Baal (Deity)

I. Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

1. Baal in the Ancient Near East. The Hebrew term ba‘al is a common Semitic noun for “husband,” “owner,” or “lord,” but as early as the 3rd millennium BCE, the term was also employed to refer to a deity in a god-list from Abu Salabikh. The term is also attested at Ebla in personal names and toponyms. Yet, it is difficult at times to ascertain which of the possible uses of the term ba‘al is in view. Thus, some scholars interpret references to b‘l hmn as an epithet for the god El (i.e., “[El], Lord of Hamon”) while others view b‘l hmn as the name of the deity in (a construct) relationship with Hamon (i.e., the deity Baal, the patron god of Hamon, thus, “Baal of Hamon”). Furthermore, the frequent occurrence in the Bible of the plural form, ba‘alim, has led some scholars to view the term as referring to an unspecified local deity or simply generically to deities other than YHWH, thus, “lords.” With the discovery of the alphabetic cuneiform texts from Ugarit, however, Baal’s major role as a deity in the early religious traditions of ancient Syria and Canaan has been much more firmly established. This is evident even if the term is employed as a title for a god who went by another name (like Hadad/Haddu) and even if the term was used on other occasions to refer to other deities as well. It is clear that at Ugarit the equation of “Baal” and the god Hadad/Haddu (or Adad/Addu) is pervasive, though admittedly this might not be representative of any wider contemporary phenomenon.

Through the frequent pairings of Baal and Hadad in the Ugaritic texts, Baal was associated with an otherwise well-known Syrian storm god of the 2nd millennium BCE, though by the 1st millennium BCE, Baal and Hadad appear as two distinct deities. In the Ugaritic god-lists, numerous Baals are listed in a series, suggesting that there were several local cults and manifestations of the deity. Elsewhere at Ugarit, Baal is described as the son of El and the son of Dagan. He is portrayed in the mythic texts as a king enthroned atop Mount Zaphon and is granted a palace upon his triumph in his battles with the forces of Death (the god Mot) and chaos (cf. the deities Yam [Sea], Lithan [Leviathan], and Tannin). Along these same lines, the iconography of Ugurit and of the wider Levantine orbit portrays Baal-Haddu/Hadad as a warrior wielding a club of thunder and/or a spear of lightning (see fig. 6). In other instances, Baal is depicted as slaying a serpent. In the series of texts commonly designated the Baal Cycle, the theme of Baal’s kingship is dominant. As the victor over the powers of death and chaos, he is the giver of life. It should be pointed out, however, that this theme as depicted in Ugaritic myth is associated exclusively with the deity’s ability to provide rain and ensure agricultural fertility. Nowhere in the myth is this role of Baal explicitly connected with human fertility, let alone some supposed power to revive, grant immortality or restore human life following death, as some scholars have conjectured (no doubt in some instances under the influence of later Judeo-Christian notions of the afterlife).

To be sure, in 1st-millennium BCE Phoenician texts, Baal’s role as king continued to be highlighted in royal inscriptions that recognize his power to grant kingship to humans. Yet, again, nowhere is any mention made of his granting immortality or resurrection to dead humans.

What seems less problematic is the notion that Baal is portrayed in Ugaritic myth as a god who himself did indeed die and then rise from the dead. In the Ugaritic texts such as the Baal Cycle, the other deities, including El and Anath, mourn his death, and its effects on nature are described at length. Baal then re-appears later in the mythic plot of the Baal Cycle. By any reckoning, one must account for the reference in the preceding sections of the Baal Cycle to deified Death’s summoning of Baal to descend to the netherworld, the mourning of his death by El and Anath, and the later description of El’s dream in which the renewal of the falling rains convince El that Baal is once again alive. Moreover, there are problems with the proposal that Baal simply disappeared rather than died. In other such vanishing-god traditions, the deity vanishes of his or her own accord as an act of divine anger, and a descent to the netherworld as part and parcel of that disappearance or vanishing is not mentioned (cf. the Hittite god, Telepinu). Finally, while storm
gods may not be portrayed as those who typically die and rise, it might be the case with the instance of Baal’s dying and rising in Ugaritic myth that an innovation had taken place at Ugarit, one perhaps influenced by the myth of Dumuzi’s descent in Mesopotamian tradition (so Mettinger), but one too late to make any impact on the Ugaritic ritual texts.

Whether or not Baal’s dying and rising (as opposed to the mythic texts) was celebrated in a seasonal ritual festival at Ugarit is also problematic, but many opine that there remains some association between Baal’s death and rejuvenation and the seasonal cycle in early Syrian tradition. In this view, the seasonal attachments of the Baal myth are given expression in the portion of the Baal Cycle wherein the goddess Anath annihilates Mot, defied Death, after which Baal returns to life. For those interpreters so inclined, the death of Baal here occurs at the beginning of the summer and is followed by his return in the fall.

There remains the related question: If Baal were understood as a dying and rising god, what impact or relationship might this tradition have as regards the death and revivification of humans in the ritual cult? One proposal is that Baal served as the patron god of the royal ancestor cult at Ugarit and, by implication, continued in such a role well into the 1st millennium BCE. Accordingly, such a cult is preserved in a ritual text from Ugarit KTU 1.161, where in this view, Baal is portrayed as descending to the netherworld following his invocation in the temple cult, only to bring up from the world below the ghosts of the deceased kings who were genealogically related to the living king, so that they may dine in splendor with the king and his courtiers and offer their blessings on the king, thereby reaffirming his right to the throne. The problems with this interpretation are numerous. Conventional literary and phraseological parallels found in mythic texts say nothing about the ritual realities that one should derive from such language, since it is often the case that language like this is stereotypical. The presumed connection between a particular mythic theme and a historically observed ritual must be demonstrated on independent and compelling grounds (such as the direct appeal to the myth or the deity mentioned therein which, in the case at hand, is entirely lacking). In fact, Baal is nowhere attested in the ritual contained in KTU 1.161, notwithstanding the highly questionable proposal that he is a participant who is identified by the epithet, title, or divine name Nap’tu. It is Shamash, the solar deity, who plays the main role in this ritual as transporter of the dead from earth above to netherworld below, but not vice versa. The ubiquitous theme of kingship is by itself inadequate to make a direct or derivative connection between the two, and it assumes a rather antiquated view that there is some necessary connection between a myth and a ritual. In sum, the biblical writers’ polemic against Baal had to do with the role of Baal and YHWH as the deities responsible for sustaining life on earth, which for the ancient Canaanites and Israelites did not include the revivification or restoration back to life of the human dead.

2. Baal in the Bible. A comparison of the religious practices and beliefs associated with Baal as preserved in the Bible with those reflective of Canaanite practice and belief attested at Ugarit and at other Levantine sites illustrates both the distinctive aspects as well as the several similarities shared by the prior, broader Canaanite storm-god traditions and those in the Israelite religious traditions that emerged from those Canaanite traditions. In fact, there is growing recognition that Israel’s earliest religious and cultural traditions possess extensive Canaanite origins, as is indicated by recent archaeological and anthropological research that situates Israel’s Late Bronze age emergence primarily, if not exclusively, within a Canaanite cultural milieu. This has in turn impacted how scholars view the portrayal of Canaanite religion depicted in the Bible and its close historical relationship with early Israelite religion, despite the biblical polemics. The literary depiction of disjunction was in fact an historical conjunction.

The deities Baal and YHWH, two of the major gods in Canaanite and Israelite religions, are portrayed in their respective literary traditions as storm and fertility gods (Job 38, Ps 29) and as warrior gods who can “ride the clouds” (Ps 18:10 = 2 Sam 22:11; Ps 68:5). Both face as their arch-nemesis the cosmic chaotic forces personified in the figures of Yamm, or Sea (Ps 89:9), and his mythic monster, Lilith in Ugaritic and Leviathan in Hebrew (Ps 74:14, Job 3:8, 41:1) and Tannin (Ps 74:13, Job 7:12). Moreover, both deities apparently possessed as their consort or wife the goddess Asherah (cf. e.g., Judg 3:7 and Kuntillet Ajrud inscriptions that mention YHWH and Asherah as a divine couple). It should be noted that Baal is also associated with Ashhtarre (Astarte) in other biblical traditions (Judg 2:13). In 1 Kgs 18, the context between the prophets of the YHWH cult and those of the Baal cult introduced by Jezebel of the Phoenician city of Tyre is focused on which deity possessed the power to provide rain to fertilize the earth. The divine “fire” mentioned in the story undoubtedly refers to the lightning and thunder, both characteristic qualities that accompany descriptions of the western Semitic storm god.

Differences between YHWH and Baal are likewise evident. Among others, one in particular stands out, namely, the Israelite demythologization of the heavenly realm. In Genesis, YHWH alone separates the sea from dry land and, if there are any reminiscences of the mythic cosmic battle between
the gods Baal and Yam in Canaanite mythology, they are at best faint and vague. Likewise, although Baal’s chthonic aspect, if that is an accurate descrip-
tor of his role vis-à-vis the netherworld, might be
evident in YHWH’s ability to exercise his power in
the realm of the dead (Amos 9:2; Hos 13:14; Isa 7:11), YHWH is never depicted as descending to
the netherworld for an extended period of time. In
any case, this trope raises yet again the rather con-
tentious point regarding Baal’s categorization as
a “dying and rising” god and the related suggestion
that Baal played a crucial role in the revivification
of the human dead in Canaanite religious tradition.

The apparent competition between YHWH and
Baal for the hearts and minds of the Israelites is
explored in several narratives, including those of
the incident at Baal-Peor (Num 25), the murder of
Gideon at the hands of Baal worshippers (Judg 6),
the story about Elijah’s challenge to the 400 pro-
phets of Baal and the 450 prophets of Asherah at
Mount Carmel (1 Kgs 18), and especially in the
sponsorship of Baal worship by a number of kings
who ruled over Israel and Judah, north and south.
For example, Ahab of Israel built a temple for Baal
in Samaria and worshipped him there (1 Kgs 16:31–33; 22:53), and Manasseh, king of Judah,
supported Baal worship in the south (2 Kgs 21:3),
while his successor and son, Josiah, attempted an
extensive purging of all Baal religion (2 Kgs 23:4–
5). Yet, despite the reference to Jehu’s having
“wiped out Baal from Israel” during one of the
centuries before the exile (2 Kgs 10:28), Baal worship
apparently continued well into the exile (Zeph 1:4;
Jer 2:8; 9:13). In addition, several personal and
proper names from the region contain a theophoric
Ba’al element, suggesting that many citizens came
from Israelite and Judahite families who wor-
shipped Baal (e.g., Jerubbaal).

Further evidence for the persistence and perva-
siveness of Baal religion besides the mention of his
temple (cf. also 2 Kgs 23:24–25) include the men-
tion of his altar (2 Kgs 21:3), his sacred pillar (2 Kgs
10:27), his prophets (2 Kgs 10:19), and his priests
(2 Kgs 11:18). In fact, some biblical writers portray
Baal prophets as ecstatics who challenge Elijah in
1 Kgs 18, and who lacerate themselves in a ritual
act. Also deserving of mention is the view that ref-
erences to the god Hadad in the 2nd-millennium
BCE texts from Ugarit likewise refer to this same
West-Semitic storm god, while in the 1st millen-
nium BCE these two deities, Hadad and Baal, come
to represent two distinct storm gods, Hadad of
the Arameans and Baal of the coastal Canaanites or
Phoenicians. Finally, the negative evidence along
these lines includes the repeated attempts at the
suppression of Baal worship (1 Sam 7:4 and 2 Chr
23:17; 34:4), and the mention of a faithful minor-
ity that had not succumbed to Baal worship (1 Kgs
19:18).

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Brian B. Schmidt

II. Judaism

In classical rabbinic literature Baal is rarely men-
tioned. In the many rabbinic texts that detail the
laws of idolatry the sages never discuss the worship
of Baal. This is perhaps not surprising, since by that
time Baal worship no longer existed. The small
number of rabbinic texts that do mention Baal re-
reflect the sages’ exegesis or their didactic goals and
are not based on firsthand knowledge of Baal wor-
ship.

In fact, the sages were so far removed from Baal
worship that they apparently did not notice that
their own term for a field that receives sufficient
rainfall (let ha-ba’al) is apparently a vestige of an-
cient idolatry. The term presumably originates with
Baal worshippers who felt that if Baal took care of a
field, no human efforts would have to be expended
on irrigation (see Ben-Yehuda: 1:575, n.1; the term
is still used in modern Hebrew.) The sages them-
selves offered a very different midrashic etymology
for this surprising turn of phrase (bMQ 2a), saying
that it connotes peace of mind or tranquility, an
emotion that can result from sexual activity (based
on one meaning of the Hebrew verb b–l). In the
Middle Ages, at least one rabbi, David Qimhi, saw
the word Baal in the Bible as a general reference
to all forms of idolatry, explaining that these idols
became “the owners” of their worshipers (based on
another meaning of the Hebrew noun ba’al, “owner”;
see Celniker: 17 [commentary on Judg 2:11]).

One text in the Jerusalem Talmud (appearing
twice, with small variations) connects the worship
of Baal to sexuality. According to yshab 9:1 (folio
11d), a statue of Baal had the shape of the head and
a penis, and (according to the standard printed text)
“it was [a] na’a’on.” Rabbi David Frankel (Germany,
18th cent.) writes in the standard rabbinic commen-
tary on the Palestinian Talmud that na’a’on means
“a dildo” (presumably connecting the noun to the
root n–p, to commit adultery). It is more likely,
though, that the reading na’a’on is a scribal error
and that the proper reading is found in the parallel
passage in the Jerusalem Talmud, yaZ 3:6 (folio
43a), which records that a Baal statue had the shape
of “the head of a penis and it was Ka’-a’on (or ka-
’a’on),” meaning that it was the size of a pea or a
bean. Again there is no reason to believe that the
sages are reflecting knowledge of Baal worship in
this text. More likely, they are just mocking idolat-
try, as they often do. If the sages’ reference to Baal
with a tiny phallus is referring to some historical reality, it might be mocking Roman statuary from their own period, when the genitals of the gods were often portrayed as being oversized.

In modern Israel, Hosea’s anti-Baal polemic (2:16–17: “On that day, says the LORD, you will call me, ‘My husband’ [ish; lit. ‘my man’], and no longer will you call me, ‘My Baal’ [ba’al; lit. ‘my husband’].” For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth”) has taken on a new meaning. Hosea was so concerned to fight against Baal worship that he was even willing to propose a change in the Hebrew language. Similarly, in 1953 David Ben Gurion, Israel’s first prime minister, wrote a letter to his minister of finance suggesting a correction to the language of a proposed law where a husband was referred to as “ba’al.” Ben Gurion thought it more appropriate in modern times that a husband be referred to as an “ish,” to avoid the possible suggestion that a husband owns his wife, and he cited the anti-Baal verse in Hosea to buttress his argument (Rozental). Many progressive Israelis follow this suggestion today and eschew the use of the Hebrew word ba’al for husband.


Martin Lockshin

III. Islam

In a characteristically brief and allusive passage, the Qur’an refers to the prophet Ilyās (S 37:123; in v. 130 the form Ilyāsn occurs) appealing to his people to abandon their worship of Baal. But only some heed him, and the rest will be called to face what awaits them (S 37:123–30). Although no contextual details are given, the commentators accept this as a reference to Elijah and his battle against the pagan worship that flourished under Ahab and Ahaziah, as recounted in 1 Kgs 17–19 and 2 Kgs 1. In the Qur’an, as in the HB/OT, people are diverted from the true God by the worship of Baal, though Baal’s inferiority is economically underlined here when God’s power is recalled in the title “the best of Creators” (v. 125).

The term ba’al and its plural ba’alān also occur in the Qur’an with the meaning “husband,” “husbands” (S 4:128, S 11:72, S 2:228, S 24:31), and in this sense, together with the feminine form ba’ālā ("wife"), it is used in general speech.

David Thomas

IV. Literature

Baal enjoys a long literary history that echoes his biblical role as false god. John Lydgate (1370–1451?) includes “fals prophets langynge to Baal” in a long list of typological references in “A Defense of Holy Church.” Jean Racine’s Athalie (1691) is a tragedy featuring the downfall of a Baal-worshiping queen of Judah.

Baal unsurprisingly comes to the aid of anti-Catholic polemics in English poetry, as in Martin F. Tupper’s “Our Church’s Enemies” (1874): “They worship bread and wine, and so to Baal bow the knee;/ And make thy better children, Church of England, fear for thee.” The example of Bertolt Brecht’s Baal illustrates many of the ways in which literature made use of the false god.

In 1918 at 20 years of age, four years after he had finished writing Die Bibel, Brecht wrote another play with a title almost as biblical: Baal. This work goes beyond the horizon of moral protest against war found in Die Bibel and takes on the existential world of human sex, cruelty, indifference, vulgarity, and humor as the hero, Baal, attempts to live while being aware that he, along with everyone else, is just a Leichnam auf Urlaub, a “corpse on vacation.”

The problem of human self-righteousness and its absolutism no longer concerns him. Instead, he has found a new and more horrible absolute than that of the grandfather in Die Bibel: death. Baal is thus not a plea from World War I for an end to the useless killing of wartime; rather, it is the shock of the medical student and military orderly who has discovered the overall weakness of the human organism, the frailty of human life, and the tenacity with which the dying hold on to it. He discovered the transitory nature of human existence even without war, and it is this death-and-body-centered concept of humanity that the student Brecht uses to refute the non-scientific, romantically-biblical glorification of the human as poet, presumptuously called der Geselle, “the Anointed One,” as found in Hanns Johat’s Der Einsame.

Brecht’s conversion of the protagonist poet from “the anointed” to Baal is described throughout the play in terms of the Baal myth with which he seems to have been familiar. At this time he kept in his room both a human skull and a picture of the Syrian god Baal over his bed – a sign of his appreciation of the insatiable appetite for life and the inevitable fate of the living. Worship of Baal is constantly condemned by the HB/OT prophets because of its idolatry, its connection to sex and animals as the god’s way of maintaining life, and its deep association with the spring rain and storm water. The famous depiction of the god on the Ras Shamra stele in the Louvre shows him striding forward in the style of an Egyptian god, a shaft of lightning in one hand, an upraised thunder club in the other. Beneath him is a stylized representation of the mountaintops over which he strides and on which he is worshiped, and on his head is a crown composed of the two horns of the bull (both bull
and calf are the symbols of fertility connected with his cult), topped by a large phallus. The two long curling locks of hair may represent the clouds of the storm as well as the testes. The enemy of Baal is the god Mot or Mat, death and sterility, to whom he yields completely when the time comes.

Brecht uses all the elements of the myth in his play. The plot is very loose and bohemian but is held together by the symbols of the myth, the passing of the seasons, and the image of the tree. Sex is everywhere, and there are even calves and bulls with their farmers coming to a swindle arranged by Baal. However, plot has only one real antagonist that is the necessary partner of life: death. Even the tree, symbol of life, can fall on a lumberjack and reverse their roles. Throughout the play the seasons move on, the months beginning at the start of the play with April rain and ending in November just after All Souls’ Day.

The end of the Baal myth and the end of the play have a telling similarity. In the Baal myth, the god surrenders abjectly to Mot’s rapacious jaws. Before descending into the realm of death, Baal copulates with a heifer and begets a male offspring. A rounded cap and detailed curly beard. His left arm is extended slightly downward and holds a lightning-bolt “tree,” as his right arm is raised, clutching a club-like weapon. His forehead. His right arm is raised, clutching a club-like weapon. The key to Baal’s biblical “theology” lies in this striving for the door. Even trapped in death, Baal is looking for life, starlight, the possible way to the Creator God by a vision as he sees the skies opening up with rain and the wadis once more flowing with honey.

When Brecht’s bohemian Baal is in the woods with the lumberjacks, he seems to be associating with the forces of Mot. In a touching final moment, Brecht has Baal drag himself to the door. No more commonplace symbol could be more effective: the dying Baal looks out the open door, perhaps hoping for a sight of the stars and an unambiguous Christian vision of transcendence, but he utters only, “hmm...” Later, another woodcutter reports that he was with Baal at his moment of death and asked for his last thoughts. Baal answered, “I am listening for the rain...”

Perhaps the key to Baal’s biblical “theology” lies in this striving for the door. Even trapped in death, Baal is looking for life, starlight, the possible way out the door. He has pleaded for companionship, sex, and music. He has called out to his mother, to numbers, and to himself (originally to God). In vivid poetry Brecht has dismissed poetry as an ultimate concern and asserted the value of life itself by pointing in biblical terms to its sovereign enemy: the wind. In language both scientific and anti-scientific, poetic and anti-poetic, religious and anti-religious, the play averts that we are au fond what the ancients and their myths said we were: mortals – adding in the Christian-pagan language of Baal: but it may rain again in the Spring.

Baal and the biblical prophet who challenged him would continue to address a variety of modern historical concerns. Martin Buber’s play Elijah (1956) recasts the biblical conflict in terms of the modern search for moral integrity. Spanish modernist Fernando Arrabal’s Baal Babylon (1959) depicts a childhood living in revolutionary and fascist Spain.

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G. Ronald Murphy

V. Visual Arts

“Baal” appears most significantly (first in the plural and then in the singular) in Judg 2:10–15, again in Jer 11:13, and most famously in 1 Kgs 18:16–39, referring to the primary Canaanite/Sidonion god(s) to which the people Israel is drawn. Baal is most frequently portrayed in the northwest Near East – today’s coastal Syria, Lebanon and northern Israel – in antiquity. Several stone reliefs from perhaps 1900–1750 BCE Ugarit/Ras Shamra depict the “Baal of Lightning” in a style reminiscent of Egypt: the torso is shown frontally, but the lower parts of the body, most obviously the legs, are shown in profile, as is the head, albeit with the visible eye also shown frontally. Several thick, stylized locks of curled hair emerge from his conical helmet over his shoulders, and counter-balancing them, curved horn-like protrusions emerge from his forehead. His left arm is extended slightly downward and holds a lightning-bolt “tree,” as his right arm is raised, clutching a club-like weapon. This is the “Baal of Lightning” who, as a storm god, fertilizes the fields and makes things grow. Similarly, a small bronze figurine from 14th- to 12th-century BCE Ugarit presents the god with enormous eyes – a virtually universal ancient Near Eastern attribute of gods and those in close contact with them – a towering conical helmet with bulbous top and his right arm upraised, as if in the act of throwing a thunderbolt (cf. fig. 6). This is a variation on Baal Hadad as a storm and fertility god.

Somewhat more staid representations of the god in his capacity as Hadad are also found, such as a Hittite image in which the god is enveloped in a body-long garment and thus depicted as a simple cylinder from which his arms protrude at a horizontal angle – as if to receive offerings – and with a rounded cap and detailed curly beard. Images of Baal as a distinctly biblical figure are less frequent than those of various Israelite heroes in the act of destroying the “Baalim” – idols, statues of false Canaanite gods for which that term is used generically. Thus, Johann Christoph Weigel pub-
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The name Baal (MT בָּעָל; LXX Βααλ; Ugar. בַּל; Akk. Bel) is a common theophoric element in West-Semitic names. Most “Baal” names are compound sentence names, whether in the HB (e.g., Baaltamar, Baal-hanan) or extra-biblical inscriptions (e.g., Ba/lu Mehir [“Baal is a warrior”] in the Amarna texts). Occasionally, however, the name Baal appears as a hypocoristicon, that is, an abbreviated form of a longer name. There are only two biblical examples of this, both in Chronicles. Two Tyrian kings are also known by the name Baal (בל [“Lord”] in Phoenician), which may be an abbreviation of a full name which includes the name of the Canaanite deity Baal as a theophoric element.

1. The Reubenite

This Baal is listed as a descendant of Reuben in 1 Chr 5:5. Interestingly, he is not listed as descended from one of the four sons of Reuben, but rather from a certain Joel, whose relationship to those sons is unclear. Baal is the son of a Reaiah and father of a Beerah, who was said to be taken into exile by Tiglath-Pilnezer. The few generations listed from Reuben to Beerah is evidence of the extremely partial nature of this genealogy, perhaps only selecting certain individuals or a family-line of interest to the Chronicler’s postexilic community.

The Reubenite genealogy in chapter five is in two parts, the first mainly listing certain descendants of Joel down to the Assyrian exile (5:4–6) and the second listing the kinsmen of Beerah, several of whom may be in the previous genealogy, with variations in spelling: a Joel is mentioned in both 5:4 and 5:8, but also Jeiel in 5:7 (very similar orthographically to Joel), Shema in 5:8, similar to Shemaiah and Shimei in 5:4, and Bela in 5:8, perhaps the same as Baal in 5:5, which the Peshitta renders as Bela.

Bela is a possible emendation for Baal here, not only based upon the Syriac evidence, but the fact that personal names containing the element Baal appear to be most common in the 10th century and earlier (i.e., Jerubbaal, Gideon), especially with reference to the family of Saul (Meribaal, Ishbaal), though names with the Baal element are attested in the Samaria Ostraca. Knoppers, however, suggests that the Bela of the Peshitta has suffered metathesis and that Baal is original.

Ori Z. Soltes

Fig. 6 Figurine of the storm god Baal (Ugarit/Syria, ca. 1300 BCE)