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## BAAL ZEBUB בעל זבוב

I. The name Baal Zebub occurs only four times in the OT (2 Kgs 1:2.3.6.16). In 2 Kgs 1 an accident of Ahaziah, the king of Israel, and his consulting the oracle of the god Baal Zebub of Ekron is described. For etymological reasons, Baal Zebub must be considered a Semitic god; he is taken over by the Philistine Ekronites and incorporated into their local cult. Zebub is the collective noun for 'flies', also attested in Ugaritic (W. H. VAN SOLDT, *UF* 21 [1989] 369-373: *dbb*), Akkadian (*zubbū*), post-biblical Hebrew, Jewish Aramaic (ܒܝܒܒܐ), Syriac (*debbaba*) and in other Semitic languages.

II. On the basis *zebub*, 'flies', the name

of the god was interpreted as 'Lord of the flies': it was assumed that he was a god who could cause or cure diseases. F. BAETHGEN (*Beiträge zur semitischen Religionsgeschichte* [1888] 25) expressed the view that the flies related to →Baal were seen as a symbol of the solar heat; they were sacred animals. In early Israel, flies were considered a source of nuisance (Isa 7:18; Qoh 10:1). TÄNGBERG (1992) interpreted the name Baal-zebub as "Baal (statue) with the flies (ornamented)" analogous to the Mesopotamian 'Nintu with the flies'. This can be compared with the fact that the Greeks called →Zeus as healer ἀπόμυιος (Clemens Alexandrinus, *Protrepticus* 11,38,4; Pausanias, *Graeciae Descriptio* V 14,1) and that they knew a ἦρωξ μυίαγρος (Pausanias, VIII 26,7: mainly concerning the driving away of the flies with sacrifices).

The LXX implies by its rendering Βααλ μυία (Baal the fly) the same wording as the MT (cf. Josephus, *Antiquitates* IX,2,1: Ἀκκάρων θεὸς Μυία, Vg: Beelzebub). In contradistinction the translation of Symmachus as well as the NT manuscripts have the forms Βεεζεβουλ respectively Βεελζεβουλ (Matt 10:25; 12:24,27; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15.18-19). This rendering of the divine name might rely on a different text-form or be based on oral tradition. Besides, Matt 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15 use the apposition ἀρχῶν τῶν δαιμονίων 'head of the →demons'. The epithet Zabulus (Ass. *Mos.* 10:1) has no connection with Βεελζεβουλ. Greek δια- is frequently replaced by Latin za-, therefore Zabulus can be interpreted as a rendition of Διαβολος. Where one meets in the NT versions the wording Beelzebub, undoubtedly a later correction according to the canonical text of the OT (LXX) exists (so already BAUDISSIN 1897; further L. GASTON, *ThZ* 18 [1962] 251).

The view that Βεελζεβουλ is the original form of the name of the deity in 2 Kgs 1 is further suggested by the titles *zbl b'l* and more frequently *zbl b'l 'arš* appearing in Ugaritic texts. Even before the excavations at Ras Shamra, MOVERS (1841:260) and GUYARD (1878) guessed Baal Zebul to be

the name's original form. They explained the notion *zēbûl*, however, after its occurrence in the OT (Deut 26:15; Isa 63:15; Ps 68:6) or otherwise by referring to the Akk *\*zabal*, 'residence' or 'lofty house' (though, in fact, there is no such word in Akkadian). CHEYNE (1899) asserted that the name Baal-zebub most likely was "...a contemptuous uneuphonic Jewish modification of the true name, which was probably Baal-zebul, 'lord of the high house' [cf. 1 Kgs 8:13]". Similarly GASTON (*ThZ* 18 [1962] 251) understood the notion as referring to [heavenly and earthly] residence.

Reviving another explication, FENSHAM (1967:361-364) tried to interpret the Hebrew noun זִבּוּל as derived from Ugaritic *ḏbb* which he understood as 'flame' (cf. Heb *šāḥīb*). He rendered זִבּוּל בַּעַל by 'Baal the →Flame' adducing the fire motif in the →Elijah tales as corroborating evidence. Yet his explanation fails to convince; the Ugaritic noun *ḏbb* is not clearly explained, and it is questionable whether there are religio-historical parallels. The NT, moreover, shows that the root is *zbl*, not *zbb*. Equally unconvincing is Mulder's proposal to explain זִבּוּל on the basis of Ug *zbl* 'illness' (*Ba'al in het Oude Testament* [1962] 142-144); the Ugaritic word for illness is *zbln*. Above all it reckons, despite the statement in the NT, with the consonantal stock *zbb*. The same doubts are to be raised against MULDER's explanation of *b'l zbl* by referring to Ug *zbl*, 'illness' particularly because this noun runs *zbln*.

Relatively soon after the findings at Ras Shamra, ALBRIGHT (1936) construed Ug *zbl* as passive participle *zabûl*. He derived the form from the verbal root ZBL—known in Akkadian and Arabic—and surmised the nominal meaning 'prince' or 'the elevated one'. The meaning fits with the frequent occurrence of *zbl* as a title for gods. This interpretation is widely accepted ('prince', 'princely state' or 'princship') and it was included in HALAT (250).

Modifications and new readings have been proposed since. J. C. DE MOOR (*UF* 1 [1969] 188) rejected ALBRIGHT's explana-

tion (1936) of the verbal form as passive participle *\*zabulu* and read *\*ziblu*, 'his Highness'. W. VON SODEN (*UF* 4 [1972] 159) vocalized the noun *zabûl[um]* referring to *zabultum* which is perhaps the title of the Ugaritic 'princess' as witnessed in two Akkadian documents from Mari. DIETRICH & LORETZ (1980) proved that the epithet *zbl b'l arš* has the meaning 'prince, lord of the underworld'. They confirmed *ba'al zēbûb* to be an intentional misspelling of *b'l zbl* 'Baal the prince', a chthonic god able to help in cases of illness. It may be added that this fact confirms Ugaritic incantations in which Baal is invoked to drive away the demon of disease (RIH I.16. 1-3; cf. *TUAT* 2 [1986-89] 335 and *ARTU* 183; perhaps also *KTU* 1.82:38; cf. *TUAT* 2, 339 [DIETRICH & LORETZ 1980]). The NT obviously preserved the correct form of the name (DIETRICH & LORETZ 1980:392). Likewise A. S. KAPELRUD (*Baal in the Ras Shamra Texts* [1952] 60); E. JENNI (*BHH* 1 [1962] 175-178.) and H. GESE (*RAAM* 122) recognize in *b'l zbb* an intentional deformation of the original *b'l zbl*. L. K. HANDY (*UF* 20 [1988] 59) finally proposes to translate the noun as 'ruler', because *zbl* designates a person who is governing or ruling.

Consequently Masoretic *b'l zbw* of 2 Kgs 1:2-3.6.16 is to be emended to *b'l zbw* which is to be rendered 'Baal the Prince'. Most probably, the meaning of this god in the Syrian-Palestine area did not essentially differ from what can be deduced from the Ras Shamra texts though for a more accurate conception the data do not suffice.

### III. Bibliography

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