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Baal, Beelzebub the Princely Lord

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Baal, Beelzebub the Princely Lord

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BAAL ZEBUL commonly known as Beelzebub is one of the best documented examples of the demonisation of gods concerns Baal-Zebul, the mighty god of the original inhabitants of Canaan; after its conquest by the tribes descended from Israel, son of Isaac and the grandson of Abraham. Baal-Zebul is now most commonly known in English as Beelzebub, although he is called Baal-Zebul in the Old Testament, and Beelzeboul in the New Testament.

Beelzebub is the usual modern spelling of a Canaanite God-name found in the Hebrew Scriptures as Baal-Zebub. In the Greek Christian New Testament, it is spelled Beelzeboul, the name of the chief of the devils.

Baal-Zebul was the Prince and Lord of Ugarit; Ugarit was a powerful trading city of the Canaanites, situated on the coast of what is now northern Syria. Its earliest beginnings were in about 7000 Bce. By the year 3000 Bce, it was already trading with the great city states of Sumer and Akkad to the east, with Egypt in the south and westwards with the peoples of the Great Sea, i.e., the Mediterranean.

The golden age of Ugarit was from about 1500 to 1200 Bce. From this era, we have many clay tablets written not only in the distinctive alphabet of Ugarit, but also in most of the other Middle Eastern scripts of the period.

El, Asherah and Dagon: There were 28 gods worshipped by the people of Ugarit and the people of Canaan to the south. The most ancient of these were El and his consort Ashterah, who were usually depicted as aged, stately beings, clad in long robes. Ashterah is a name of the Great Goddess who was worshipped throughout the ancient Middle East. She has also been called Astarte, Ashtaroah and Ishtar.

In the most ancient texts, Baal is just one of the seventy sons of Asherah. But, in later texts, Baal is the son of El's brother, Dagon, and the consort of his ever virgin sister, Anath.

El is usually depicted with one hand raised in blessing and holding a wine cup in the other. El lends the assembly of the Gods. He is the son of Heaven and Earth, like his brother Dagon.

Dagon was successively worshipped as the Corn God and the Fish God. Corn and Fish are both symbols of the fruits of the earth. The change probably took place when the Philistines, one of the peoples of the Great Sea, settled in Canaan and blended their sea culture with that of the land people.

In one of the Ugarit myths, El is the Father of all the Gods, except Dagon and Dagon's son Baal. Baal is described in the Ugarit tablets as Baal-Zebul, the 'Princely Lord'. El, Dagon and Baal are usually depicted wearing the horns of a bull and each god is sometimes depicted as a bull. The horns, being the great Middle Eastern symbol of virility and fertility. But, it is Baal to whom the image of the Bull is most often applied.

Baal and Anath: In later Ugarit tablets, Baal has grown in importance to become the most powerful god in Ugarit and Canaan. El increasingly becomes a remote, elder statesman and counselor, while Baal is the active, fertile God of Life.

Baal is a helmeted warrior, clad in a short kilt his helmet is horned as a bull. He strides into action with an uplifted mace. His spear is the thunderbolt,

and Baal is often described as 'he who mounts the clouds,' for he stands for fertile life. He was engaged in prolonged war with Mot, the God of Death, whose dwelling place is the slimy ooze and filth of stagnant water. The realm of Mot is called Erets, Earth, i.e. the dirt.

Anath rescues Baal from Mot: When Mot invited Baal to dine with him, Baal became the main course of the meal. Anath, the ever virgin Warrior Goddess, pined for her lost brother and lover, and confronted Mot:

She seized Mot by the linen, of his garment: She grabbed him by the hem of his robe. "Thou Mot, give up my brother!" To which divine Mot replied. "I met mighty Baal I put him like a lamb in my mouth, Like a kid in my gullet was he crushed."

The Sun and lamp of Mot; and the Sky gleamed in the power of the divine Mot.

Anath's response was sudden and violent. She seized the divine Mot. With a sword she split him, with fire she burned him, with millstones she ground him; And In the fields she sowed him.

As a result of Anath's vengeance on Mot, Haul returns to life each year with the coming of the winter thunder storms and rains, but is swallowed up by Mot once more in the burning heat of summer.

People used to European tales of the rigours of winter should remember that here we are dealing with a different climate, in which the blazing heat of summer is the time of destruction of life, and winter is the mild season of cool rains and fertile growth.

The story of Anath's yearly rescue of Baal from Mot, the God of Death, is supplemented by another legend of the Ugarites that tells how, after seven ages of war, Death is finally defeated by the Mighty and Glorious Baal.

In Hebrew Scripture: After Caanan had been conquered by the Israelites in about the year 1000 Bce., the Hebrew religious establishment had great difficulty in preventing the people, royalty, aristocracy and commoners alike,

from adopting the local gods - especially Baal, and his mother Asherali who had by this time displaced Anath as his consort.

For example, in the Old Testament, when Ahaziah, King of Israel [853 Bce.], fell through a lattice of the cool chamber built on the roof of his palace and was injured, messengers were sent to enquire of the oracle of Baal-Zebub at Ekron as to whether he would recover.

It is likely that the correct name of the God at Ekron was Baal-Zebul, which was the common Canaanite term for the God, meaning 'Princely Lord or perhaps by this time 'Lord of the Shrine.'

According to the Talmudic commentaries on Scripture, Baal-Zebub meant 'Lord of the Flies,' which is a derogatory term referring to the swarms of flies that flocked around the sacrificial altars of ancient times. However, there are a number of accounts from various parts of the world that refer to oracles interpreting the buzzing and movement of flies around altars or wells.

In time, the Hebrew propagandists developed a pun on the name Baal-Zebul, changing it to Baal-Zibbul, which meant 'Lord of the Dung.' This became the standard way to refer to the Princely Lord of the Canaanite peoples, among the Jewish peoples.

By the time of the Rabbi Jesus of Nazareth, the people of Judea had forgotten that Baal-Zebul had ever been a mighty god. His name was now pronounced Beelzeboul, and it had become the personal name of the Prince of Devils, the Satan, and the Great Adversary of Yahweh.

When the Pharisees, the so-called 'Pure ones', who were the 'moral majority' of the day, became jealous of the popularity of the Healer and Teacher from Galilee, they said:

"This fellow does not cast out devils except by Beelzeboul, the prince of the devils."...

Jesus who did not deny this, replied with a question and said to them, "If I cast out devils by means of Beelzeboul, then by whom do your followers cast

them out?" [Matthew 12:24, 27.] You can begin to imagine why the Pharisees rapidly grew to hate Jesus.

Then Scribes came down from Jerusalem and said (of Jesus): "He is possessed by Beelzeboul, and by the prince of demons, that he casts out demons." Jesus once again replied with a question, "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand." [Mark 3: 22-24] Consider the true history of Baal when contemplating on Jesus' reply.

Beelzebub in Christian legend: The spelling of the same as Beelzebub first appeared in the 4th century Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible, the version commonly used within the Roman Catholic Church ever since. This spelling was also used in the 4th century Christian legend The Gospel of Nicodemus. At this stage, Beelzebub was still an alternative name for Satan the Adversary, in the Acts of Pilate, the following myth is told.

Satan, the heir of darkness, came and said to Hades, "Now that Jesus who calls himself Son of God is dead, be prepared that we might secure him here."

Hades replied, "It seems to me that no one will be able to withstand such a one, who is able to wield such power with only a won."

Satan answered, "O all devouring and insatiable Hades, are you so afraid 'when you hear about our common enemy? I did not fear him, but worked upon the people and they crucified him. Therefore, prepare to hold him firmly in your power when he comes."

Hades said, "If we receive him here, I fear lest we run the risk of losing all those that I have swallowed up from the beginning of time. When Lazarus died, he was not a dead man, but when called by this Jesus, he flew away from me, like an eagle, so quickly did the earth cast him out"

While Satan and Hades were speaking, a voice sounded like thunder, "Lift up the gates that the King of Glory might come in."

Then Hades said to his legions, "Make fast the gates of brass and bars of iron, secure the locks and stand alert and watch every point." All the dead began to mock Hades and Satan. Again the voice sounded, "Lift up the gates" Hades then asked, "Who is thus King of Glory" and the angel hosts replied, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord strong in battle."

Immediately, the gates of brass were broken in pieces, and the bars of iron were crushed, and all the dead were loosed from their chains.

Then the King of Glory seized the chief ruler Satan by the head and handed him over to the angels, saying, "Bind him."

The King of Glory handed Satan over to Hades, saying, "Take him and hold him until I come again."

Then Hades said to Satan, "O Beelzebub, you wished to kill the King of Glory, but have killed yourself"

And now prepare to be shocked, dear reader.

The defeat of Death: Thus tale of the victory of the King of Glory [Jesus] over Hades [Death] and Satan (associated to Beelzebub) is curiously similar to the tale told a millennium earlier on the clay tablets of Ugarit of the victory of the mighty and glorious Baal over Mot [Death]. This is so, even to the extent of describing such minor details as the realm of Hades as Earth.

Many of the epithets applied to Jesus as King of Glory are almost identical with those formerly applied to Baal, but the personal name, Beelzebub; is now given to the defeated enemy, who is no longer a god but a devil !

The rule of Hades in the myth is ambivalent Satan regards Hades a co-enemy with him of the King of Glory, but the King of Glory appears to regard Hades as a servant.

Later Myths: In the middle Ages miracle plays, Beelzebub was a figure of fun, a black man who carried a bag into which he used to place the souls of the wicked. However he was commonly tricked into humiliating situations.

In the 17th century the English Puritan poet, John Milton, in his epic poem 'Paradise Lost' restored some dignity to Beelzebub, made him Satan's chief lieutenant in the war against Heaven.

The 18th century text the Grimorium Verum and the often spoke of Grand Grimoire, also published in the 18th century, say that the supreme trinity of evil consists of Lucifer, Beelzebub and Ashtaroath. In the ancient legends, the consort of Baal was called was called Ashtaroath.

References to Beelzebub follow similar lines in all later grimoires and magical texts. The appellation 'Lord of the Flies' has stuck, and this is how he is

generally described in the kind of popular paperback demonology's read by superstitious teenagers in rebellion, looking to give the finger to their parents and pastors.

Beelzebub was once the mighty Lord of one of the greatest trading cities of the ancient world. The conqueror of Death, the Lord of Life and Fertility worshipped by millions of people; but now, he is depicted as a fly, and barely escaped being a second rate demon and figure of fun. How the mighty are fallen?!