

The Origin of Baal

A origem de Baal

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Abstract

The origin of Baal is complex. Analysis of archaeological and epigraphic artifacts points to Upper Mesopotamia aligned with the Gods of Weather. It specifically points to Aleppo, the motherland of the God Hadu. From Aleppo, during the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, the cult of Hadu expanded to the entire Levant. In Lower Mesopotamia under the nomenclature of Haddu, Hadda, Hadad, Addu and Adad. On the Syro-palestinian coast, in the middle of the second millennium BCE, Hadu is worshipped, initially, with the epithet "Baal," Baal-Hadu. Soon, the epithet would replace the Deity. Hadu becomes Baal. And from there, from the north of the coast, specifically from Ugarit, the cult of the "new" God Baal spreads rapidly and receives new "addenda". In Phoenicia he will be worshipped as Baalsamen and Baal-Melkart; farther south, in Ekron, as Baal-Zebub; in Egypt, as Baal-Seth; in Shechem, as Baal-Berith; in Israel and Judah, as Baal.

Keywords: Baal. Hadu. Aleppo. Baal-Seth. Baalsamem.

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Resumo

A origem de Baal é complexa. A análise de artefatos arqueológicos e epigráficos aponta para a Alta Mesopotâmia, alinhado aos Deuses do “tempo”. Aponta, especificamente, para Aleppo, a casa mãe do Deus Hadu. Desde Aleppo, durante o Bronze Médio e Tardio, o culto a Hadu se expandiu para todo o Levante. Na Baixa Mesopotâmia sob a nomenclatura de Haddu, Hadda, Hadad, Addu e Adad. Na costa Siro-palestinense, em meados do segundo milênio AEC, Hadu é cultuado, inicialmente, com o epíteto “Baal”, Baal-Hadu. Mas, logo, o epíteto acabaria por substituir a divindade. Hadu passa a ser Baal. E dali, do norte da costa, especificamente de Ugarit, o culto ao “novo” Deus Baal se propaga rapidamente e vai recebendo novos “adendos”. Na Fenícia será cultuado como Baalsamen e Baal-Melkart; mais ao sul, em Ecron, como Baal-Zebub; no Egito, como Baal-Seth; em Siquém, como Baal-Berith; em Israel e Judá, como Baal.

Palavras-chave: *Baal. Hadu. Aleppo. Baal-Seth. Baalsamem.*

Introduction

This article aims only to start a debate in the circles of biblical research in Latin America and the Caribbean, because the subject is so broad and complex that it would be very arrogant to try to reach the limit of the object in question. Therefore, the debate is on.¹

The fact of the great presence of Baal in the Bible has always drawn the attention of research. Why this presence? What led the authors/editors of the biblical texts to mention Baal so many times? In general, Baal has been interpreted as the adversary of Yahweh, as the one who leads God's people astray. However, with the archaeological discoveries of a large number of artifacts, stelae, ostraca, seals, etc., which reveal the widespread presence of Baal worship, not only in Israel and Judah, but also throughout the Levant, another view of Baal began to be seen. The discoveries of the Ugarit tablets (Rash-Shamra) from the 1929 excavations onwards contributed essentially to this. Ugarit's literature revealed to the world a society built around the cult of Baal. It revealed that the culture of Ugarit preceded the Israelite culture and thus influenced it enormously. In other words, it made clear that the matrix of Israeli culture is found in Ugarit. We could say in clearer words that the Old Testament of the Old Testament is found in Ugaritic literature, which has Baal as the basis of its religious horizon. Once this is assimilated, another question arises. In other words, the old maxim imposes itself again: the answer to a question opens the door to new questions. And the main one is: if the cultural matrix of Israel is in Ugarit, where, then, does the culture of Ugarit come from? What is the origin of Baal? It is with the answer to this question that the present research will be concerned.

The Temple of Baal in Pella

In 2014, on a study expedition to Jordan's archaeological sites, one of the sites on our visit list was Pella (*Tabaqat Fahl*), which is about 2 km straight east of the Jordan River, 10 km from Bethshan, and 85 km northeast of Jerusalem. Our main objective was to get to know the site that, according to one line of research, would have been the city to which many Judahites would have fled during the Jewish war of 66-73 CE, among them the Christians of Mark's community (cf. Mk 13:14-21; Lk 21:20-24; Mt 24:15-25). Perhaps for this reason, the city was marked by a strong presence of Christians during the Byzantine period (330-1453). Many large churches were built in this period in Pella, of which some remains are still standing (Kaefer, p. 2016, p. 49-55). Our focus was exactly to get to know these churches. However, when we arrived at the site we were surprised by a huge excavation of three impressive overlapping temples: the Middle Bronze (2200-1550), the Late Bronze (1550-1150) and the Iron I (1150-900). The size of the first two superimposed temples (the Middle Bronze and the Late Bronze), no less than 32 meters long by 24 wide, caught our attention, and certainly also that of the archaeologists. It was a temple-fortress, with wide adobe walls, perhaps the largest ever found in the region. We then wondered to what God these temples had been dedicated.

¹ I would like to thank Silas Klein Cardoso for his help in the search for bibliographic references.

Figure 1 – Temple of Pella



Source: author (2024).

A few years later, returning to research on Pella and reading the report of the archaeologists (Bourke, 2004, p. 1-31), I was pleasantly surprised that in the second and third phases, the temple was dedicated to Baal. Let's briefly look at some of the report's topics.

The temple was excavated in the 1994-2001 expeditions by the Australian Archaeology Mission in Sydney, under the coordination of archaeologist Stephen Bourke, in conjunction with the Jordanian government's Department of Antiquities. The archaeologists' conclusion was that the temple had been built about the nineteenth century BCE and continually restored. The first phase of the temple was situated between the years 1800-1450; the second phase, between the years 1450-1000; the third phase, between the years 1000-800, a period in which the temple was diminished. Around the year 800, the city of Pella was destroyed and the temple no longer rebuilt. The position of the temple was oriented in a northeasterly direction, which points to the sunrise in summer (Polcaro *et al.*, 2013, p. 485).

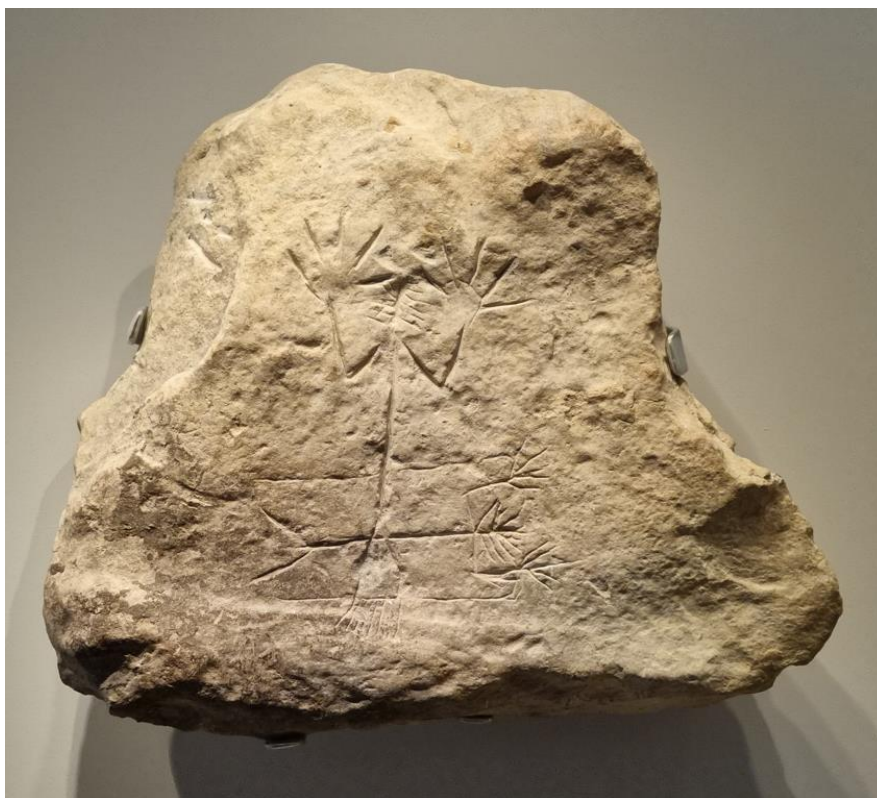
The various objects of worship found inside the temple led archaeologists to conclude that in the beginning, in the first phase, although the evidences were not very reliable, during the Middle Bronze Age, the temple was dedicated to El, the great God of the Canaanite pantheon. In the second phase, in the Late Bronze Age, the temple was dedicated to Baal. And in the third phase, in Iron I, when the Egyptian influence was already strongly perceived, the temple began to be dedicated to Baal-Seth (Bourke, 2004; Polcaro *et al.*, 2013). In summary, in our opinion, the temple of Pella can be a kind of model to understand the evolution of the cult of Baal throughout the Levant, the object of our research. So we will come back to this site later.

The Gods of Weather

There is a growing conviction in modern research about the big cultural influence that the region of Upper Mesopotamia, especially Anatolia and northern Syria, exerted on Lower Mesopotamia as well as on the entire Levant. Hence the importance of seeking the roots of the Levant culture in the north. And, in our specific interest, to know the deities that were worshipped there and how their cult migrated to the south, integrating or being absorbed by the local pantheons.

It is quite understandable that in the regions of Upper Mesopotamia, the main deities were linked to the fertility of the land, since they were regions with strongly agricultural characteristics. That is, regions that depended constantly on rain, but as such, were also prone to floods, storms, lightning, etc. The oldest god in Sumerian texts responsible for weather (rain, winds, lightning, and thunder) is Iskur. From the Middle Bronze Onward, in addition to Sumerian personal names with the theophoric element Iskur, Akkadian personal names with the theoric element Hadu, Adad, or Adda begin to appear. From then on, the names of Hadu/Adad became more and more frequent, far surpassing those of Iskur (Schwemer, 2008, p. 121, 130-134; 2001, p. 29-31). That is, it seems that Iskur is gradually merging into Hadu/Adad, whose functions and characteristics, in general, were the same.

Figure 2 – The stele of Arad. One of the oldest artifacts of the cult of fertility (cycle of nature) found in Israel



Source: Author (2024), Courtesy of the Israel Museum.

The God Hadu of Aleppo

The God Hadu, with some linguistic variations (Haddu, Hadda, Hadad, Addu, Adad), depending on the region, ended up becoming the most important God of weather, specifically of the storm, in the Ancient Near East. The earliest attestation of Hadu is found in a cuneiform text from the middle of the third millennium BCE in the northern Syrian city of Ebla. There Hadu appears among the most important Gods of the pantheon with the name "Hadda", from the Semitic root *hdd* (to thunder). "The fact that the root *hdd* is not productive any more in most Semitic languages of the ancient Near East, allows us to infer that the divine name is very old" (Schwemer, 2008, p. 135-136).

The most important sanctuary of Hadu in the entire region of what would become Syria (Aram-Damascus, Ebla, etc.) was the temple of Aleppo (Halab) (Santos, 2023, p. 43-60,168). Aleppo is about ninety km straight northeast of Ugarit (Rash-Shamra). The temple of Hadu, on the hill of the present-day city of Aleppo, has survived all periods of Ancient Near Eastern history, from the late Old Bronze Age to the Iron Age. Even with the changing powers of the empires of turn, the temple remained unshaken for more than a millennium. In it was found a stele of the God Hadu in human form and standing on a bull (Figure 3), holding the lightning in one hand and the thunder in the other (Gonnella, Khayyata, Kohlmeier, 2005). Above the head of the image is the symbol of the Sun God, probably Egyptian influence. Hadu's consort was the Goddess Habatu, who was worshipped in Aleppo and Ebla. The proximity of the important city of Ebla to Aleppo, about 55 km straight to the southeast, made these two cities, perhaps also Mari, the main center of Hadu's worship. Perhaps also, via the trade route, its largest centers of propagation. In Ebla a seal with the God Hadu was also found, next to a bull on a throne (Römer, 2016, 109-110).

Figure 3. Hadu of Aleppo on a bull and with lightning and thunder in his hands.



Source: Courtesy of the Louvre museum².

² Available at: <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010120231>. Accessed on: mar. 30th 2024.

From northern Syria, the cult of Hadu, at the time of Iron II, expanded widely to Assyria and Babylon, being taken over by kings, such as the kings of Aram-Damascus, Ben-Adad I (885–865), Ben-Adad II/Adadazer (860–843) and Ben-Adad III, son of Hazael (796–770); and the Assyrian king Adadnirari (811-783). That is, Hadu migrated from Aleppo to Assyria and Babylon under the name of Adad or Addad.

Hadu and Baal

Upper Mesopotamia, including the important cities of Aleppo, Ebla and Mari, underwent a profound political change at the end of the Old Babylonian Empire (1790-1750), when Amorite rule in the region was supplanted by the Hurrians (Liverani, 2016, p. 315-340, Schwemer, 2008, p. 158). The Hurrian God of weather (storm and rain, etc.) was Teshub. He was the chief god of the Hurrian pantheon, king of the gods, royalty, and court. However, Hadu continued to be worshipped in Aleppo and the region. That is, with the arrival of the Hurrians, who dominated a large part of the city-states of the Levant, and their main God, Teshub, Hadu continued to be worshipped, practically in the same way as before, especially in the popular milieu. This is probably due to the similarity of the two Gods of weather, Teshub and Hadu. Possibly, too, because the cult of Teshub was more properly of Hurrian royalty. In brief, the temples of Hadu remained as before, as well as his image, now next to Teshub.

It is in this period, perhaps a little before the middle of the second millennium BCE, around 1600-1500, that the cult of Baal or Baalu begins to emerge on the Syro-Palestinian coast, as the God of weather (rain, storm, fertility, etc.). Not only temples to Baal/Baaluu began to emerge on the Mediterranean coast, but also literature, as witnessed by the finds of Ugarit (Schaeffer, 1979; Yon, 2006). The cult of Baal emerges with a strong association between Hadu, Teshub and Baalu (Schwemer, 2008, p. 159; Niehr, 2003, p. 13-34). Aleppo's proximity to Ugarit helps to understand the influence that it, specifically its temple, exerted on Ugarit, on the Syro-Palestinian coast.

Baal is Hadu

The epithet *Belu*, *Baaluu* "lord", along with the proper name of a particular God is attested in different Gods at various times in the Ancient Near East. The epithet is often used as a form of abbreviation for "lord of...", lord of a toponym or lord of the Gods, etc., as in the case of "Bel Marduk". Therefore, the element Baalu found together with the names of different deities, especially in Mesopotamia, should be understood as an epithet, a qualifier of the deity in question, not as the proper name of a God, of a single God. Therefore, it is not correct to associate the form "Baaluu" found in Mesopotamian writings of Ebla, Tell Beydar, etc. as a precursor of the God Baal of the middle of the second millennium and the beginning of the first millennium BCE on the Syro-Palestinian coast (Schwemer, 2008, p. 174).

What can be concluded from the writings found at Ugarit is that initially the epithet Baal was associated with Hadu, as it appears in some tablets, where Baal is called Hadu (KTU 1. 3 IV 27; 1.4 IV 40; 1.4 VII 37; 1.5 I 23; 1.5 IV 5). Over time, the epithet would end up replacing the name of the deity (SOLER, 2021, p. 463-464). That is, Hadu becomes Baal. And in this "metamorphosis", Baal becomes the most popular God on the Syro-Palestinian coast, as can be seen in the tablets of Ugarit. However, there is some difference between the "old" God (Hadu) and the "new" God (Baal). Hadu's main characteristic was that he was the God who controlled the storms, the lightning and thunder, the floods, etc. Often understood as a God with destructive powers. In this sense, he also has attributes of war, a characteristic particularly exploited by the kings for their battles. However, even though he also controlled rain,

fertility was a secondary attribute of Hadu. There is little reference to Hadu as the God of fertility (Soler, 2021, p. 464-465). On the other hand, Baal is primarily the God of fertility, the one who sends rain to water the land and guarantee agriculture, the one who controls the cycle of rain and drought (Lete, 1981). In short, as seen, we can say with relative certainty that Baal is Hadu.

Therefore, from the middle of the second millennium, with greater intensity at the turn of the second to the first millennium BCE, an intense development of the cult of Baal is perceived throughout the Mediterranean coast up to Egypt. As an example of the spread of the cult of Baal in this region, it is enough to observe the titles that the kings of important cities on the coast, such as Tyre and Byblos, adopted. Kings of Tyre: Abibaal (993-981); Baal-Eser I (946-930); Etbaal I (878-847); Baal-Eser II (846-841); Etbaal II (750-739); Baal I (609-599). Kings of Byblos (as the dates are not precise, we list just the names in ascending order): Abibaal; Elibaal; Safatbaal I; Safatbaal II; Safatbaal III; Yeharbaal.

Hadu's prominent role in the divine pantheon in the northern region aided Baal's expansion. The "new God" will develop in the fertile lands watered by Hadu. In the eastern region of the Levant, Baal will retain more the characteristics of Hadu, such as the God of storm and floods, while in the western range, as the God of fertility. However, not exclusively of fertility, since, as can be seen in the Ugaritic myths, Baal will also identify himself as the God of storms, lightning and violent winds, etc., especially when related to Mount Safon (Jebel el-Aqra), where his dwelling was located. And, from time to time, also as the God of war, but much less frequently.

Figure 4 – Baal of Ugarit



Source: Author (2024), Courtesy of the Israel Museum.

Baal son of Dagan and son of El

In Ugaritic mythology, Baal appears as the son of El and Asherah (KTU 1:3 V 35; 1:4 IV 47), father and mother of the Gods. However, in other tablets Baal also appears as the son of Dagan (KTU 1:2 I 18-19, 35, 36-37; 1:5 VI 23-24; 1:6 I 6, 51, 52; 1:10 III 14-15; 1:12 II 26; 1:14 II 77-78; IV 170). It is possible that this affiliation with both Gods is due to the fact that El and Dagan, belonging to different pantheons, were known as the fathers of the Gods. In the middle Euphrates, Dagan was associated with the Hurrian god Kumarbi and the Babylonian god Enlil, fathers of the Gods and responsible for the enthronement of kings, as well as their protectors. There Dagan appears at the top of Emar's pantheon (Fleming, 1992). El or Elu, in turn, appears as God, king and father of the generation of younger Gods (Schwemer, 2008, P. 129, 156).

In Ugarit a large temple dedicated to Dagan was found. Apparently, Dagan was most worshipped there as a deity of the sea, from which comes his name (*dag*: "fish"), protector of sailors. Proof of this are the many anchors found in his temple, deposited there by sailors as an offering for Dagan to have saved them from the storms of the sea (Kaefer, 2022, p. 1-19).

Therefore, since Dagan and El were the fathers of the Gods in different pantheons, it is understandable that, given the importance that Baal acquired in Ugarit and the region, along with Dagan and El, both were considered the fathers of Baal. In addition, it is important to consider that there are many myths where Gods have double paternity (Ayali-Darshan, 2013, p. 651-657). In short, the most convincing thing seems to be that two parallel myths developed in Ugarit and the region: one that Baal was the son of Dagan and the other that Baal was the son of El or Elu, with the probability that the first myth was older.

Seth-Baal

Several records have been found, mainly on the Mediterranean coast and in Egypt, that relate Baal to the Egyptian God Seth or vice versa. In fact, sometimes Baal appears with Egyptian characteristics. This is the case of the famous statuette found in Ugarit, in the 1929 excavation, by Claude Schaeffer (figure 4). The statuette was found in stratum II, which places it between the fifteenth and eighth centuries BCE (Wyatt, 2018, p. 429-430). There Baal appears with lightning and thunder in his hands and wearing an Egyptian crown. Or the bronze statuette of Baal seated on the throne, similar to El, found in Hazor in 1996 and where Baal appears in Egyptian garments (Ornan, 2011, p. 253-280).

One of the oldest records from the Mediterranean coast that relates Baal and Seth is the scapular seal found in Sidon. This seal contains a hieroglyphic inscription that reads: "Sadok-Re, beloved of Seth-Baal, Lord of Lay" (Soler, 2021, p. 461). The dating of the seal is not secure. It is possible that it is around the fifteenth century BCE (Goldwasser, 2006, p. 123). There is some doubt with the association of Baal with Seth and Baal with Horus in Egypt, which seems to have occurred at the same time and in a similar way (Allon, 2007, p. 15-22; Schneider, 2010, p. 405-409). This incongruity is perhaps understandable, if it is understood that Baal-Horus was most associated with popular religion, while Baal-Seth was more linked to royal circles or vice versa (Goldwasser, 2006, p. 123; Keel, 1989, p. 243-280). Silvia Schröer, when referring to the association between Baal and Seth, states that "Basically, however, Baal, similar to El, is not a proper name, but a title that was associated with a certain God by the local population, but as such did not make the identification visible"³ (Schröer, 2018 p. 71).

³ Grundsätzlich ist aber Baal, ähnlich wie El, kein Eigenname, sondern ein Titel, der zwar von der lokalen Bevölkerung mit einem bestimmten Gott verbunden wurde, aber als solcher die Identifikation nicht sichtbar werden ließ.

Also in Alalak, Syria, a cylinder seal was found containing an inscription resembling that of Sidon with the phrase: "... Seth-Baal, Lord of..." (Soler, 2021, p. 461). The date is close to the seal of Sidon, perhaps a little later, between the thirteenth and twelfth centuries BCE. Alalak is to the west of Aleppo, forming with it, Ebla and Ugarit, a kind of geographical rectangle between the four cities. Unfortunately, the toponym of where Seth-Baal is lord was damaged. Perhaps it was Ugarit, Lebanon or Byblos (Soler, 2021, p. 462).

However, the safe claim that Seth is Baal is still an open debate (Schneider, 2010, p. 405–409). The problem lies on the translation of the sign (hieroglyph) of the inscriptions that identifies Seth, whether it refers to the divinity itself or whether it is an epithet. Porzia (2024, p. 9-10) contradicts the statement that Seth is Baal (Allon, 2007). For Porzia, this statement would be a scholarly creation introduced by Keel and Uehlinger (1992). The argument is that the name Baal-Seth, sometimes Seth-Baal, does not appear on the seals or papyri and stelae. The hieroglyphic sign (Seth's animal) that identifies Seth would be a "Sethian" determinative, which precedes the name of Baal, a kind of presentation card to place Baal, a foreign God, in the divine sphere dominated by Seth. Therefore, it would not be a fusion of two deities, or a religious syncretism, Baal-Seth, but only Baal. Porzia's position makes sense, since Seth was not a rain God, as in Egypt the rains only reached a strip of the Mediterranean. The rest of the earth's fertility depended on the overflowing of the Nile River, caused by the melting of snow in the mountains of North Africa.

In short, if Porzia's argument is correct, it further reinforces the expanding power of Baal worship throughout the Levant and Egypt.

Baalsamem

Around the beginning of the first millennium BCE, a God named Baalsamem (Baal of heaven) also appears in the region of Phoenicia (Sumur, Byblos, Tyre, and Qatna). It is not very clear its relationship with the weather (rain, storm, floods, fertility, etc.). It seems that his attributes were more related to the cosmos, as well as to the care of royal affairs, with some resemblance to the God El.

It is difficult to know whether Baalsamem is an extension of the Baal cult or whether he is an extension of the Hadu cult or even a new God from the Phoenician pantheon who does not appear until the first millennium BCE. Perhaps one could, at the level of supposition, draw a timeline as follows: in the beginning would be the Hurrian and Hittite God Teshob, then Hadu of Aleppo, then Baal-Hadu, then Baal and finally Baalsamem (Niehr, 2003, p. 11-12; 84-85; Eissfeldt, 1963, p. 171-198).

In the Ancient Near East, a God of heaven has been known since the Old Bronze period, but not by this name, Baalsamem. It was not until the end of the first millennium BCE, around the second century BCE, that a Roman temple dedicated to Baal-Shamen or Baalsamen was found in Palmyra. Everything indicates that this God is the same Phoenician Baalsamem. There was only a small change in the final consonant of the name, the final "m" became "n" (Niehr, 2003, p. 181-182). That is, it is likely that the cult of Baalsamen migrated near the end of the first millennium BCE from Phoenicia to the city of Palmyra in Mesopotamia.

According to Niehr, there is no evidence that there was a cult of Baalsamem in Israel and Judah. The fact that there is a widespread worship of Baal in Israel, Judah and the region, does not mean that this worship can be directly projected to Baalsamem. They are two distinct Gods. The worship of astral deities present in biblical texts, such as 2 Kings 22-23, is not related to Baalsamem. In the same way, the title "God of Heaven" given to Yahweh, for example, in the book of Ezra, in the post-exile, is not related to Baalsamem, it is probably an influence of Persian theology (Niehr, 2003, p. 185-205).

There would also be other qualitatives that Baal began to receive from his expansion in the Levant that deserved to be addressed. This is the case, for example, of Baal-Zebub or Baal-Zebul, which,

according to 2 Kings 1:2-6, was worshipped in the coastal city of Ecron, neighboring Israel (Frevel, 2023, p. 202-237). Or of Baal-Berit, who, according to Judges 8:33; 9:4,46, was worshipped in Shechem (Lewis, 1996, p. 401-423). However, this is a subject to be deepened in other research. What we want to put on record with our analysis here is that: a) The origins of Baal, as God of time, are to be researched in Aleppo. That is, Baal is the transculturation in Ugarit, Phoenicia, and the region of the God Hadu of Aleppo, first as Baal-Hadu and then only as Baal; b) The origins of Baal, as Baal alone, without qualitative, must be looked for in Ugarit, Phoenicia and the region.

Baal in Israel and Judah

As shown, from Ugarit and later throughout the Mediterranean coast, the cult of Baal expanded throughout the Levant. Kingdoms such as Israel, Judah, Edom, Moab, etc., were not exempt. It is not our object here, however, we consider it relevant to make a brief mention of the cult of Baal, specifically in Israel and Judah, from the biblical text to show the importance that Baal had within the Yahwist domain.

One way to attest to the antiquity of the cult of Baal in Israel and Judah is to pay attention to toponyms (Levin, 2017, p. 203-222). In the Bible there are several mentions of places that contain the name of Baal. Let's look at a few:

Baal-Shaphon (Ex 14:2. 9; Num 33:7); Baal-Meon (Num 32:38; Josh 13:17; Jer 48:23; Ezek 25:9; 1Ch 5:8), a site that is also mentioned on the Mesa stele, on line 9 (Kaefer, 2006, p. 171-172); Baal-Gad (Josh 11:17; 12:7; 13:5); Baalah (Josh 15:9. 10. 11. 29; 1 Chronicles 13:6); Bealot (Josh 15:24; 1 Kings 4:16); Baalat-Ber (Josh 19:8; 1 Chronicle 4:33); Baalat (Josh 19:44; 1 Kings 9:18; 2 Chronicles 8:6); Baal-Hermon (Judges 3:3; 1 Chronicles 5:23); Baal-Tamar (Judges 20:33); Baal-Perazim (2 Sam 5:20); Baalei-Judah (2 Sam 6:2); Baal-Hazor (2 Sam 13:23); Baal-Shalishah (2 Kings 4:42); Baal-Hamon (Song 8:11).

In addition to the Baalist toponyms found in the Bible, according to 1 Kings 16:32, there was also a temple of Baal in Samaria, built by Ahab, who had married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of Sidon. This Baal is often identified as the Baal Melcart of Tyre (1 Kings 18). But not only in Samaria, but also in Jerusalem, according to 2 Kings 11:18 and 2 Chronicles 23:17, there was a temple of Baal. In short, it seems to us that it is not necessary to go into detail to demonstrate the popularity of Baal worship in Israel and Judah, not only from the biblical accounts, but also from the archaeology evidences. It is understandable, therefore, that even in Israel and Judah, Baal was much more popular than Yahweh himself, especially in his early phase, as the book of Hosea demonstrates, for example.

Conclusion

In Upper Mesopotamia, one of the oldest and most popular Gods of the wheater was Hadu of Aleppo. With the expansion to Lower Mesopotamia, Assyria and Babylon, already entering the Iron Age, Hadu will suffer some variations in his name: Haddu, Hadda, Hadad, Addu, Adad. By the middle of the second millennium BCE, Hadu worship also spread to the Syro-Palestinian coast, with the epithet "Baal," "Baal-Hadu." The epithet Baal was common in several deities of the Ancient Near East. It was used to designate a qualitative of divinity, "lord of...". However, on the Syro-Palestinian coast the epithet would eventually replace the deity itself. That is, Hadu becomes Baal. The "new" God will differ a little from the "old". While Hadu was characterized primarily as the God of storms and floods, Baal will be characterized primarily as the God of fertility, the one who controls the rains, without, however, ceasing to exercise those characteristics as well. Baal's growing popularity gave rise to several myths about him.

Among these, that Baal is the son of two different Gods: "son of El" and "son of Dagan". Both "fathers" were the supreme deities of two distinct pantheons.

Baal's expansion and popularity reaches as far as Egypt, where he is associated with Seth, as the God Seth-Baal or Baal-Seth. Also in the important coastal cities, around the years 1000-900 BCE, such as Tyre and Byblos, Baal receives other epithets, as is the case of Baalsamem "Baal from heaven". From the coast of Phoenicia, Baal also expands into Mesopotamia, where, in the city of Palmyra, a second-century BCE a temple dedicated to Baalsamen has been found. Baal is still worshipped under other attributes, Baal-zebub of Ecron, Baal-berit of Shechem, etc. In short, there is vast evidence, both literary and archaeological, of the widespread expansion of Baal worship throughout the Levant.

Returning to Pella, the subject with which we began this research and with which we want to close it. We said, based on the information of the archaeologists, that the temple excavated in Pella belonged in the first phase (1800-1450) to El; in the second phase (1450-1000) to Baal; and in the third phase (1000-800) to Baal-Seth. We also said that the dedication of the temple to El, the first phase, was not very safe. In view of the process of transformation through which the cult of Baal in the Levant passed, as we have demonstrated, we suggest that instead to El, in the first phase, the temple of Pella was dedicated to Hadu. This possibility is based on the fact that the change of worship from El to Baal does not fit, due to the different characteristics of the two Gods. However, from Hadu to Baal is perfectly possible, since the characteristics of both Gods are very similar. Therefore, the temple of Pella, in our opinion, is a perfect illustration to demonstrate the origin of Baal, as an extension of the God Hadu, and its expansion throughout the Ancient Near East, receiving new attributes.

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