

VERSE PATTERNS IN KTU 1.119: 26-36

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Introduction

Several years ago this poem was analysed as a «worked example» in a manual on Hebrew poetry¹. Since then the patterning of this short poem has been re-examined recently in at least two independent studies² and in addition an important study on the difficult verb *šr*, which occurs in this text, has also appeared (see below) so that my previous presentation needs to be revised accordingly.

Text and translation

First, the text and translation can be set out (stichometrically, in order to avoid repetition and to save space) followed by some textual and philological notes.

k gr 'z. tgrkm.
qrd hmytkm.
'nkm. l. b' l tšun

When a stalwart attacks your gate(s),
a warrior your walls,
your eyes to Baal lift up (saying):

yb'lm.
[a]l[.] tdy 'z ltgrny.
qrd [l]hmytny.

O Baal,
will you not drive the stalwart from our gate(s),
the warrior from our walls?

ibr. yb' l nšqdš
mđr b' l nmlu.
dkr b' l. nš[q]dš
h̄tp b' l[.] nmlu.

A bull, O Baal, will we consecrate,
a vow, Baal, will we fulfil,
a male (?), Baal, will we consecrate,
a *h̄tpu*- sacrifice, Baal, will we fulfil.

'šrt. b' l. n[]šr.
qdš b' l. n' l.
ntbt bt b['] ntlk.

A feast for Baal will we proclaim,
to the sanctuary of Baal, will we climb,
(on) the path of Baal's temple will we walk.

wšm [. b] ' l l. šl[km]
ydy. 'z. ltgrkm[.]
[qrd] lhmytkm []

And Baal will hear your entreaty.
He will drive the stalwart from your gate(s),
the warrior from your walls.

¹ W.G.E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques* (JSOTSS 26), Sheffield 1995 (2nd revised ed.), 360-62.

² D. Pardee, *Poetry in Ugaritic Ritual Texts*, in J.C. de Moor - W.G.E. Watson (Eds.), *Verse in Ancient Near Eastern Prose* (AOAT 42), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1993, 207-18, esp. 213-17. For bibliography see *ibid.*, 213, n.18. The other study is Y. Avishur, *Studies in Hebrew and Ugaritic Psalms*, Jerusalem 1994, 253-76.

Here, since the focus is on poetic patterning, the transliteration has been given in simplified form. For critical editions of the text see Pardee's study and KTU (2nd edition)³. In line 28, Pardee suggests reading *hm* or *im*, «if»: *yb['l]m[. h/im. t]dy 'z l['l]grny*, «O Ba'1, if you drive the strong one from our gate»⁴. If *al* is read, perhaps it is a rhetorical question, as rendered by Tropper and Verreet: «O Ba'1, möchtest du nicht den Starken von unserem Tor vertreiben, den Krieger von unseren Wällen?»⁵. De Moor (ARTU, 173 and n. 18) takes *yb'lm* as a plural of majesty but the *-m* is probably enclitic (see below). The verb 'šr (line 32) has recently been re-examined by Dietrich and Loretz⁶ and they translate the verb as «invite (to a meal)»⁷. This provides a key element to understanding *b'1* here and in the following two lines as not being a vocative⁸. The verb *qdš* (š) has also been discussed recently⁹. The restoration generally proposed for lines 33(end)-34 is *ntbt bt[. b'1] ntlk*. (KTU): «The paths of the house of Ba'lu we shall walk» (e.g., ARTU, 174)¹⁰. Pardee plausibly suggested the restoration *ntbt b['1] ntlk*, «(That) path (O) Ba'1, we shall take», to fit in with the series of vocatives in the other lines¹¹. However, it seems that in the last three lines of the prayer, *b'1* is determined by the previous word, as shown in the translation, and so is not a vocative.

The Poem

The poetic character of these lines was first recognised by Herdner¹² and then acknowledged by other scholars. According to del Olmo Lete, «Literalmente el texto es de un gran equilibrio y sencillez de composición, y ofrece un bello ejemplo de plegaria-voto inscrito en el culto, similar al que ya nos ofrecía la épica ugarítica (cf.

³ Also P.D. Miller, Jr., *Prayer and Sacrifice in Ugarit and Israel*, in W. Claassen (Ed.), *Text and Context: Old Testament and Semitic Studies for F. C. Fensham* (JSOTSS 48), Sheffield 1988, 139-55 (140-41).

⁴ Accepted by Miller, Jr., *Prayer and Sacrifice*, 140-41. Without making this correction, F. Saracino, *Un parallelo elegiaco a KTU 1.119:29-36*, UF 15, 1983, 304-306 (304, n. 2) points to the similar construction with *hm* in KTU 1.127:30-33.

⁵ J. Tropper - E. Verreet, *Ugaritisch ndy, ydy, hdy, ndd und d(w)d*, UF 20, 1988, 339-50 (342-43). TOu II, 210: «O Ba'al, puisses-tu éloigner le puissant (de) notre porte, le vaillant [de] nos murailles».

⁶ M. Dietrich - O. Loretz, *Ugaritisch 'ašr, āširūma und äthiopisch 'aššara*, in A. Kaye (Ed.), *Semitic Studies in Honor of Wolf Leslau*, I, Wiesbaden 1991, 309-27.

⁷ «Ein Mahl für Baal werden wir ausrufen», Dietrich - Loretz, *Studies Leslau*, cit., 313.

⁸ Cf. «a banquet, O Baal, we shall lay on», as previously translated by S.B. Parker, *The Pre-biblical Narrative Tradition*, Atlanta 1989, 71.

⁹ J. Tropper, *Der ugaritische Kausativstamm und die Kausativbildungen des Semitischen* (ALASP 2), Münster 1990, 56.

¹⁰ Or perhaps, «the temple-paths, Baal, we will tread», as in Watson, *Guide*, 361.

¹¹ Pardee, *Poetry*, 216 and n. 30.

¹² A. Herdner, *Une prière à Baal des Ugaritains en danger*, CRAIBL, 1972, 693-703 (694).

KTU 1.14 IV 38-43) y nos proporciona la lírica sacra de Israel»¹³. Pardee comments: «Everything about the poem makes it stand out from its context: its structure (as bicolonial and tricolonial units with monocola at transitions), its vocabulary (virtually none of which occurs elsewhere in the ritual texts), its syntax (with a regular occurrence of verbs and with brief propositions each clearly distinguishable from its neighbour), and the very fact that it is a form of prayer (one does not find speeches addressed to the gods in the standard ritual texts)»¹⁴. Parker states: «The poetic epic character of l. 26ff. is seen when one recognizes that the closest parallels in Ugaritic are found in the Krt text»¹⁵. Another indication that these lines are verse is the lack of a speech introduction formula before the 'prayer'¹⁶, and it has, therefore, to be supplied in parentheses: «You shall lift up your eyes to Baal (saying:)».

Anacrusis

It is probable that the first word (*yb'Im*) is an anacrusis¹⁷ (since otherwise the line would be too long), highlighted, perhaps, by the focus-marker *-m*¹⁸.

Envelope figure

The envelope figure or *inclusio*, created by near-repetition of the opening and closing couplets («When a stalwart attacks your gate(s), a warrior your walls» and, «He will drive the stalwart from your gate(s), the warrior from your walls») had been noted previously¹⁹. In fact, Avishur considers the *inclusio* to comprise two sets of three lines enclosing the body of the psalm as follows²⁰:

¹³ G. del Olmo Lete, *Liturgia sacrificial y salmodia en Ugarit (KTU 1.119)*, AuOr 7, 1989, 27-35 (34) = *La religión cananea según la liturgia de Ugarit, Estudio textual*, Sabadell 1992, 205.

¹⁴ Pardee, *Poetry*, 217.

¹⁵ Miller, *Prayer and Sacrifice*, 149; see there for details. Note that Pardee, *Poetry*, 217, wonders whether the two lines preceding the poem (lines 24'-25'), which exhibit a degree of parallelism, might not be a transitional element between the ritual and the prayer.

¹⁶ See, in general, W.G.E. Watson, *Abrupt Speech in Ugaritic Narrative Verse*, UF 22, 1990, 415-23 (419, n. 16). However, note the similar lack of formula in line 24, and in KTU 1.106:20, as interpreted by del Olmo Lete, *La religión cananea*, 203 and 207.

¹⁷ Other examples of anacrusis in Ugaritic are *bn* (KTU 1.16 I 25), *ur* (KTU 1.19 II 17), *ahl an* (KTU 1.19 II 22) and *hn* (KTU 1.24:45).

¹⁸ As set out in Watson, *Guide*, 361. Miller, *Prayer and Sacrifice*, 146, also noted later: «The initial address to the deity, *yb'Im*, in line 28' is extra-metrical (cf. *ywhw 'dnyw* of Ps. 8.1). The colon would have sixteen syllables with the vocative included, which is much too long for this poem, or indeed most cola of Ugaritic poetry». The anacrusis is also accepted by Parker, *Narrative Tradition*, 71. For the use of final *-m* here see Watson, *Final -m in Ugaritic*, AuOr 10, 1992, 223-52(236).

¹⁹ Watson, *Guide*, 362, n. 13; for similar use of *inclusio* in a Greek elegy, see Saracino, *Un parallelo*, 306.

²⁰ Avishur, *Studies*, 265. He notes: «The Ugaritic prayer was carefully structured and exhibits the use of sophisticated artistic technique. It is formulated chiasmically and symmetrically: the opening and conclusion, which are equal in length and parallel each other formally and thematically, each consists of three cola, forming an *inclusio* surrounding the body of the psalm». For other examples of the envelope figure in Ugaritic cf. Watson, *Guide*, 283 and n. 43.

k gr 'z. *tḡrkm*.
qrd ḥmytkm.
 'nmk. l. b' l tšun
 [psalm]
 wšm' [b] 'l. šlt[km]
ydy. 'z. *ltḡrkm* [.]
 [qrd] *lḥmytkm*

An argument in favour of grouping each of these two sets as a tricolon (rather than as couplet plus monocolon) is the comparison made by Saracino with the similar passage in Mic 5:5:

<i>whšyl m'šwr</i>	Then he will rescue from Assyria
<i>ky ybw' b'ršnw</i>	if he enters our land
<i>wky ydrk bgbwlnw</i>	and if he treads in our territory.

He notes: «The last three lines of the prayer to Baal repeat the first ones, as in Micah's oracle, and they enclose the whole as a unity»²¹. In both Ugaritic and Hebrew the three lines form one complete sentence²².

Word pairs

A few word pairs occur in these lines, with some equivalents in other Semitic languages: 'z || *qrd*, «strong (man)» || «hero, warrior» (26, 28-29 and 35-36); comparable are Akk. «Can strong warriors (*qarrādū da[nnūtū]*) withstand a flood, or mighty men (*bēl em[ūqī]*) quiet a conflagration?»²³; *ina Igigi qardaku ina Annunāki gašraku*, «I am warrior among the Igigi-gods, mighty one among the Anunna-gods!»²⁴; and *libbu dan libbu qarrād*, «the heart is strong, the heart is a hero»²⁵; *tḡr* || *ḥmyt*, «gate» || «wall» (28-29) is matched by Heb. *ḥmyh* || *š'ṛ*, «wall» || «gate» (Jer 51:58; cf. Ex 26:10; also Lam 2:8-9; Isa 60:10-11; cf. Isa 26:1-2 and Prov 1:21)²⁶ where the sequence is reversed; 'ly || *ylk*, «to go up» || «to walk», evokes the use of *elû* + *alāku* in *elima ana muḥḥi dūri ša Uruk itallak*, «Climb up onto the wall of Uruk and walk around» (Gilg.

²¹ F. Saracino, *A State of Siege: Mi 5 4-5 and an Ugaritic Prayer*, ZAW 95, 1983, 263-69 (268). Incidentally, the comparison also suggests translating Ug. *k* in our text as «if» (so already Saracino).

²² For the significance of «il criterio della corrispondenza tra verso e proposizione completa dal punto di vista grammaticale» cf. A. Niccacci, review of Watson, *Guide, Liber Annuus* 35, 1985, 470-73 (471) and for grouping monocolon + bicolon more often as a tricolon cf. *ibid.*, 473.

²³ BWL, 265 obv. 8-9, restored from Sumerian; translation: B. Foster, *From Distant Days. Myths, Tales and Poetry of Ancient Mesopotamia*, Bethesda 1995, 387; cf. Watson, *Guide*, 362, n. 12.

²⁴ L. Cagni, *L'Epopea di Erra*, Roma 1969, 68 = I 111; translation: Foster, *From Distant Days*, 138.

²⁵ F. Küchler, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der assyrisch-babylonischen Medizin*, Leipzig 1904, pl. 4 iii 65, cited in CAD Q, 143a.

²⁶ For these word pairs see Avishur, *Studies*, 257.

Epic I i 16)²⁷. The other pairs are unattested either in Ugaritic or elsewhere²⁸. The presence of these parallel word pairs simply accentuates the poetic character of the lines in question²⁹.

Repetition

As Avishur has noted, the name *bʿl* occurs seven times consecutively in the body of the psalm and ten times altogether, both significant numbers³⁰. As mentioned, the ‘refrain’ occurs three times. There is also repetition of the verbs *mlʿ* and *qdš*.

Sound patterns

Some degree of end-rhyme seems to be present³¹: *-km* || *-km* (in opening and closing couplets); *-ny* || *-ny*; and the chiasmic sequence *-š* || *-u* || *-š* || *-u* and the set *ibr*, *mḡr*, *dkr* (with final *-r*). There is very little alliteration which is mainly due to the repetition of *bʿl* and of the 1st plur. verb forms (*nšqdš* etc.)³². This is in stark contrast to KTU 1.161, which is marked by strong line-initial alliteration³³ and repetition of verb forms in the same position³⁴.

Syntactic patterns

As Xella has shown in tabulated form, the syntactic pattern of five consecutive lines (12c-16a) is consistent: «La parte propriamente sacrificale appare strutturata secondo un modulo fisso, che si ripete cinque volte, e che prevede *un sostantivo* (= animale, tipo di offerta); *un vocativo* (= il dio); *un verbo* (= compimento del rito)»³⁵. There is also gapping³⁶ in the ‘refrains’, e.g.

²⁷ The terms «gate» and «wall» are collocated in ABL 486:8-9; cf. S. Parpola, *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part I. Letters from Assyria and the West* (SAA I), Helsinki 1987, text 64.

²⁸ The Babylonian proverb *alu ša kakkāšu lā dannū nakru ina pān abullišu ul ippaṣṣar*, «The enemy does not depart from before the gate of a city whose weapons are not powerful» (BWL 245 and 250) encapsulates the Ugaritic poem in one sentence; cf. also CT 39, 3:1.

²⁹ For a recent evaluation of word pairs in Ugaritic and Hebrew cf. E.L. Greenstein, *Aspects of Biblical Poetry, Jewish Book Annual* 44, 1986-87, 33-42 (40-42).

³⁰ Avishur, *Studies*, 266.

³¹ As noted previously in *Guide*, 362.

³² Similarly, KTU 1.100:65-67 (four consecutive lines with verbs in final position).

³³ Eleven consecutive lines beginning with *q* followed by one with *k*, 2 lines beginning with *i*, 3 with *a*, 5 with *t* and only 5 intervening non-alliterative lines.

³⁴ However, cf. KTU 1.161:27-30, with sevenfold repetition of *ṯʿy* in final position.

³⁵ P. Xella, *Un testo ugaritico recente* (RS 24.266, Verso, 9-19) e il «sacrificio dei primi nati», RSF 6, 1978, 127-36 (133). However, the last occurrence may not be a vocative (see discussion).

³⁶ For such gapping (or ellipsis) see J.C. de Moor, *Syntax Peculiar to Ugaritic Poetry*, in de Moor - Watson, *Verse in Ancient Near Eastern Prose*, 191-205, esp. 200-204. As he comments, «By far the most common type of ellipsis is the omission of a verbal predicate» (200). See also C.R. Krahmalkov, «When He Drove Out Yirachan»: A Phoenician (Punic) Poem, ca. A.D. 350,

kgr 'z tgrkm
 «kgr» qrd hmytkm

(where « » denotes gapping) and perhaps of the vocative *y* in the three lines after *ibr yb' l nšqdš*. Otherwise, there is no ellipsis and a verb occurs in all the other lines, always in final position³⁷.

Strophic Structure

Pardee sets out the lines in question as a couplet, a monocolon, two couplets, a tricolon, another couplet, a monocolon and a closing bicolon. According to Avishur, the psalm (as he terms it) comprises an opening tricolon (or bicolon plus monocolon), three bicolon verses and a final tricolon, followed by a closing tricolon (which inverts the pattern of the initial strophe)³⁸. For del Olmo Lete, the sequence is tricolon, tricolon, bicolon, tricolon, bicolon, tricolon. For lines 28-34, Parker proposes bicolon, five parallel cola (= bicolon + bicolon expanded to tricolon), bicolon³⁹. Others refrain from any division into strophes. The structural pattern suggested here is tricolon, couplet, quatrain (or two couplets)⁴⁰, tricolon and tricolon⁴¹. Some reasons for such a division have been set out above. In view of such diversity of opinion, however, the problem of strophic patterning remains intriguing but unresolved.

BASOR 294, 1994, 69-82 (75-76) for further examples in Ugaritic and Phoenician. The poem in question also concerns driving off an attacking enemy from a city.

37 For the sequence object-verb with *yqt* forms see G.H. Wilson, *Ugaritic Word Order and Sentence Structure in Krt*, JSS 27, 1982, 17-32 (20-21).

38 Avishur, *Studies*, 266.

39 Parker, *Narrative Tradition*, 72.

40 Note the ABAB pattern here and the sequence of four vocatives.

41 The sequence couplet, quatrain, tricolon also occurs in KTU 1.161, lines 2-10, with an *inclusio* (lines 2-3 and 9-10), according to T.J. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Egypt* (HSM 39), Atlanta 1989, 29.