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Baal

The worship of Baal was popular in Egypt from the later New Kingdom in about 1400 BC to its end (1075 BC_

SPADING UP ANCIENT WORDS

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Chapter 4: CLUES FOR GODS, SITES, AND PEOPLES

Baal. The worship of fire is associated with both Baal and Moloch in ancient times. There is the familiar story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal in I Kings 18. An idea of the extent of Baal worship is found in Ireland. Abundant traces are preserved to this day in place names and in dedications of ancient temples to Baal. The tradition remains at Glendalough, County Wicklow, Ireland, that in ancient times the heathen priest used to ascend the fine round stone tower, now restored, and at sunrise called aloud the name of Baal four times, once from each of the four openings at the summit of the tower which face the cardinal points of the compass. Baal worship is believed to have continued until the time of St. Patrick. There are many remnants of old fire worship and sacrifice of children to Moloch in Scotland. Only a century ago on an estate in Scotland it was the practice of peasants on May Day to gather round a fire and throw their children across from one to another through the fire. Other similar descriptions come from Devonshire and in Ireland at fires called Beltina, or Baal fires. Beltane is the name of the first of May in Scotland which even now commemorates the ancient name of Bel (Victoria Institute, 44:125; 6:267; 27:185-186).

In many parts of the world, children dance and play around the Maypole on May Day. This lovely old custom which presents a joyous sight to all who see it unfortunately goes back to a less attractive origin. From ancient times this was part of Baal worship. The word Belus or Baal is the same in Babylonian, Phoenician, Celtic, and other languages. The Celts brought Baal worship into northern Europe, and our old May Day was called Beltina in the British Isles and Ireland (Victoria Institute, 14:131).

Such place names as Ball Hill, Val Hill, and Baalbeg are examples of Baal place names in England. Baalbeg is a deserted village above Loch Ness in Scotland (Michell, 1969, p. 40).

The Phoenicians are also thought to have carried Baal worship to the western and northern coasts of Europe. Baal gave his name to the Baltic Sea, and to the Great Belt and Little Belt channels of Denmark, to towns such as Baleshaugen, Balestranden, and to many localities in the British Isles, such as Belan, and the Baal hills in Yorkshire (Donnelly, 1949, p. 67).

The word Peor appears abruptly in two connections in the books of Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Psalms, and Hosea. It is the name of the mountain from which Baalam last blessed Israel. Although the specific peak is not known today, its location was north of the Dead Sea and opposite the city of Jericho. The word also suddenly became attached to the word Baal, which means lord, and thus we have the word Baalpeor. Few today realize the 'peor' has become a common word in English. It seems passing strange that the word 'peor' is not a Semitic word at all, but it is the Hittite word for fire and underlies the Greek 'pyr,' which is found in many English words meaning 'fire,' and it is the word from which the English word 'fire' is derived (Mendenhall, 1979, p. 109). We thus have a peak called the Mountain of Fire, and the sudden deification of fire in the word Baalpeor, the God of Fire. It seems reasonable to conclude that some terrifying, fiery event some time previously impelled the tribes and nations of the eastern Mediterranean to worship a god of fire in the hope of avoiding another such event. Whether the event was the pillar of fire after the Exodus, or some other event, we do not know, but when we say the word 'fire' today, we are saying quite a historical mouthful.

Basques, Cari, and Scyths. The Basques, those people of unknown origin, now are concentrated in the western Pyrenees in France and Spain. At one time they left a much wider impact on Europe. Basque is a form of the Latin Vasco, and we can see at once that the famous explorer, Vasco da Gama, was a Basque.

The French province north of the Pyrenees on the Atlantic shore is called Gasconne or Guascogne, and is of course named after the Basques. We can also see the name in the Biscayan or Viscayan Gulf on the Atlantic side of France and Spain. We can trace the Basques to the east. The mountain chain which separates France and Germany is called the Vosges, the Mountains of the Basques. In the oldest German records, Walther's Song, this barrier is called the Wasgen Wald, or the Forest of the Basques (Wadler, 1948, p.48-42).

The mysterious Basques of the Spanish and French mountain regions have defied all efforts to relate them to other peoples or languages. Some years ago, however, an Indian scholar, Lahovary, completed a study which showed interesting and detailed relationships between the Dravidian and the Basque languages. These two widely separated people still today have in common such words as those related to sheep, oxen, pigs, asses; spun and woven wool; ducks and doves; houses of wood, stone, or brick; boats of wood; fruit trees, plowing, cattle raising, and vine growing. The Tamil language (Dravidian) is still spoken by millions in India. The oldest form of the word Tamil was Dramila, Dramiza (Dravida). Lahovary also notes that the Lycians of Asia Minor called themselves Trmmili, and the pre-Hellenic Asiatic people of Crete were called Termilai, further possible links to Dravidians and Basques. Perhaps the trail of these peoples will one day be further clarified (Lahovary, 1963, p. 33-35).

The Carians were a mysterious eastern Mediterranean people often associated with the Philistines and with the Phoenicians. The tradition of the Carians was that they, the Lydians, and the Mysians were brother-peoples, descended from three brothers: Car, Lydus, and Mysos. Their reputation as warriors is noted by the fact that King David had both Philistine and Carian bodyguards, the Pleti (a shortened form of Philistine) and the Kari (II Sam. 8:18). At a later time Queen Athaliah, II Kings 11, also had a bodyguard of Cari. The greater fame of the Carians was their reputation as mariners and pirates. The Carians are often mentioned in classical literature. In Egypt, the Mediterranean Sea was known as the Sea of Khar(u). Carians lived in Crete under the name of Leleges and were famous warriors under King Minos of Crete. The Carians had settlements in many parts of the world and left traces in many geographical names containing the syllable "Car," "Cart," or "Keret." The Greek writer, Thucydides noted that the Carians lived on many Aegean islands and joined with the Phoenicians in the great game of piracy. Studies have been made of "Car-" sites all over the world, e.g., Karkar, Carchemish, Car Shalmaneser, and Carthage. After Nebuchadnezzar took Tyre, a remnant of Phoenicians and Carians fled to the west and settled in an earlier colony, Carthage. Homer speaks of barbarously speaking Carians, that is, they did not speak Greek. The script of the Carians may be the same as the still unread Cyprian language or the picture script of Crete, but of course this is only speculation. If some day these scripts are read, we may learn a great deal of ancient times in the eastern Mediterranean (Velikovsky, 1952, p. 198-205; Victoria Institute, 39:90-91).

Beth-Shan was an important old city located at the strategic junction of the Valley of Jezreel with the Jordan Valley. The name is preserved in the modern village of Beisan. The site was settled as early as the fourth millennium B.C. Beth-Shan may mean the Temple of the Serpent God. There have been many finds there of serpent representations. Serpent worship in ancient times was a world-wide phenomenon, and there must be some kind of cultural link in this practice. Beth-Shan at various times was the home of the Canaanites, Egyptians, Hittites, Babylonians, Philistines, Israelites, Scythians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Crusaders, and now Israelis. In the Septuagint, Beth-Shan is translated as Scythopolis, or the City of the Scyths. This unexpected name refers back to a Russian (Indo-European) Invasion of Palestine in the seventh century B.C. about which we know little. At this time the warlike Scythians swept down from the plains of south Russia as far as the boundaries of Egypt. This occurred after the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C., the end of the Kingdom of Israel, and the disappearance of the ten tribes of Israel (Glueck, 1968, p. 173-174).

Finding Sites. The priceless Tell el-Amarna Letters found in Egypt tie into some Old Testament history. Among other things, the letters spoke of the important city-states with important harbors which lay from Mount Carmel northward along the Phoenician coastline. Among them were Acco, Tyre, Sidon, Berytus, Byblos, Simyra, Arvad, and Ugarit. Archaeologists soon identified all but the last, Ugarit. In 1928 Ugarit was

found by accident, and a priceless treasure of Canaanite literature was uncovered. The fact that over a gap in time of an least three thousand years an old place name can be definitely located demonstrates how persistently the root consonant structure of ancient words live on in modern words. Acco, now called Acre, was an Important stepping-stone to the rich Plain of Esdraelon and to southern Galilee. The ancient city of Berytus is easily seen in the present name of Beirut, and Arvad is now known as Ru-Ad (Cleator, 1959, p. 134).

Tarshish. This, is a troublesome place name usually placed on maps as Tarshish(?). Was there one Tarshish or many? As Albright pointed out, the word meant "smelter" in Phoenician before it became a place name. The obsession of the ancients with metal is a strong hint that many places were known as the "Place of the Smelter." The Tarshish of Solomon's day may not be the same location as the Tarshish of Jonah or of St. Paul some centuries later. While Spain may be one likely location, there are other places known by that name many centuries ago (Glueck, 1968, p. 120).

A Cultural Pattern. Our Indo-European languages betray our cattle-raising past in prehistoric times. Cattle were often the sole form of wealth in early societies, and this concept of wealth still survives in parts of the world today. We seldom realize how strikingly various words for cattle are preserved in our languages. The word fee, which now means reward or payment, and closely related words such as feud, fief, feudal, plus our modern terms such as fee-simple, and limited fee, are derived from Scottish, Old Saxon, German, Swedish, and Danish words, all of which mean cattle. From the Latin we have received the word pecuniary, which refers to money. This word is derived from the Latin pecus, which again means cattle. We use the legal term, chattel, which refers to the goods one owns. Again this word is plainly derived from cattle. Another common term for money is capital, which originally referred to the chief part of one's property, which is to say, one's cattle. From the same root we have such English words as cadet, cap, cape, capital, capitol, capitulate, caprice, captain, cattle, chapter, chef, cope, achieve, biceps, decapitate, kerchief, mischief, precipitate, recapitulate, and triceps - all related in some way back to the word cattle (Victoria Institute, 24:156).

Old Testament Synchronisms. It seems strange to find a very ancient Hebrew place name in Egypt, the Yusuf Canal. The author still remembers the excitement of coming unexpectedly to the Yusuf Canal and then noting an ominous sign that photography was forbidden there. Yusuf is the word Joseph. There is no attempt in conventional writing to link the canal with Joseph since the canal supposedly predates him by a number of centuries. Since, however, Egyptian chronology is far from firmly established, there is some likelihood that this famous canal in full operation today was constructed at the time of Joseph after he was made a viceroy (Victoria Institute, 59:90).

Shishak is mentioned twice in the Old Testament: I Kings 11:40 "And Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon," and II Chronicles 12:9 "So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house; he took all: he carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made." The name Shishak is a perfect Illustration of the chaotic condition of ancient chronology. The fabulous find of the Ras Shamra tablets at Ugarit north of Israel is generally dated as 15th century B.C. Shishak lived in the 10th century B.C., 500 years later. Yet one of the first Egyptian names translated from the Ras Shamra tablets was that of Sosaq or Sisaq, which is Shishak, but the translator did not dare draw the correct conclusion, for what was this 10th century Pharaoh doing in the middle of the second millennium B.C. (Velikovsky, 1952, p. 219)?

Punt is another mysterious geographical location, and scholars have come up with various conjectures about its location. Inscriptions in Egypt sometimes say Punt is to the east, and sometimes to the south. This land became famous in ancient literature when the Queen of Egypt, Hatshepsut, took the unprecedented step of voyaging overseas to pay homage to a foreign ruler. Problems of Egyptian chronology have complicated the search. The word Punt means "Holy Land." Already in the Old and Middle Kingdoms of Egypt, the land of Israel was called the Divine Land or God's Land in Egyptian Inscriptions. There is evidence that Queen

Hatshepsut was a contemporary of King Solomon, and that her visit to Punt, which is elaborately recorded in Egyptian inscriptions, was the same historical event described in the Old Testament as the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon. The opinion is given in the Talmud that Sheba was a personal name rather than a geographic one, and Josephus said that Sheba was the ruler of Egypt and Ethiopia, just as Ethiopian tradition has it. The Punt inscriptions in Egypt show the gifts which Solomon gave her. Before the queen went to Punt there was a preliminary mission which was met by a Chief of Punt named Perehu or Paruah. Compare I Kings 4:17 "Jehoshaphat, the son of Paruah." The meeting place was in Aloth or Eloth. Compare Solomon's city of Eloth (next to Ezlongeber) at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba, on the east side of the Sinai peninsula. One of the inscriptions reads: "Sailing in the sea, beginning the goodly way toward God's Land, journeying in peace to the land of Punt." "I have reached the myrrh terraces. It is the glorious region of God's Land." Compare II Chronicles 9:11 "And the King made of alnum trees terraces to the house of the Lord and the palace." On a Punt relief kneeling men were called chiefs of Irem (Hiram). On the return trip the ships arrived at Thebes, so they must have come from the Mediterranean, two fleets and two routes to Palestine, one to the south and one to the east. From other Punt reliefs we see that trees were taken up in God's Land and set in the ground in Egypt. Not only were the gardens of Solomon imitated, but the plan of the Temple and the temple service were followed as models. The temple at Deir el Bahari shows foreign elements, and the queen said that she had built a Punt here. I Kings 10:24 "And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart" (Victoria Institute, 57:191; Velikovsky, 1952, p. 107-135).

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Feature Story

Baal, God of Thunder

by Taylor Ray Ellison

The storm god, Baal, was a West Semitic import to Egypt. Late Bronze Age texts discovered at Ras Shamra (ancient Ugarit) on the Levantine coast, from which his cult spread, indicate that by 1400 BC, Baal had displaced the god El to become the most important god in the local pantheon.

However, the meaning of Baal is "owner" or "lord" and in the earliest of times it is questionable whether the word was used as a title for important local gods in general, or as a proper name to a specific god. Particularly at first, this name was probably given to completely different gods. Over time, the term seems to have been applied to agricultural gods in a variety of locations. There is a great confusion amongst scholars concerning the these deities called "Baal", or sometimes Bel, and their natures and origins. In fact, this god's survival through a vast period of time provides us with a complex trail marked by considerable theological difficulties.

Of the many "Baals" we find referenced, perhaps the most important, or at least the one most associated with Egypt, is the god who dwelt on Mount Sapan (hence Baal-Zaphon) in Northern Syria, and it should be noted that the following discussion relates to him more specifically than to some of his other identities. The equivalent of the Amorite deity Adad, or Hadad, he was a centrally important deity of the Canaanites. He was considered the son of a less well attested god named Dagan (others have identified him as the son of El), who was himself a god of agriculture and storms. Baal was the source of the winter rain storms, spring mist and summer dew which nourished the crops. However, Baal also became associated with the deity of other sites such as Baal Hazor in Palestine, Baal-Sidon and Baal of Tyre (Melkart) in Lebanon.

Baal was known to be a rider of clouds, most active during storms but was also considered to be a "lord of heaven and earth", even controlling earth's fertility. He was the god of thunderstorms, the most vigorous and aggressive of the gods and the one on whom



mortals most depended. Some of his other common epithets include " Most High Prince/Master", " Conqueror of Warriors", Mightiest, Most High, Supreme, Powerful, Puissant", " Warrior", and " Prince, Master of the Earth". He is also sometimes called Re'ammin, meanign "Thunderer", as well as Aleyin, meaning "Most High", Mightiest", "Most Powerful", or Supreme and he has many, many other epithets.



Armed with magical weapons made by the craftsman god, Kothar, Baal manages to overcome Yam, who was the tyrannical god of the sea, according to the surviving ancient Near Eastern myths. However, in another story, with the assistance [Anat](#), Ball gets El's approval to build a house. It is Kothar who actually builds the house, and afterwards, Baal celebrates by inviting the gods to a feast. Ball himself was eventually overcome by Mot, a personification of death, after which he descended into the underworld. He then returned to life with the help of his sister and consort, Anat, in a tradition not unlike the death and resurrection of [Osiris](#).

Baal was usually shown in anthropomorphic form depicted as a powerful warrior with long hair and a full, slightly curved, pointed Syrian style beard. He would wear a conical helmet much like a funnel with two horns attached at its base. He is often represented with a straight-bladed sword that he wore on the belt of a short kilt. At other times, he was shown holding a cedar tree club or spear in his left hand while his raised right hand welding a weapon or even a thunderbolt. This theme, which is common to many Near Eastern storm gods, may have inspired the iconography of the Greek god Zeus.

Baal's cult animal was the bull, which symbolized his power and fertility, though at times and in different places he was also associated with goats and even flies. He is sometimes shown in Near Eastern art standing on the back of a bull, and certainly this association would have also contributed to his acceptance by the [Pharaohs of Egypt](#), where bull cults particularly in the [New Kingdom](#) were an important aspect of the ancient theology.

In fact, it was in the New Kingdom's [18th Dynasty](#) that Baal's cult became formally recognized in Egypt, though he may have made a much earlier, though perhaps temporary, appearance with the [Semitic Hyksos](#). However, E. A. Willis Budge tells us that here, his name was Bar or Balu and says that he may have been worshipped not only as a primary god of war and battle, but may have also been a personification of the burning and destroying heat of the sun and blazing desert wind. In Egypt, he was most certainly a specific, identifiable god.

An important cult center was established for him at Baal Saphon near [Tanis](#) in the northern Delta, and he was also popular at [Memphis](#) and in several other areas. The fact that Osiris and Baal have similar backgrounds, though not directly connected, probably aided Baal's acceptance in Egypt. Also, his nature as a storm god naturally meant that he was equated with the Egyptian



god [Seth](#), but perhaps also with [Montu](#). [Ramesses II](#) was said to appear at the [Battle of Kadesh](#) like "Seth great of strength and Baal himself". The war cry of [Ramesses III](#) was said to be like Baal in the sky, and therefore thunder which makes the mountains shake.

The Hebrew Bible records the ancient Israelites' interaction with this pagan god, and the remnants of his worship survive in the Jewish prayer book for late spring prayers for dew and late fall prayers for rain.

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