

The Breakup of Stereotyped Phrases: Some New Examples

MITCHELL DAHOOD

Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome

In recent years scholars have been giving increased attention to the breakup of a composite or stereotyped phrase as a text-critical and poetic criterion.¹ Like the recognition of word pairs in parallelism,² the appreciation of the stylistic practice whereby the components of a composite expression are distributed over the balancing cola of a verse, may permit the critic to determine the sense of ambiguous expressions or to identify poetic usages hitherto overlooked. The present study seeks both to clarify some disputed passages in Ugaritic and in Hebrew and to direct attention to new instances of this practice in the Bible.

There is no need to review here the eight translations that have been proposed for *bn ym*//*bn 'dt* in *UT* 51:vii:15-16b, since this has recently been done by J. C. de Moor.³ The text reads:

āštm ktr bn ym

ktr bnm 'dt

I will install them, Kothar, son of the sea,

Kothar, son of the confluence.

This slightly modified version of W. F. Albright's translation⁴ appeals to the breakup of the composite phrase *bnm 'dt* in Jer. 30:20:

w^ebāyû bānāyw k^eqēdēm

wa^adātô l^epānay tikkôn

And his sons will be as of old,

And his assembly established before me.

That *bnm 'dt* is related to *bānāyw*//*'ādātô* is further sustained by the observation that the

1 To cite but three recent authors: G. Braulik, "Aufbrechen von geprägten Wortverbindungen und Zusammenfassen von stereotypen Ausdrücken in der alttestamentlichen Kunstprosa," *Semitics* 1 (1970), 7-11; D. N. Freedman, "'Mistress Forever': a Note on Isaiah 47, 7," *Biblica* 51 (1970), 538; M. Dahood, *Psalms III*, Anchor Bible 17A (New York, 1970), 413-14, where examples from the Psalter are listed.

2 See this writer's study, written with the collaboration of T. Penar, "Ugaritic-Hebrew parallel Pairs," in L. R. Fisher, ed., *Ras Shamra Parallels: The Texts from Ugarit and the Hebrew Bible*, vol. 1, *An. Or.* 49 (Rome, 1972), 71-382.

3 *The Seasonal Pattern in the Ugaritic Myth of Ba'lu: According to the Version of Ilimilku*, AOAT 16 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1971), 160-61.

4 *JPOS* 14 (1934), 129.

uncommon parallelism *qedem//le pānay* reflects the parallelism attested in *UT* 51:v:107-8: *št alp qdmh mra wtk pnh* "He put an ox before him, a fatling directly in front of his face."⁵ The nuance 'confluence' for 'dt derives from *Ugaritica* V, chapter 3, text 7:2-3, *ql bl 'm il mbk nhrm b'dt tbtmt* "Bring my message to El at the spring of the two rivers, at the confluence of the two deeps."

This description of Kothar as "son of the sea" and "son of the confluence" leads to a reexamination of much-disputed *UT* Krt:16-20:

mīltt ktrm tmt
mrb't zblnm
mhmšt yitšp ršp
mtdt gīm ym

If these cola are read as chiasmic, as seem indicated by the second and third cola, the passage would translate:

One third died from drowning,
 One fourth of sickness; One fifth Resheph gathered to himself,
 One sixth the youth of the sea.

Since Resheph is the god of pestilence, the second and third cola refer to the same cause of death. This suggests that the first and fourth members are to be taken together, so that abstract plural *ktrm* would be connected with *gīm ym*, just as abstract plural *zblnm* 'sickness', is the work of *ršp*. Thus *gīm ym* 'the youth of the sea', becomes synonymous with *bn ym* 'son of the sea', and *bnm* 'dt' 'son of the confluence'.

These epithets accord with the information concerning Kothar supplied by other Ugaritic texts. In *UT* 51:ii:28-33 he is called the 'gīm of Asherah of the sea', as well as her *dgy* 'fisherman', who takes the net into his hands (*qh rtt bdk*). According to *UT* 'nt:vi:14-15, Kothar's home is on Kaphtor, frequently identified with the island of Crete.⁶ Sanchuniathon makes Kothar the first to travel the sea in ships. In Philo Byblius he appears as the inventor of all fishery appliances and the first to employ boats.⁷ In Greek mythology Hephaistos, the classical counterpart of Kothar, was cast down from heaven into the sea by Hera because he was misshapen.⁸ Finally, the Babylonian god Ea, with whom Kothar was equated at Ugarit,⁹ dwelt below the earth in the Apsu, the cosmic subterranean ocean.

Wider agreement in translation will probably be reached when the poetic figure is recognized

5 The occurrence in economic texts of the phrase *alp mru* 'a fat ox' (*UT* 1128:16; 1100:1) suggests that the Canaanite poet has separated a composite expression in this bicolon.

6 Cf. T. H. Gaster, *Thespis*, 2nd Anchor ed. rev. (New York, 1961), 163-64.

7 See W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (Baltimore, 1946), 81-82; M. H. Pope "Kōtar," in *Wörterbuch der Mythologie*, ed. H. W. Haussig (Stuttgart, 1961), 295-96.

8 Consult W. H. Roscher, ed., *Ausführliches Lexicon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie* (Leipzig, 1886-90), s.v. Hephaistos, col. 2049-50.

9 J. Nougayrol et al., eds., *Ugaritica* V (Paris, 1969), chapter 1, nos. 18:15; 137:IVa 19; 170:23¹ cf. chapter 3, no. 9, rev. 8.

in UT 125:34-35:

al tšt bšdm mmb

bsmkt šat npšb

Let her not pour¹⁰ her waters in the fields,

On the uplands¹¹ the issue of her throat.¹²

H. L. Ginsberg, for instance, offers no translation for these lines,¹³ while the most recent translation of Keret by H. Sauren and G. Kestemont¹⁴ reads here "Elle portera, pour sûr, sa clameur dans les campagnes, l'expression de son souffle dans les cieux." The disputed words *mmb* and *šat* grow clear when compared with the composite expression in Hebrew, *môšē' māyîm* 'spring of water' (Isa. 58:11; Ps. 107:33, 35, etc.). The Canaanite poet has distributed the components of this phrase over the parallel cola. Thus, the imagery here is of a piece with UT 125:26-28:

al tkl bn qr 'nk

my rišk udm't

Do not exhaust, my son, the fount of your eyes,

The water¹⁵ of your head with tears.

C. H. Gordon's translation of 125:34-35, "Let her not put her waters in the field, Nor the outpouring of her soul in the meadow,"¹⁶ is passable, but his exegesis appears to be mistaken. In UT, Glossary, no. 1469, he translates: "Do not put into the fields her (*vital*) waters," and comments, "the parallel (*šat npšb*) suggests that *mmb* indicates a vital substance that can leave the body and enter the earth upon death, hence *mmb* would refer to her blood." Gordon's false interpretation stems from his failure to see that *npš* means 'throat' in this context, and to appreciate that according to Ugaritic and biblical physiology tears originate in the *kbd* 'the liver', pass through the *npš* 'the throat', and issue from the eyes.¹⁷ Hence *mmb* is 'her tears', not 'her blood'.

10 For this nuance of *št*, see H. J. van Dijk, VT 18 (1968), 16-30; cf. also S. C. Reif, VT 20 (1970), 114-16.

11 For this meaning of *smkt*, see G. R. Driver, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Edinburgh, 1956), 147 and n. 7. Cf. Judg. 11:37-38 for a similar motif.

12 Another instance of *npš* 'throat', may be found in 1 Sam. 2:33, *l'kallôt 'et 'ênē(y)ka w'la'ādîb 'et napšekā* "to exhaust your eyes, to make your throat flow," a description of weeping that echoes UT 125:25-28. Unexplained *la'ādîb* would parse as an *aphel* infinitive construct of *dwb*, a Canaanite (cf. *mdb*, 'flood'), form of *zwb* 'to flow'.

13 In ANET³, 147. In *The Legend of King Keret* (New Haven, 1946), 26, Ginsberg tentatively proposed "Let not her waters be dried up with grief, her breath with sorrow." A. Jirku, on the other hand, approached the correct meaning of the lines, falling short only in his interpretation of *šat npšb*: "nicht soll sie vergiesen auf dem Gefilde ihre Tränen, in der Landschaft ihren Atem"; cf. *Kanaanäische Mythen und Epen aus Ras Shamra-Ugarit* (Gütersloh, 1962), 105.

14 In UF 3 (1971), 211.

15 Reading with S. Gevirtz, JNES 20 (1961), 41-46, *my*, for the tablet's *mḫ*, a reading further supported by the identification of *mmb* in our passage as a term for 'tears'.

16 Ugarit and Minoan Crete (New York, 1966), 114.

17 Consult Terence Collins, "The Physiology of Tears," CBQ 33 (1971), 18-38, 185-97.

Scholars are rather evenly divided in their translation of *UT* 49:iv:27, 38, 'nt *mḥrtt*; some render it 'springs of the plowland', while others defend the translation 'furrows of the plowland'.¹⁸ It would seem that Ps. 129:3 is relevant to this dispute.

'al gabbî ḥārēšû ḥōrēšîm
bē'ērîkû lāmō 'anôtām (MT lēma' anîwtām)
Upon my back the plowmen plowed,
Upon it they made their furrows long.¹⁹

The biblical breakup of *ḥrš* 'to plow' and '*mwt* 'furrows', distinctly favors the rendition of 'nt in 'nt *mḥrtt* as 'furrows'.

In the phrase *rḥb mknpt* (*UT* 125:9, 109), *mknpt* is regularly understood as 'wingspread' or 'wingspan', though in a recent study of Keret we read: "On pense généralement trouver ici le terme *knp aile*. Toutefois, le sens premier de la racine semble être *entourer d'une protection*, d'ou l'arabe *kanafa entourer d'une baie* et l'homonyme heb. *kanaf* l'extrémité. *mknpt* est donc la *clôture de protection*, le *pourtour*, l'*extrémité*."²⁰ But this interpretation fails to consider Isa. 8:8, which distributes the roots of *rḥb mknpt* 'broad of wingspread' over the successive cola:

wēḥāyāb muṭṭôt kēnāpāyw
mēlō' rōḥab 'aršekā 'immānū 'ēl
And the expanse of its wings
Will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.

Surely relevant for the translation of Job 20:19 is the juxtaposition of *bḥt* 'house(s)', and 'dbt 'wares, furnishings' in *UT* 51:v:91-93:

ṣḥ ḥrn bbbtk
'dbt bqr̄b bklk
Call a caravan into your house,
Furnishings into your palace.

That 'dbt equals 'izzābôn in Ezek. 27:12 *bēkēšep barzel bēdîl wē'ôperet nātēnû 'izzbônāyik* "For silver, iron, tin and lead they exchanged your wares,"²¹ appears from the specification of 'dbt in the following lines 93-94:

tblk ḡrm mid ksp
gb'm mḥmd ḥr̄š
Let the mountains bring you much silver,
The hills the choicest gold.

18 See the discussion by de Moor, *Seasonal Pattern*, 221.

19 For grammatical details of this translation, see Dahood, *Psalms III*, 231.

20 *UF* 3 (1971), 210 and n. 85.

21 So. F. Løkkegaard in F. F. Hvidberg, *Weeping and Laughter in the Old Testament: A Study of Canaanite-Israelite Religion* (Leiden, 1962), 44, n. 5. Contrast P. J. van Zijl, *Baal: A Study of Texts in Connexion with Baal in the Ugaritic Texts*, *AOAT* 10 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1972), 132-33, whose stichometry in this passage appears mistaken.

Of the roots of *bht* and *'dbt* the author of Job makes a parallel pair in 20:19:

kî riššaš 'zb (MT *'āzab*) *dallîm*
bayit gāzal w'elō' yibnēhū
 For he smashed the furnishings of the poor,
 Seized a house he never built.

Consonantal *'zb* is doubtless to be read as a construct plural, hence another instance of *scriptio defectiva* in Job.²² As the direct object of *riššaš* 'he smashed', and as the parallel partner of *bayit* 'house', *'zb* 'furnishing' is unexceptionable.

The translations of *yd mqmb* in UT Krt:127, 139, 284, range from Ginsberg's²³ tentative "friendship by covenant" to Gordon's²⁴ "a share of her estate" to *jusqu'à (épuisement de) la réserve*, recently proposed by H. Sauren and G. Kestemont.²⁵ The immediate context, Krt:126-127, reads:

qh ksp wyrq hrš
yd mqmb w'bd 'lm
 Take silver and yellow gold,
 The plot, its mansion, and perpetual slaves.

This translation of *yd mqmb*, which closely approaches Gordon's "a share of her estate," appeals to Heb. *yād* 'plot, place',²⁶ *māqôm* 'home, mansion',²⁷ and to the breakup of these two words in Job 20:9-10:

'ayin šezāpattū w'elō' tōsîp
w'elō' 'ôd tēšūrennū meqômô
bānāyw yeraššū dallîm
w'eyādāyw tūšābnāh (MT *tāšēbnāh*) *'ônô*
 The eye which saw him will see him no more,
 Nor will his mansion behold him any more,
 The poor will crush his sons,
 And his plots will be inhabited by the wealthy.

For MT *tāšēbnāh*, I read *qal* passive *tūšābnāh*, from *yšb*,²⁸ and interpret *'ônô* as the abstract noun 'wealth', assuming a concrete denotation by reason of its balance with *dallîm* 'the poor', with which it forms a merismus. One may retain MT *'ônô* by explaining the ending as the suffix functioning for the definite article,²⁹ or one may read *'ôn* and attach the final *w* to the

22 See. D. N. Freedman, "Orthographic Peculiarities in the Book of Job," *Eretz-Israel* 9 (1969), 35-44; his list of examples of defective spelling in Job may now be considerably lengthened.

23 In *ANET*³, 144.

24 *Ugarit and Minoan Crete*, 104.

25 *UF* 3 (1971), 199.

26 Consult Brown, Driver and Briggs, *Lexicon*, 354; Dahood, *Psalms II*, 354; and cf. Job 1:14 with Jer. 6:3 and Ps. 95:7.

27 Cf. Dahood, *Biblica* 48 (1967), 431.

28 From this analysis emerges an A:B:C//A':B':C' pattern.

29 For other instances of this usage, see Dahood, *Psalms I*, 98.

next word (in verse 11) as the copula.

The distribution over successive verses of *y^ešū'āy* 'my bed', and *rimmāb* 'maggots', in Job 17:13-14, suggests a new grammatical analysis of Isa. 14:11:

taḥṭe(y)kā y^ešū'ā' (MT yūšša') rimmāb
ūm^ekasse(y)kā tōlē'āb
 Beneath you is a bed of maggots,
 And worms are your covering.

In the traditional interpretation of the first colon, the masculine verb *yūšša'* is predicated of the immediately following³⁰ feminine subject *rimmāb*; this discord can be removed by reading the construct chain *y^ešū'ā' rimmāb* 'a bed of maggots', which is witnessed in the broken-up form in Job 17:13-14. What is more, the resultant nominal sentence of the first colon now matches the nominal sentence in the second colon.

The phrase *l^emaṭṭāb lā'āreš* in Eccl. 3:21 suggests that a breakup of this expression occurs in Krt:28-30:

<i>tntkn udm'th</i>	His tears are poured forth
<i>km ṭqlm aršb</i>	Like shekels to the ground,
<i>km ḥmšt mṭth</i>	Like pieces of five downwards.

The final cola are often rendered "Like shekels to the ground, like pieces of five to the bed," but the biblical phrase strongly indicates that *mṭth* does not mean 'to the bed' (Heb. *miṭṭāb*) but 'downwards' (Heb. *maṭṭāb*). Cf. also the juxtaposition of these roots in Job 15:29, *yitṭāb lā'āreš*.

Unexplained *ṭṭ prqt*³¹ in UT 1112:3 gains some elucidation from comparison with Nah. 3:1-2, where the purported toots of *ṭṭ* and *prqt* appear distributed over successive verses:

pereq m^elē'ab lō' yāmīš ṭārep
qōl šōṭ w^eqōl ra'aš 'ōpān . . .
 It is filled with booty, plundering never ceases;
 The crack of the whip, the rumble of wheels. . .

This unique collocation of *pereq* and *šōṭ* must surely bear on the etymology and translation of Ugar. *ṭṭ prqt*. If not, we would have a striking coincidence. The apparent identity of roots must be more than coincidence. While there would be no difficulty in translating *ṭṭ* as 'whip', it is not immediately clear what the nuance of *prqt* might be, since in other Semitic languages *prq* has a variety of meanings, such as 'to tear away, rend, wrench'. A tentative rendering of *ṭṭ prqt* would be 'a twisted whip', that is, a whip of twisted cords.

30 When a word intervenes between the subject and its verb, the rules of gender agreement may be relaxed, but where there is juxtaposition, one looks for concord of gender.

31 C. Viroilleaud, *Palais royal d'Ugarit*, vol. 2, MRS 7 (Paris, 1957), 146 correctly noted that *ṭṭ* phonetically could correspond to Heb. *šōṭ*, 'whip', but he proposed no translation for the phrase. Gordon, *UT*, does not even list *ṭṭ* in his glossary.

UT 1001:14, *amš yd* 'strong/strength of hand',³² permits us to recognize the breakup of a composite expression in Job 17:9:

ūṭ^obor yādayim yôšîp 'ōmēš
And the clean of hand increases his strength.

G. R. Driver³³ has rightly related *pltt* in UT 67:vi:15 to *yitpallāšû* 'they shall sprinkle themselves', in Ezek. 27:30, but has failed to comment on the poetic figure in the verse:

w^eya'alû 'āpār 'al rā'šêbēm
bā'ēper yitpallāšû
They will throw dust on their heads
And sprinkle themselves with ashes.

Placing '*āpār* in the first colon and *yitpallāšû* in the second, the prophet effects the breakup of the composite phrase '*pr pltt* witnessed thus far only in Ugaritic.

The Canaanite background of Deut. 32 has long been recognized, but it remains to point out a further connection between this poem and the Ras Shamra tablets. The Ugaritic phrase *dr bn il* in UT 2:17; 107:2, shows that the biblical poet broke up a composite phrase in Deut. 32:20:

kî dôr tabpūkôt hemmāb
banîm lô' 'ēmūnē (MT '*ēmūn*) *bām*³⁴
For they are a mutinous generation,
Sons in whom there is no reliability.

This study began by citing Jer. 30:20 to elucidate Ugaritic *bnm* '*dt* and ends by employing Ugaritic *dr bn il* for the recognition of the poetic figure in Deut. 32:20. If the mutual relevance of Ugaritic and Hebrew is today widely granted, a good share of the credit belongs to Professor Theodor Gaster, who has taught this *dôr* to read ancient Near Eastern texts with comparative eyes.

32 Though '*mš yd* does not occur in the Bible, cognate phrases such as '*ammîš lēb* are attested.

33 *Biblica* 35 (1954), 157-58; see also H. J. van Dijk, *Ezekiel's Prophecy on Tyre*, *Biblica et Orientalia* 20 (Rome, 1968), 85. I agree with de Moor, *Seasonal Pattern*, 192, that neither the meaning 'to sprinkle' nor 'to wallow' has been certainly established for *plṭ*, though I do not share his view that *plṭ* might turn out to be a non-Semitic loan. Being witnessed in Ugaritic and in Hebrew alone, *plṭ* joins a growing list of words attested in only these two Canaanite dialects, a fact further underscoring the close lexical kinship between Ugaritic and Hebrew. Are we to suspect that all these examples are non-Semitic loans?

34 Being a hapax legomenon, MT '*ēmūn* should perhaps be pointed as construct plural of well-attested '*ēmūnîm*, and '*ēmūnē bām* parsed as a construct chain with '*ēmūnē* dependent upon prepositional *bām*. Cf. GK, § 130a; Dahood, *Psalms II*, 281; idem, *Psalms III*, 330; W. L. Holladay, VT 20 (1970), 172.