

PARALLEL WORDS IN HEBREW AND UGARITIC

[1947]

In my essay 'Biblical and Canaanite Literature', which I published several years ago in *Tarbiz*,¹ I raised a difficult question regarding the history of Biblical literature: Why is it that already in the earliest stages of this literature we find finished and perfected compositions, as though they had been preceded by a development extending over many centuries? As a result of my examination of the problem, I came to the conclusion that the solution could be found in the premise that Hebrew literature was but the continuation of the earlier Canaanite literature. A number of characteristic features, common to both Biblical and Ugaritic literature, served as conclusive proofs of the correctness of this assumption. The affinity between the two literatures in their methods of literary expression points to a very ancient Canaanite literary tradition, from which evolved both Ugaritic literature on the one hand and Hebrew literature on the other. Just as the Hebrew language is only one of the dialects that grew from the ancient Canaanite stock, and is a continuation — with certain dialectal changes resulting from the ramification and development of the various Canaanite dialects in the second millennium B.C.E. — of the oldest and most homogeneous Canaanite tongue, so does Hebrew literature continue the Canaanite literary tradition, which had already taken shape among the Canaanite-speaking population before the people of Israel came into existence.

One of the features, common to both Ugaritic and Biblical literature, that I have enumerated in my aforementioned essay is the existence of *fixed* pairs of parallel words in the two cola of a poetic verse. In the literary tradition there developed a kind of permanent nexus between a given word and another word that was synonymous with it, a sort of established custom that posited that when a certain word occurred in the first line of a couplet, it drew after it, in the second line, the word that regularly formed a parallelism with it.

1 Vol. XIII, pp. 197-212; XIV, pp. 1-10 [see English translation above, pp. 16-59].

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In this way, for instance, the correlatives עפר — ארץ ['earth, ground — dust'] were originated. If a poet introduced the word ארץ in the first colon, he already knew that in the second colon he would have to use the word עפר. Or, contrariwise, if he began with עפר, he would have to conclude with ארץ. For instance, Psalms vii 6 [5]: וישג וירמס: לארץ חיי, וכבודי לעפר ישכן סלה ['... and overtake me, and let him trample my life to the *ground*, and lay my soul in the *dust*. Selah']; *ibid.* xlv 26 [25]: כי שחה לעפר נפשנו, דבקה לארץ בטננו ['for our soul is bowed down to the *dust*; our body cleaves to the *ground*']. This word-pair occurs no less than thirteen times in the Bible, and just as it is common in Biblical literature, so it is found with equal frequency in Ugaritic literature. In stating this, it is not my intention to convey that in Ugaritic poetry one frequently encounters correlatives meaning 'ground' and 'dust', but that precisely the same words are used in both languages: actually ארץ and actually עפר occur in Ugaritic as in Hebrew.

In my essay, to which I have referred above, I have cited twenty-two examples of word-pairs of this kind.² Here I propose to offer still further examples that can shed new light on the study of the Hebrew language.

לאם — אדם ['man, men — people'].

In the Ugaritic poetic text V AB ii 7-8, it is written: *tmḥṣ l'im ḥp y[m]*, *tṣmt 'adm ṣ'at ṣpš* ('she smote the *peoples* of the seashore, she exterminated the *men* of the sunrise'); and in Isaiah xliii 4: ואתן אדם תחתך, ולאמים תחת נפשך ['I give *men* in return for you, *peoples* in exchange for your life']. In the view of most contemporary commentators of Isaiah the word אדם in this verse is suspect, since they hold that in Hebrew אדם is not a suitable parallel to לאמים; hence they have suggested emending it and reading in its stead אדמות ['lands'] or איים ['isles'], or the like. Now we learn from the Ugaritic verse mentioned above that, on the contrary, this is a traditional and established parallelism in the history of the language, and that the Masoretic text is not to be emended at all.

צרה — אויב ['enemy — adversaries'].

Among the word-pairs that I noted in my earlier article, I listed (צורה) צר — אויב ['enemy — adversary' (or, 'vexer')]. In addition, it now seems to me that we can indicate another parallel, even more exact and interesting, between Biblical and Ugaritic literature, namely,

2 See above, pp. 43-56.

that the word *צרה* (*srt*) occurs in both of them as a parallel to אויבים, and in the light of this traditional parallelism we can see that in several Biblical passages this word is not used in its normal sense of 'trouble, calamity', but in a different, collective, signification — 'a group of adversaries'. We read in Psalms cxxxviii 7: **אם אלך בקרב צרה תחייני על אף איני תשלה ירך ותושיעני ימינך** [though I walk in the midst of צרה, Thou dost preserve my life; Thou dost stretch out Thy hand against the wrath of my enemies, and Thy right hand delivers me].³ According to the usual interpretation of the word, the expression *צרה בקרב*, signifying 'in the midst of calamity', is somewhat strange, and the thought does not fit the context, which deals with the oppression of the enemy and not with a calamity. In Ugaritic the word *srt* certainly denotes the adversaries as a whole, as, for example, in Tablet III AB 8-9: *ht 'ibk, b'lm, ht 'ibk tmḥṣ, ht tsmt srtk* ('lo, thine enemies, O Baal, lo thou shalt smite thine enemies, lo, thou shalt exterminate thine adversaries').⁴ If we interpret the word thus in the above-mentioned verse of Psalms, the entire passage becomes fully comprehensive. So, too, we find in Psalm liv 9 [7]: **כי מכל צרה הצילני, ובאיבי ראה עיני** [for He has delivered me from every צרה, and mine eye has looked in triumph on mine enemies']. Essentially the psalm does not speak of calamities, but of enemies and vexers; hence there, too, צרה is to be understood in the sense indicated, to wit, 'a group of adversaries'. The same applies to Psalms cxliii. This psalm also deals wholly with the oppression of enemies and at the end it is written (vv. 11-12): **למען שמך ה' תחייני, ובחוסך תצמיט איבי והאבדת כל צררי נפשי... תוציא מצרה נפשי, ובחוסך תצמיט איבי והאבדת כל צררי נפשי...** [for Thy name's sake, O Lord, preserve my life! in Thy righteousness bring me out of צרה! and in Thy steadfast love cut off my enemies, and destroy all my adversaries...].⁵ Verse 12 continues the thought of verse 11 and parallels it, and in it, too, the word צרה has to be understood in the above-mentioned sense. It may well be that the word צרה is to be interpreted thus also in other parts of the Bible, as, for instance, in i Samuel xxvi 24; i Kings i 29; Nahum i 9.

דמע — בכה [weep — shed tears'].

In Ugaritic: Tablet I D 34-35: *tbky pgt bm lb, tdm' bm kbd* ('Pgt wept in her heart, she shed tears in her liver'); *ibid.* 173-175, and

3 On the parallelism די — ימין, see above, p. 49.

4 For further Ugaritic examples, see my previous article above, p. 47.

5 Note should also be taken of the word תצמיט, which also occurs in the Ugaritic verse cited.

177-179: *ybk l'aqht g'zr, ydm' lkdd dn'il mt rp'i* ('he wept for Aqhat, the mighty one, he shed tears for Kdd, the son of Danel, the Raphaman'). Similarly, a number of times in Tablet I K (26-27: *ybk y - ydm'*; 31-32: *bm bkyh - [b]dn'h*; 39-40: *ybk y - ydm'*; 60-61: *bbk - bdm'*); so, too, in Tablet II K (i 25-28: *tbkn - 'udm't*).

In the Bible: Isaiah xvi 9: **על כן אבכה בככי יעזר גפן שבמה אריוך** [therefore I weep with the weeping of Jazer for the vine of Sebmah; I drench you with tears, O Heshbon and Elealeh]; Jeremiah viii 23 [ix i]: **מי יתן ראשי מים ועיני מקור דמעה** [O that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night...]; *ibid.* xiii 17: **במסתרים תבכה נפשי מפני גוה, ודמע תדמע ותרד עיני דמעה** [my soul will weep in secret for your pride, mine eyes will weep bitterly and run down with tears]; *ibid.* xxxi 16: **מנעי קולך מבכי ועיניך מדמעה** [keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears]; Ezekiel xxiv 16: **ולא תספד ולא תבכה ולוא תבוא דמעתיך** [yet you shall not mourn or weep nor shall your tears run down]; Malachi ii 13: **כסוה דמעה** [you cover the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning]; Lamentations i 2: **על בלילה ודמעתי על לחיה** [she weeps bitterly in the night, tears on her cheeks].

Comparison with the Ugaritic texts proves not only that in the ancient literary tradition the parallelism between the stems בכה and דמע was a stereotyped common feature, but also that a whole series of figurative expressions connected with the notion of weeping was established in the tradition. The eyes are deemed a source of tears both in Jeremiah viii 23 [xi 1] (ועיני מקור דמעה), and in II K i 27 (*qr 'nk*); the verb כלה in relation to eyes that waste away in tears occurs not only in Lamentations ii 11 (כלו בדמעות עיני) [mine eyes are spent with weeping], but also in II K, *loc. cit.* (26-27: *'al tkl bn qr 'nk*, 'do not consume, O my son, the source of thine eyes'); the whole head, or the brain therein, is depicted, in parallelism with eyes, as though it had wasted away and become water through the tears that run down from it, in Jeremiah viii 23 [ix 1] (מי יתן ראשי) even as in the above-mentioned verse of II K (which continues, after the word 'nk, with: *mḥ r'išk 'udm't*, 'the brain of thy head with tears'); the expression **ויתן את קלו בככי** [and he wept aloud] is found in Genesis xlv 2 (compare Jeremiah xxxi 16: **מנעי קולך מבכי**), and likewise, actually word for word, in II K i 13-14 (*ytn gh bky*). I have already cited, in my essay in *Turbiz*,⁶

6 See above, p. 34, No. 2 and 3.

Biblical and Ugaritic expressions like 'drinking tears', and 'being sated with weeping', or 'melting the bed' with tears. All this evidences the existence of a broad-based and comprehensive tradition, which prevailed through the entire range of the literary language.

נתן — שלח ['give — send'].

In Ugaritic: Tablet II D vi 17-18: [*i*]rš ksp w'atnk [hrš w'aš]lḥk; and *ibid.* 27-28: 'irš hym w'atnk, blmt w'ašlḥk (both verses according to the reading correctly proposed by Ginsberg),⁷ 'ask for silver and I shall give thee, gold and I shall send thee; ask for life and I shall give thee, immortality and I shall send thee'.

In the Bible: Psalms lxxviii 24-25: ודגן שמים נתן למר ... צידה שלח [and gave them the grain of heaven... he sent them food in abundance]; Job v 10: הנתן מטר על פני ארץ. ושלה מים על פני חוצות [He gives rain upon the earth, and sends waters upon the fields]; compare also Joel ii 19: ולא הגבי שלח לכם את הדגן והתירוש והיצהר ... ואלא אתן אתכם עוד הרפה בגוים [behold, I am sending to you grain, wine, and oil... and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations], although in this verse the verb נתן is used in a different sense. Similarly, in Ugaritic: NK 21-22: 'išḥ ṭhrm 'iqn'im, 'itn šdh krmm, 'I shall send bright sapphires, I shall make her fields vineyards'. At all events, from all the passages that I have cited it will be seen that we can establish a special connotation of the stem שלח similar to that of נתן. Just as the diction employed in correspondence, in which the writer *sends* to inform the addressee of something, led to the use of the term 'send to someone' in the sense of 'write to someone in a letter',⁸ so the custom of presenting gifts by means of a messenger caused the same expression to acquire the meaning 'to give to someone', even where no actual sending is involved.

7 *BASOR* 98, 1945, pp. 17-20. For the expression compare, as Ginsberg has suggested, p. 17: i Kings iii 5: שאל מה אתן לך ['ask what I shall give you']; Psalms ii 8: שאל ממני ואתנה גוים נחלתך ['ask of Me, and I will make the nations your heritage...']; *ibid.* xxi 5 [4]: חיים שאל ממך נתתה לו, ארך ימים: עולם ועד ['he asked life of Thee; Thou gavest it to him, length of days forever and ever'].

8 So, for instance, in the Lachish ostrakon, No. 3, line 7: מאן שלחך אל עבדך, signifying, 'since you wrote to your servant'. See Torczyner's remarks in *Te'udor Lakhish*, Jerusalem 1940, pp. 56-57 [and in *The Lachish Letters* (Lachish I), London 1938, p. 52], and my observations in my article on the Lachish ostraca in *RSO* XV, 1936, p. 174 [see also below, p. 231].

פה — שפתים ['mouth — lips'].

A very important proof of the power of the literary tradition is provided in the fact that several pairs of parallel words keep recurring in the Bible ever so many times as a common and conventional literary usage. Of the examples that I have given in *Tarbiz* it is worth noting, from this aspect the pair עפר — ארץ ['earth, ground — dust'], which occurs in the Bible thirteen times, and the pair דור (ו)דור — לעולם [for ever — through all the generations] which occurs in Scripture twenty-eight times. Because of the importance of such correlatives for determining the stylistic techniques of literary Hebrew, it appears to me that another example should be added that appears in the Bible twenty-four times, namely, the word-pair פה — שפתים ['mouth — lips'].

In Ugaritic: NK 45-47: hn bpy sprhn, bšpty mnthn ('lo, in my mouth is their number, on my lips their count'); I D 75: bph rgm lys'a,⁹ bšpth [hwt] ('speech went forth from his mouth, utterance from his lips'), and similar passages.

Seeing that the Biblical examples are so numerous, I shall refrain from quoting them, but will content myself with giving the references: Isaiah xi 4; xxix 13; Malachi ii 6; ii 7; Psalms li 17 [15]; lix 8 [7]; lix 13 [12]; lxvi 14; cxli 3; Proverbs iv 24; x 31; xiii 3; xiv 3; xvi 10; xvi 23; xviii 6; xviii 7; xviii 20; xxvii 2; Job viii 21; xv 6; xvi 5; xxiii 12; Ecclesiastes x 12.

It would be possible to add many more examples, such as: — אח — אה — אהבים ['brother — son of mother']; דודים — אהבים ['affection — love']; דין — שפט ['judge — judge, govern']; חיים — אלמות [life — immortality]; שמח — גיל [rejoice — exult]; שמח — צהל [rejoice — glow (as a sign of joy)]; שמע — בין [hear — understand]; שפתים — לשון ['lips — tongue']; and many more. But I am compelled to be brief, so as not to take up too much space in this journal. With these and similar examples I shall deal specifically on another occasion.

Even more so it appears to me desirable to postpone the discussion of those word-pairs that are not actually identical in the two languages — only their signification being the same — even in so far as one of the two words is concerned, for example: אמרה — דבר ['speech — utterance'] in Hebrew, *rgm* — *hwt* in Ugaritic; אש — להבה ['fire — flame'] in Hebrew, 'išt — *nbl'at* in Ugaritic; שר — שופט ['prince — judge'] in Hebrew, *zbl* — *tpṭ* in Ugaritic.

9 For the expression, compare Job xxxvii 2: והנה מפי יצא ['and the rumbling that comes from His mouth'].

שבי [a masculine noun] is used; relative to אשת יפת תאר, we find שביה [a feminine noun]. Here, too, the word שביה connotes the group of captive women.¹⁵ In this manner also we can explain Isaiah iii 1: כי הנה האדון ה' צבאות מסיר מירושלם ומיהודה משען ומשענה [‘for, behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, is taking away from Jerusalem and from Judah stay and staff’]. The customary interpretation that the expression משען and משענה is intended to signify every kind of stay has no basis. Apparently, the feminine word משענה refers to Jerusalem and the masculine word משען to Judah (compare in the continuation of the passage, verse 8: [masc.] נפל ויהודה, [fem.] כשלה ירושלם. [‘for Jerusalem has stumbled, and Judah has fallen’]), the order being chiasitic.¹⁶

15 In verse 13 we find שמלת שביה and not שמלת שביהה, because there the reference is not to a body of captive women, but to the general state of captivity, as in verse 16; while the feminine form already occurs in the word שמלה.

16 In verses like Psalms cxliv 12: בנותינו כזויות... אטר בנינו כנטיעים [‘may our sons be like plants... our daughters like corner pillars’], or Proverbs i 8: שמע בני מוסר אביך ואל תש תורת אמך [‘hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and reject not your mother’s teaching’], and the like, the use of masculine and feminine may be purely fortuitous (in Proverbs vi 20, the text reads: נצר בני מצות אביך ואל תש תורת אמך [‘my son, keep your father’s commandment, and forsake not your mother’s teaching’]).