one cannot question the ingenuity of Obermann's theories, considerable doubt has been expressed whether they have been constructed on sufficient

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[1]S. E. Loewenstamm, "The Ugaritic Fertility Myth--The Result of a Mistranslation," Israel Exploration Journal, XII (1962), No. 2, pp. 87-88.

[2]Obermann, Ugaritic Mythology, p. 84.

[3]Julian Obermann, "How Baal Destroyed a Rival," JAOS, LXVII (1947), pp. 195-208.

evidence.[1]

It is important to note that a diversity of interpretations of Ugaritic mythology has been offered. It may not be necessary to be committed to any one of them, and it is probable they are all valid in some degree. It is not impossible, for example, that the myths had both agricultural and cosmic significance. Kapelrud's attitude is appreciated when he observes that the building epic reflected some historical events but was also cultically seen as part of a yearly cycle.[2]

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[1]For example, Gaster has made the accusation that Obermann has deduced his theories of metallurgy from references that are mere secondary and trivial elaborations of the central theme. Review of Ugaritic Mythology, in JNES, VII (1948), p. 186.

[2]Kapelrud, Baal in the Ras Shamra Texts, pp. 142-143.

APPENDIX III

THE CANAANITE GOD "YW"

As noted in the conclusion of the thesis a number of scholars have been attracted to the idea that there was some sort of relationship between the Canaanite deity El and the Israelite Yahweh. The proof needed to substantiate such a theory is some indication of a link between the deities of the two respective cultures. It is possible that such a link does exist in a reference to Yahweh in Ugaritic literature. The passage in question will be examined in order to determine if it provides sufficient evidence to establish that Yahweh had a Canaanite origin, and whether this theory carries greater validity than the more traditional explanations for the origin of the divine name "Yahweh".

The argument that Yahweh was originally a Canaanite deity is based on a very fragmented passage in the

Anath text.

> And Ltpn, God of Mercy, replies: [ ]
> "The name of my son is Yw-El ( )."
> And he proclaims the name of Sea ( ).[1]

Driver's translation of the passage is:

> "The name of my son is Yaw god"
> And he did proclaim the name of Yaw
> [to be Yaw].[2]

A. Murtonen has translated these lines as:

> "The name of my son is Yw'll(m?) . ,"
> and he gives the name Ym (to him?).[3]

Ginsberg does not attempt a translation of the passage but suggests the sense of it to be that El "announces that his (eldest? favorite?) son is to be known as El's Beloved Yamm (= Sea) and as Master."[4]

The text in question is surrounded with difficulties. In the first place the entire tablet has been preserved in such a mutilated condition that it is impossible to agree on its general meaning and place in the mythology. De Langhe has calculated that about half of the characters are missing.[5] Secondly, the final words of the crucial lines

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[1] GORDON UH ʿnt: pl:x:IV:13-15 (VIAB:IV:13-15).

[2] Canaanite Myths and Legends, p. 75. In a footnote he gives as an alternative reading to "Yaw" in line 15, "the sea."

[3] A. Murtonen, "The Appearance of the Name YHWH Outside Israel," Studia Orientalia: Edidit Societas Orientalis Fennica, XVI:3 (Helsinki, 1951), p. 7.

[4] ANET, p. 129.

[5] R. de Langhe, "Un dieu Yahweh a Ras Shamra," ETL, XIX (1942), p. 94.

are missing, and it is not certain whether yw in line 14 is followed by el, elt, or elm.[1] There is even some question whether the correct reading is yw?[2] Gray notes that there is no other mention of Yw in this or any other mythological text, and "owing to this material damage and the uncertain meaning of the passage in general, this is a most questionable proof-text."[3]

In spite of the textual problems, this sole reference to Yw in Ugaritic poetry has been offered as proof of Yahweh's Canaanite origin. This position has been taken by Gordon who regards Ugarit as the missing link between Greece and Israel.

> "Yw-El" is the son of the head of the pantheon. This suggests that "Yahweh" (Yw") was originally El's son in pre-Israelite Canaan. It is usual for a younger god to eclipse the older gods in the development of religion. In other words, just as Zeus eclipsed his father Cronus, Yahweh eclipsed his father El. Subsequently, Hebrew monotheism necessitated the identification of Yahweh with El.[4]

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[1]Driver prefers elm, and renders the phrase "Yaw god." Canaanite Myths and Legends, p. 75. De Langhe prefers elt, the feminine form, concluding that the text "désignant sans doute Anat." "Un dieu Yahweh à Ras Shamra," p. 96.

[2]Gray cites Albright's argument for the reading yr which he connects with the Akkadian ârru "spawn," giving the sense "my son, brood of Elat." He states that Albright's reading is not justified. "The God Yw in the Religion of Canaan," JNES, XII (1953), p. 279.

[3]Ibid., p. 278.

[4]Ugarit and Minoan Crete, p. 61, n. 25.

Dussaud also cites the practice among deities of the son supplanting the father and concludes from the text in question that Yahweh would supplant El just as El supplanted his father ʿElyon.[1] Murtonen and MacLaurin recognize that Yam and Yaw are used in parallel. Murtonen concludes from this fact that Yam was a new name bestowed upon Yaw.[2] MacLaurin agrees that Yam and Yaw are identified and proceeds to argue that Yahweh was originally the Ugaritic god Yam.[3]

The arguments for Yahweh's presence in the Canaanite pantheon, although very sophisticated, are erected upon the flimsiest of evidence. In the "locus classicus," as Gray pointedly notes "we are told nothing of Yw beyond the fact that he was apparently the son of El and possibly of his consort Elat" and it is odd that the Hebrews should have chosen such a nonentity.[4] Dahood, referring to the problem of whether the text should read yw or yr asks whether there is any connection with Yahweh even if it does read yw. "Yahweh," he states, "cannot linguistically be derived from yw; the shorter form is later than, and derived from the long-

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[1]Yahwé, Fils de El," Syria, XXXIV (1957), p. 237.

[2]Murtonen, op. cit., p. 7.

[3]E. C. B. MacLaurin, "YHWH--The Origin of the Tetragrammaton," VT, XII (1962), pp. 449 ff.

[4]"The God Yw in the Religion of Canaan," p. 279. The Canaanite theory of Yahweh's origin cannot be evaluated on the sole point of Yw's obscurity. Marduk rose from similar obscurity to prominence in Babylon.

er form of the name."[1] The most serious objection to the identification of Yw with the Israelite Yahweh is the parallelism between Yaw and Yam, and the only objective interpretation that is possible is that the intended reference is to Yam.[2] Ginsberg agrees that the deity in question is Yam, and suggests that yw is a form of the vocative particle y.[3] Considering the meagre and improbable arguments for an allusion to Yahweh in Ugaritic literature, it is necessary to conclude, with Abba, that there is no reference in the Ugaritic texts to Israel's God.[4]

The possibility that Yahweh had a Canaanite origin cannot be dismissed entirely. The mystery connected with the origin of Yahweh and the meaning of the name prohibits dog-

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[1] J. Mitchell Dahood, "Ancient Semitic Deities in Syria and Palestine," p. 93.

[2] This is de Langhe's conclusion. "Après le vocable šm qui revient encore ici, il y a un dernier mot qui est lu non sans hésitation ym et qui, en parallélisme avec yw, devrait indiquer le dieu Yam." "Un dieu Yahweh à Ras Shamra," p. 96.

[3] "Incidently, I shall not be surprised if a majority of competent scholars ultimately decide that the famous yw, VI AB 4:14, the most recent of alleged pre-Israelite traces of the divine name YHWH, is simply a variant of the vocative particle y--and it too stands with its following substantive (ilm) at the end of the first colon of a speech." "The North-Canaanite Myth of Anath and Aqht," BASOR, XCVIII (April 1945), p. 21, n. 49.

[4] Raymond Abba, "The Divine Name Yahweh," JBL, LXXX (1961), p. 321.

matisms of any kind. A thorough discussion of this subject is far beyond the scope of the present study, but it is sufficient to note that there is considerably more credibility for some of the traditional theories of Yahweh's origin than those which assert a Canaanite source. The Kenite hypothesis has gained wide acceptance,[1] and Gray prefers it to the Canaanite theory:

> The Hebrew traditions are unanimous in locating Jahweh in the southern desert and even east of the Arabah in the vicinity of Seir or Midian. They do imply that Jahweh was the god of a non-Israelite people, but his worshippers were not the Canaanites but the nomad Kenites. The Hebrews came to know Jahweh and bound themselves to his worship in their nomad days before they knew and settled Palestine west of the Jordan. To suppose that they entered into a convenant (sic) with a minor Canaanite deity is only barely possible on the assumption that the Phoenicians had left traces of their culture in the southern desert where the early Hebrew fathers had sojourned and where the people was again found in the days of Moses.[2]

Perhaps the most convincing argument for the Kenite theory is the fact that Moses' father-in-law was a Kenite priest.[3]

A number of theories connect the origin of the

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[1]Abba, however, rejects the Kenite theory for the same reason he rejects the Canaanite origin of Yahweh. "There is in fact no convincing attestation of any god of this name among the Kenites or indeed anywhere outside Israel." Ibid., p. 321. MacLaurin, who argues for a Canaanite origin does not mention the Kenite theory, even though he discusses Jethro's role in the worship of Yahweh, in "The Origin of the Tetragrammaton," pp. 460 ff.

[2]"The God Yw in the Religion of Canaan," p. 279.

[3]In Exodus 3:1 Jethro is called "the priest of Midian. In Judges 1:16 Moses' father-in-law is called "the Kenite."

tetragrammaton with some form of the Hebrew word "to be," הוה , which is associated with Yahweh in the divine answer to Moses in Exodus 3:14. Yahweh is reported to say to Moses אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה which the RSV translates as "I AM WHO I AM." Albright rejects this translation on the grounds that the verb is not in the simple (Qal) stem but is a causative (Hiph'il) form. He proposes the correct meaning to be "He causes to Come into Existence."[1] The most convincing theory of the meaning of the divine name is that proposed by Raymond Abba who emphasizes the importance of interpreting Exodus 3:14 within its context.[2] The occasion of Exodus 3 is the historical confrontation of God and man which marks the beginning of Israel as a nation. In calling Moses God repeatedly assures him of his presence. "It is this assurance of the presence of the Savior God with his covenant people," says Abba, "which is embodied in the name Yahweh."[3] The meaning, therefore, of אֶהְיֶה is "I will be present," and the same word is used in the promise which precedes and follows it (אֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ , Exodus 3:12, אֶהְיֶה עִם פִּיךָ , Exodus 4:12,15).[4] Abba concludes that it is "within the context of the covenant with Israel that the

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[1]F. W. Albright, Review of L'épithète divine Jahve, JBL, LXVII (1949), p. 380. See also his discussion of this subject in Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan, pp. 168-172.

[2]Abba, op. cit., p. 325. [3]Ibid., p. 325.

[4]Ibid.

divine name has significance.[1] If the name Yahweh was in some way a formulation of Israel's covenant faith, there is no justification in seeking a source for Yahweh's origin outside of Israel, and the obscure Ugaritic reference to Yaw can be no more than a co-incidence. The weight of evidence does not support the theory that Yahweh had a Canaanite origin.

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[1] Ibid., p. 326.

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