

UGARITIC FRAGMENTS: KTU 1.1 IV 11 AND 1.16 IV 5

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There is considerable variation in the translations of the expression *k ml k ḥṣ tusp[]* (KTU 1.1 iv 11)¹, which occurs in a broken context, as the following sample clearly shows²:

(1) “comme *des épis, comme des javelles, ils rassemblent*” – Caquot - Sznycer - Herdner³, who follow Virolleaud⁴ for Ug. *ml*, who referred to Mishnaic Heb. *mēlilāh* “ear (of grain)”. The meaning “sheaves” is based on the root *ḥṣṣ*, “to cut”⁵. This proposal is followed by Wyatt⁶: “[] like grains of wheat, like gravel he gathered”.

(2) “... like pulp / Like ... is gathered ...” – Smith⁷ understands *ml* in the light of the post-biblical Hebrew verb *ml*, which can mean “to stir a mush, make a pulp”, as referring either to what is consumed or how it is prepared. He adds: «The phrase *kḥṣ* might be viewed similarly in view of Syriac *ḥayeṣ*, “to bind, compress”».

(3) “[su contenido (?) es] como desperdicios, como grava (lo que en él (?) se reúne” – Del Olmo Lete⁸, where Ug. *ml* is understood to mean “waste, scraps”, corresponding to Heb. *ml*, “to wilt, wither, dry up”⁹.

(4) “like crumbs, like gravel” – De Moor¹⁰ who explains *ml* as follows: «here perhaps a noun, cf. Hebr. *milmūl* “crumb”»¹¹.

¹ RS 3.361.

² No translation is given in J.C.L. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, Edinburgh 1978, p. 39 (nor of KTU 1.16 iv 6 on p. 99). For other translations cf. G. del Olmo Lete, *Mitos y leyendas de Canaan según la tradición de Ugarit*, Valencia / Madrid 1981, pp. 158-159, note on line 11.

³ A. Caquot - M. Sznycer - A. Herdner, *Textes ougaritiques. Tome I. Mythes et Légendes. Introduction, traduction, commentaire* (LAPO 7), Paris 1974, p. 308.

⁴ C. Virolleaud, *La déesse ‘Anat*, Paris 1938, p. 98.

⁵ Caquot - Sznycer - Herdner, *Textes ougaritiques*, I, p. 308, n. k and see n. j for other translations.

⁶ N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit. The Words of Ilimilku and his Colleagues* (The Biblical Seminar 53), Sheffield 1998; 2002² (= RTU), p. 48.

⁷ M.S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle. Volume I. Introduction with Text, Translation and Commentary of KTU 1.1-1.2* (VTS 55), Leiden 1994, pp. 132, 147.

⁸ G. del Olmo Lete, *Interpretación de la mitología cananea. Estudios de semántica ugarítica* (Fuentes de la Ciencia bíblica 2), Valencia 1984, pp. 39-43; previously, G. del Olmo Lete, “Notes on Ugaritic Semantics III”, *UF* 9, 1977, pp. 31-46 (36).

⁹ *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* vols. I-V (transl. by M.E.J. Richardson), Leiden 1994-2000 (= HALOT), pp. 593-594.

Evidently there is no agreement either in respect of colometry or in respect of a translation, which is not surprising in view of the broken context. Yet, as Smith notes¹²: «The word *kmll* may be parallel to *khš*, especially given their apparent syntactic parallelism. Given the preceding context of drinking, these terms may characterize the type, content or manner of drink or food». With this in mind, the two principal terms in question are evidently *mll* and they are discussed in turn.

mll – If not to be explained by Heb. *mlylwt* (from **mlylh*), “ears of corn for rubbing” (Dt 23:26)¹³, then perhaps the Semitic word borrowed in Egyptian as *ma=ru₁=ru₂*, i.e. **malulu* ? “a baked good”¹⁴ may be more apposite. Note that according to Hoch¹⁵ there is no connection with Arab. *mullā*, “bread baked in hot ashes”, although the next paragraph suggests otherwise.

hš – An approach to a solution for the meaning of this word is provided by a recent article by M. Stol¹⁶. There he discusses the meaning of Hebrew *wygrs bhšš šny hkbyšny b’pr*, “He has broken my teeth on gravel, he has made me cower in ash” (Lam. 3:16). Stol relates Heb. *hšš* to Akk. *hiššu*, “rubble, gravel”, which is associated with cereals, and also to Akk. *hiššatu*, which seems to denote “uncleaned barley”¹⁷. He then connects Heb. *’pr*, “dust, ash”, with bread baked in ashes, as in the Akkadian expressions *akal tumri*, *kamān tumri* and *akal pi’tim*. According to Stol, the bread in question is made from flour that also contains small stones and in addition has been baked on embers, which explains why it is gritty (with both gravel and ashes in it) and why it breaks teeth. As in Ps. 102:10, “For I eat ashes like (or: in my) bread”, the complaint in Lam. 3:16 is also that “the sufferer finds ashes in or on his bread”. In his note, though, Stol makes no reference at all to Ug. *hš*.

Applying these conclusions to the passage in Ugaritic (*k mll k hš*), we can translate it: “like baked bread, like gravel”, or else perhaps, with hendiadys: “like gritty bread (baked in ashes)”. If this is the case, then it seems that in essence de Moor’s explanation is correct (he translated “like crumbs, like gravel”). More to the point is Wyatt’s explanation¹⁸: «It is unclear what exactly El is gathering. But if Yam is the subject of *ytn* in l. 9 [i.e. “Muddy corruption [he gives to eat], he gives to drink a surfeit of slime!”], then it is presumably the mud he gives his guests». In other words, a handful of mud and

10 J.C. de Moor, *The Seasonal Pattern in the Ugaritic Myth of Bālu According to the Version of Ilmilku* (AOAT 16), Kevelaer / Neukirchen-Vluyn 1971, p. 116.

11 De Moor, *Seasonal Pattern*, p. 118.

12 Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, p. 147.

13 Cf. HALOT, p. 590, also cited by J. E. Hoch, *Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts of the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period*, Princeton 1994, p. 138.

14 Hoch, *Semitic Words*, § 178.

15 Hoch, *Semitic Words*, p. 138.

16 M. Stol, “Grit and Ashes in Jeremiah’s Bread”, *BiOr* 59, 2002, pp. 245-249.

17 Akk. (NB, LB) *hiššatu*, “rubble, sand” (CAD H, p. 204); *hiššu*, “gravel” (CAD H, p. 117); for discussion see Stol, *loc. cit.*

18 Wyatt, RTU, p. 48 n. 48.

grit is gathered¹⁹ and proffered in the guise of a loaf, very much like a tooth-breaking loaf made from poor quality flour and baked in ashes. Perhaps Prov. 20:17 (also cited by Stol) reflects this very Ugaritic expression: “Pleasant to a man is bread of falsity, but afterwards, his mouth will be filled (*yml?*) with gravel (*ḥṣṣ*)”, where the last two words seem to echo Ug. *mll // ḥṣṣ*²⁰, though this may be mere coincidence.

As is generally recognised, a similar expression seems to occur in KTU 1.16 iv 5²¹, i.e. *k ḥṣ k m^ck*, but again the context is broken. It has been discussed by de Moor²² and de Moor - Spronk²³, who compare the expression discussed above, noting that if the translation “like crumbs, like gravel it/they is/are gathered” is correct, «then *m^ck* might be a synonym of *mll* “crumbs, things rubbed”, cf. the verb *M^cK* in Arabic and Jewish Aramaic». This has been accepted²⁴. It would seem, though, that in fact the reading of the last word is *km^cr*. Following Rin²⁵, del Olmo Lete²⁶ had understood the expression *kḥṣ k m^cr* to mean “He certainly left, quickly, like one aroused”, where *kḥṣ* is a verb meaning “to leave, vanish with haste”²⁷ and *m^cr* is taken to be a form of the verb *ṣr*²⁸. If instead the word division is *km ṣr*, then a more feasible translation is “er eilte wie ein Wildesel”²⁹, followed by Margalit³⁰: “Like a young ass, [Kothar-Ḥasis] hurried off” and by Wyatt³¹: “Like a wild ass off sped [Kothar]”. Against these solutions is the fact that the verb *kḥṣ* is not included in such recent reference works as DUL and Tropper UG³², and even Aistleitner himself was dubious about it.

In conclusion, whereas in KTU 1.1 iv 11 a translation such as “like breadcrumbs, like grit (they [were] collected/gathered)” is possible and can be explained, in KTU 1.16 iv 5 the context is completely different and of the available options a translation such as “Like a wild ass [Kothar (?)] hurried off” seems the most likely.

¹⁹ Note a similar action in KTU 1.16 v 28-30: “With m[ud his hand] he filled, with suitable mud [his right hand]. He fashioned [] out of moistened clay”; translation: Wyatt, RTU, pp. 235-236. J. Tropper, “Els Schöpfungssakt nach KTU 1.16.V:28-31”, *AoF* 26, 1999, pp. 26-32, reads *rh[tm. ṛ] ymll* and translates the expression “Mit den (beiden) Handflächen knetete er Lehm”.

²⁰ Less likely is an explanation in terms of vegetables, e.g. Hittite *mulili-*, “(a garden herb or vegetable)” (CHD 3/3, p. 328) and Akk. *ḥaṣṣu*, a plant (AHw, p. 332, where there is a reference to *ḥaṣ(ṣ)uttu*, a garden plant), possibly “lettuce” (CAD Ḥ, p. 110: *pl. tantum: ḥaṣṣū*).

²¹ RS 3.325 + 3.408.

²² J.C. de Moor, *An Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit* (Nisaba), Leiden 1987, p. 218.

²³ J.C. de Moor - K. Spronk, “Problematical Passages in the Legend of Kirtu (II)”, *UF* 14, 1982, pp. 173-190 (187).

²⁴ For example, in G. del Olmo Lete - J. Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition* (Transl. by W.G. E. Watson), 2 vols. (HdO I/67), Leiden 2002 (= DUL), p. 4.

²⁵ Z. and S. Rin, *‘Alilôt hā-’ēlīm*, Jerusalem 1968, p. 353.

²⁶ Del Olmo Lete, *Mitos*, p. 316.

²⁷ Cf. Del Olmo Lete, *Mitos*, p. 564, following Aistleitner, WUS, p. 147 §1300.

²⁸ Del Olmo Lete, *Mitos*, pp. 581 and 604.

²⁹ Aistleitner, WUS, p. 147.

³⁰ B. Margalit, “K-R-T Studies”, *UF* 27, 1995, pp. 215-315 (291).

³¹ Wyatt, RTU, p. 233.

³² J. Tropper, *Ugaritische Grammatik* (AOAT 273), Münster 2000.