

Sharper Than a Serpent's Tooth: A Canaanite Charm Against Snakebite

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The object of this paper is to offer a new interpretation of the Canaanite (Ugaritic) charm against snakebite (RŠ 24.244) first published by Charles Virolleaud in *Ugaritica* V (1968), 564–72 and subsequently discussed, from divergent viewpoints, by Michael Astour in *JNES* 27 (1968), 13–28, by André Caquot in *Syria* 46 (1969), 241–54, and by E. Lipiński in *Ugarit - Forschungen* 6 (1974), 169–74.¹

I

The text reads as follows:

I. ll. 1–7

(1) um pḥl pḥlt
bt 'n bt abn
bt šmm wthm
(2) qrit lšpš umh
špš um ql
bl 'm (3) ll mbk nbrm b'dt tbtm (4) mnt
nṯk nḥš
šmrr nḥš (5) 'qšr
lnh mlḥš abd
lnh ydy (6) ḥmt
hlm yṯq nḥš
yšlḥm <nḥš>² 'qšr
(7) y'db ksa wyṯb

1 There is a companion piece (RŠ 24.251) dealing with the same situation and mentioning the same deities, but owing to its fragmentary state, this is not here discussed.

2 This word is accidentally omitted in the first paragraph.

(This paragraph is then repeated eleven times, with variations in the names of the gods and places.³ The last to be mentioned is Hôron.)

II. ll. 61-67a

(61) bĤrn pnm trġn {w}
wtġkl (62) bnwth
ykr 'r dqdm

(63) idk pnm lytn
tk Aršĥ rbt
(64) wAršĥ ġrrt
ydy b'šm 'r'r
(65) wbšĥt 'š mt
'r'rm yn'rnĥ
(66) ssnm ysynĥ
'dtm y'dynĥ
yb(67)ltm yblnĥ

III. ll. 67^b-76

mġy Ĥrn lbth
(68) wyštql lĥġrh
tlu ĥt km nĥl
(69) tplg km plg

(70) b'dh bĥtm mnt
b'dh bĥtm sgrt
(71) b'dh 'dbt ġlġ pthĥ bt mnt

(72) pthĥ bt wubn
hkl wištql
(73) tn km nĥšm
yĥr tn km (74) mhry
wbn bġn itnny

(75) ytt nĥšm mhrk
bn bġn (76) itnnk

3 They are: (9) *B'L myrm Špn* (cf. IIAB, iv. 19; v. 85; I*AB, i. 11; VAB, D:82, etc.); (15) *DGN Ttlb* (i.e. of Tuttul); (20) *'NT w-TTRT inbbb* (cf. VAB, D:78; UT 6.9); (26) *YRH Lrgtb*; (31) *RŠP Bbtb*; (36) *TT w-KMT* (= Chemosh) *Ĥrytb*; (41) *MLK 'lrb* (cf. *MLKM*: UT 17:11); (46) *KTR w-ĤSS Kprtb* (cf. Gaster, *Thespis*² [1961], 162f); (52) *ŠĤR w-ŠLM Šmmĥ* (ibid., 411); (58) *ĤRN Mšdb* (which Caquot takes to mean 'fastness' = 'netherworld').

II

(a) According to Astour, what is here described is how a certain goddess named P-ḥ-l-t appealed to her mother, the sun (Š-p-š), to round up various deities against a scourge of serpents. The god Ḥōron, however, failed to respond; so his female suppliant cast a spell on him to deprive him of his sexual powers. In order to regain them the god journeyed forthwith to the banks of the Tigris (A-r-š-ḥ = Hittite *Aranzah*) there to procure the plants customarily used (as in Mesopotamian *namburbi*-rituals) to effect cures by magic. When he came home with his virility restored, P-ḥ-l-t resorted to another device: she offered herself to him in return for a bride-price or harlot's fee of snakes. Ḥōron agreed, and she thus attained her purpose.

(b) Caquot's explanation, on the other hand, is that when the sun-goddess (Š-p-š) appealed for his aid, Ḥōron, a god of the netherworld, held her prisoner and took her to wife. He then embarked on a rampaging expedition designed to show that he was indeed capable of subduing the serpents. When he returned home, the goddess, convinced of his prowess, proposed that the price of their union be the protection of her house and the commitment of the serpents into her power. Ḥōron agreed.

(c) My own interpretation is entirely different. In the first place, I see no reason why *pḥlt*, mentioned in the opening sentence, should have to be the name of a goddess.⁴ The word is a common noun meaning 'mare', and what is related is simply that a mare, solicitous for her foal (*pḥl*), appealed to the all-seeing and all-traversing sun to round up the gods and goddesses to provide spells against serpents.⁵ This finds an exact parallel in the Egyptian charms against snakebite inscribed on the so-called "Horus cippi" (the Metternich Stele), where the sacred cat of Bastet similarly appeals to the sun-god (Re') on behalf of *all* cats. That the sun-goddess is here described as the mare's mother (*um*) has no more physical connotation than our own "Our Father which art in heaven," and it is especially appropriate because the mare relies on the Lady Sun's having the same maternal instincts as she has herself.

Secondly, the assumption that the text deals with the unmaning of Ḥōron and with the sequel to this misadventure rests, I submit, on a misinterpretation of the words, *bḥrn pnm trgn wtḥkl brwth* in lines 61–62. By combining the verb *trgn* with Arabic roots (*r-ḡ-n* or *r-ḡ-'y*) said to mean 'incline', and by giving to *t-k-l* the general meaning of 'deprive', Astour and Caquot take the sense to be that Ḥōron's female suppliant (either Pḥlt or Špš) *turned her face towards him and deprived him of his procreative powers* (compare *√ b-n-y*). This, however, is untenable for two reasons:

4 Astour's attempt, in his *Hellenosemitica* (1965), 265, to identify P-ḥ-l-t with an equine solar goddess, and M. Riemschneider's view (in *Archiv Orientalní* 25 [1967], 531–46) that she was the goddess of Pella seem to me alike tortuous and far-fetched.

5 In a companion charm, RŠ 24.251, the same deities (with others) cooperate with the Lady Sun in dispelling the thick darkness (*yisp ḡrpl* [cf. Isa. 60:1]) so that the serpent's venom can be located.—On the Heb. root 'r-b / 'r-p 'be dark', cf. J. A. Loader in *De Fructu Oris Sui: Essays in Honor of Adrianus van Selms*, Pretoria Oriental Series, 9 (Leiden, 1971).

(i) the construction of the first clause (*bḤrn pnm trgn*) can scarcely be separated from that of *bDnil pnm tšmḥ* in IID, ii. 8–9, and this shows that *pnm* is the *subject*, that *trgn* (whatever it may mean) is a verb in *3rd pl. impf.*, in agreement with it, and consequently that what is being described is Horon's visual reaction to the appeal for his intervention.⁶

(ii) the verb *t-k-l* (Heb. *škl*) is elsewhere usually employed of *a woman's being bereaved of her children*, never of a man's being deprived of his virility. Hence, the subject can only be *the mare* (expressly described in l. 1 as *a mother—um pḥl!*), and what is here stated is that as the result of the serpents' attacks she continued to be bereaved of her progeny.

Moreover, so long as an alternative interpretation is possible, it surely seems preferable to discard the unlikely hypothesis that a suppliant who is invoking a god's aid should begin by castrating him. This is certainly no way of "making friends and influencing people!"

With the alleged goddess *Phlt* and the alleged unmaning of *Ḥōron* thus eliminated, it is clear that the story must really run on quite other lines. This, then, is how I would read it:

I. ll. 1–60: A mare, representative of *all* mares solicitous for their foals, appeals to the all-seeing and all-traversing Sun-goddess, by virtue of the latter's own maternal instincts, to round up various gods and goddesses in their respective habitations to furnish spells against poisonous snakes which are at large. She complains that all human snake-charmers have proved ineffective and that their impotence amounts to feeding and appeasing the reptiles.

II. ll. 61–67^a: Apprehensive of the Sun-goddess' intervention, the serpents now concentrate their attacks on the very city—"the city of the east (*Qdm*)"—whence she is about to set forth on her mission. As a result, the mares continue to be bereaved of their foals. This brings a ready response from *Ḥōron*, the god of plague and pestilence (but here assimilated to some extent to the Egyptian Horus), the last of the deities whose aid has been invoked. He embarks at once on an extensive rampage over the entire breadth of the Syrian Desert, bent on routing the serpents from their accustomed haunts. To this end he tears up the clumps of scrub and bracken beneath which they might lurk, convulses the palms under which they might shelter, sets the placid ponds in violent motion (or: causes them to ebb), and turns the streams into veritable torrents to sweep them away.

III. ll. 67^b–76: Amid this scene of havoc, *Ḥōron* at length arrives at the house of a certain lady. In fear of the serpents and of other unwelcome visitors (demons), she has barred the door and attempted to protect her home and person by hanging up apotropaic charms. *Ḥōron*, now at journey's end, requests admittance. She, however, shrewdly decides to turn the situation to advantage and therefore promptly offers him her favors in return for a bride-price or mere harlot's fee of serpents and similar reptiles.⁷ *Ḥōron*, who has evidently caught quite a number of them, readily agrees.

6 Besides, the Arabic verbs take the preposition *'l-y*, not *b-*.

7 It is not necessarily implied that she is aware of the true identity of her importunate visitor; though,

The recitation of the story, or the inscription of it on apotropaic plaques, serves ever after as a narrative spell to protect persons and animals exposed to the same peril.

III

Subjoined is a free rendering of the text into doggerel verse, designed to convey its general tenor in the typical style of a narrative spell. In order to render explicit what in the original is often only implicit, I have here and there worked in explanatory phrases, which might be regarded as glosses. The accompanying *literal* version and commentary will, I hope, justify the interpretation in detail.

FREE RENDERING

1-60: *On behalf of her foals a mare appeals to the Lady Sun to rally the gods and goddesses against the depredations of poisonous serpents. The last deity mentioned is Hôron, a god of plague and pestilence.*

Filled with all a mother's care,
 once upon a time a mare—
 such as roves by fount and fell,
 drinking from the springs that well
 from the ocean-down-below,
 basking in the heavens' glow—
 did to the sun, her mother, send
 her cry: "O Mother Sun, attend!
 (The god) who there in . . . dwells,⁸
 hath he, then, no counterspells?
 The snake hath stung; Sir Twine-and-Twist
 hath on us his venom hissed;
 yet do all snake-charmers fail
 to cast from him his bane and bale,
 They bind him—yes, but what they tie
 are bonds of cordial amity!
 Why, they as good as serve his meat
 and spread the board for him to eat!"

61-67^a: *Apprehensive of her intervention, the serpents carry their attacks to the place whence the Lady Sun is about to set forth on her mission. This brings a prompt response from Hôron, who embarks on an extensive rampage in order to dislodge them from their haunts.*

if we accept the explanation of *yhr* in l. 73 as 'O Hôr(on)' (see below, commentary), this would, of course, be the case.

⁸ Name of deity/deities and location.

At this the serpents turned their spite
 against that citadel of light,
 that eastern city whence the sun
 was starting on her course to run.
 But when therein each dam and mare
 kept losing all the young she bare,
 Hôron started up apace
 (a dour expression on his face),
 and through the desert wastes he hied,
 roving far and roving wide
 from where first dawns the morning sun
 to where the Tigris waters run.
 Where'er among the trees there grew
 a sturdy shrub, in passing through,
 he plucked it up, and 'mid the shoots
 tore up the bracken by the roots.
Sturdy shrubs he stirred; lush fronds
of palms he lashed; turned quiet ponds
to pounding waves; each rivulet
 into a gushing stream he set.

67^b-76:

At last, Hôron reaches the house of a certain lady. Alarmed at the havoc all around, she has barred the door and hung up amulets. Hôron requests admittance. The lady decides to turn the situation to her advantage and offers him her favors in return for a bride-price or mere harlot's fee of the noxious reptiles. Having already caught several of them, Hôron readily complies.

While still the snakes streamed all around,
 uncowed, like torrents o'er the ground,
 branching out on every side
 like rills which from a stream divide,
 Hôron at a house arrived,
 a court wherein a lady lived.

Locked within her chambers, she
 had chanted spells to keep them free
 from fiend and foe, and o'er the gate
 put up charms in triplicate.

"Open," he cried, "for here I come
 back at dusk to hearth and home!"

"Nay," replied the lady fair,
 "but, stranger, thou my bed canst share!
 Yet, if thou take me for thy bride,
 snakes and lizards then provide
 for bridal gift; or else, maybe,
 cobras for a harlot's fee!"

"Done! Behold, these snakes," he cried,
 "I give thee, an thou be my bride;
 or, if I may but lie with thee,
 here be cobras for thy fee!"

LITERAL VERSION

1-60:

A mare, mother of a stallion, daughter of fountain,
 daughter of stony tract, daughter of (open) sky
 and nether abyss, called to the Sun-goddess,
 her mother: "List, O Mother Sun! Surely,
 (the god) . . . in . . . is not without spells.
 The serpent has been biting; (Sir) Twist-and-
 Twine has been emitting (his) venom. Yet
 there is nowhere to be found a snake-charmer
 who might expel the poison from him.
 Why, see, he (i.e. the snake-charmer) indeed
 binds him—(but) in friendly alliance; he is
 (as good as) serving him food and setting a
 chair for him to sit."

61-67^a:

Ḥōron's expression was dour, now that she (i.e.
 the mare) was being bereaved of her breed, the
 while he (i.e. the serpent) vented his hostility on
 the City of the East (i.e. of the rising sun). Then
 straightway he turned his face towards A-r-š-ḥ the
 Great and A-r-š-ḥ the Less.

Hardy scrub he removed from/among
 the trees, dead wood from/among the
 shoots. The hardy scrub—he shook it;
 the palm-frond—he tossed (?) it; the
 standing water—he caused it to recede
 (or: move along); the rivulet—he sent it
 flowing.

67^b-76:

While they (i.e. the serpents), un-
 cowed, (swept on) like a torrent,
 branching out (in all directions) like
 rills (from a stream), Ḥōron arrived
 at her (i.e. a certain lady's) house and
 dwelling.

She had protected the chambers with
 spells, herself confined within; she
 had locked the chambers, herself con-
 fined within. At the entrance to the
 house she had put charms in triplicate.

"Open the house," (cried Ḥōron) "seeing
 that here I am, home at dusk, seeing
 that I have arrived!"

"Give me something like serpents,"
 (replied the lady,) "Give me lizard(s)
 by way of bride-price, or cobras as
 a harlot's fee!"

"I hereby give serpents as thy bride-
 price," (said Ḥōron,) "(or) cobras as
 thy harlot's fee!"

IV

COMMENTARY

Lines 1–7 (1–60)

um p̄hl p̄hlt. Cp. *p̄hl* // 'r (ass), ID: 53, 58; Akkad. (W. Sem. loanword) *puḫālu*; Ar. *faḥl*. J. N. Epstein (*Kedem* 1 [1942], 38) would restore the word to Biblical Hebrew in Mic. 6:7, where for MT's *naḫālê šāmen* 'rivers of oil' he proposes to read *paḫālê šāmen* 'sleek stallions', on the strength of //*êlim* 'rams' and of LXX's *chimaroī piones* and Vulgate's *hirci pingues*.—The mare typifies all mares anxious to protect their foals from snakebite (cf. Gen. 49:17), just as on the Egyptian 'Horus cippi' the sacred cat of Bastet appeals to the sun-god (Re') on behalf of all cats; cf. K. Seele, *JNES* 6 (1947), 47, n. 52; Nora Scott, *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* 9 (1951), 205f. Indeed, *p̄hlt* may here be used as a generic proper-name, like Chanticleer, Brer Rabbit, etc.—For the style, *um p̄hl p̄hlt* cp. (in reverse) 'Nemi (rover), son of Nemit (her that roves)' as the designation of a *serpent* in the Egyptian charm, Sethe, *Pyramidentexte* §§ 434–35 = Wilson, in *ANET*, 326 (c).
bt 'n bt abn. This means simply that horses rove beside springs and on stony ground. For *bt 'n* cp. Gen. 49:22 *ben PRT 'ālê 'āyin*, where, in view of the fact that all the other sons of Jacob are likened to *animals* rather than *plants*, and that *bānôt sa'ādab* = Ar. *banât ṣa'dat*, 'wild asses', *p̄rt* may be an error for *pere*' (cj. H. L. Ginsberg orally). Cp. Hom. Hymn to Pythian Apollo, 86, *ardomenoi t'ourēes emôn hierôn apo pēgeôn*. (Amos 6:12 scarcely contradicts this, since the emphasis there is on the inability of horses to *run* on rocky ground.)

bt šmm wthm. This means simply that horses live under the open sky and drink from springs, which were believed to well up from the nether abyss (*thm*); cf. A. J. Wensinck, *The Ocean in the Literature of the Western Semites* (1918), 15f. For the sense and merism cp. VAB, C:14; Deut. 33:13.—In similar vein the *serpent* is sometimes styled 'son of the earth' (*s; t*) in Egyptian charms.—Note the neat contrast between *um* and *bt*, describing the mare in different aspects.—Note too the ancient convention that in charms and spells protection is invoked in the name of the potential victim's *mother*; cf. TB *Shabbat* 66b. *Kl mgnyny bšm' d'm'*; J. A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* (1913), 49, n.1; also in Greek charms; cf. R. Wuensch, *Antike Fluchtafeln*, (1907), no. 20.

špš. The sun, on its daily round, will be able to see what damage the serpents are doing and to rally the gods and goddesses in their several habitations. It is likewise invoked in the companion charm from Ugarit (RŠ 24.251), just as is Re' on the Egyptian "Horus cippi."—Moreover, the sun will dispel the darkness under cover of which cobras and the like habitually operate; cf. Sir. J. Frayer, *Journal of Transactions of the Victoria Institute* 26 (1893), 100.—For the same reason the sun is inimical to *demons*; cf. Arslan Tash Amuletic Plaque I:25 (according to F. M. Cross' improved reading in *BASOR* 197 [1970], 47), *yš' šmš ḥlp*; Pradel, 12:24, *taxū anatellontos tou hēliou pheugete*; Papyrus Parthey, 120 *apopte prin anatolēs hēliou*, T. H. Gaster, *Orientalia* 11(1942), 67f.—In addition, the sun is credited with *healing* powers; cf. the Babylonian Šamaš (Meissner, *BuA*, ii. 20); Vedic Surya, etc.; Mal. 3:20 "The sun of righteousness shall rise with *healing* in its wings."—The characterization of the sun-goddess

as a *mother* is not to be understood genealogically; it means simply that the benighted dam relies on the goddess' maternal instincts, and is little different from our own, "Our Father which art in heaven." In similar vein, in Teutonic mythology the sun is sometimes called *alte Mutter* (*de olsch, de oll madam*); cf. ZVfK 1 (1891), 75f.; J. Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*³, iii.414.

ql. I take this to be 2nd. sg. fem. imperative of $\sqrt{q-w-l}$ = Akkad. *qâlu*, 'list'—a word often used in supplications; cf. E. Reiner, *Studies Landsberger* (1965), 247–52. Cp. specifically A. Schollmeyer, *Sum.-bab. Hymnen und Gebete an Šamaš* (1912), 113:11, *dŠamaš qū[lamma]*. The word is, indeed, something of a liturgical cliché, like the frequent "Hear, O Lord," in the Psalter.

bl. Seeing that in ll. 15, 20, 25, 31, 36, 41, 46, 51 and 56 the toponyms carry the seemingly *directive* suffix *-b*, it is tempting at first sight to parse this word as imperat. of $\sqrt{y-b-l}$, i.e. 'along with the deity X bring spells to the place Y'. However, in view of the fact that in lines 3 and 9 the suffix is omitted, it would seem preferable to take *-b* as *locative*, as occasionally in Biblical Hebrew (cf. Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley, § 90 b, h; E. König, *Lehrgebäude*, II/2, § 330) and Ugaritic (cf. Astour, in loc.), and to parse *bl* as the rhetorical negative particle = Latin *num*, which may be recognized in Ugaritic also in IAB, i. 48; IIAB, v. 123; vi. 5; cf. A. Goetze, in *Studia . . . Johannis Pedersen* (1953), 128, n. 26. The meaning will then be, "Has the deity A (who dwells) in B no counterspell(s)?"—This interpretation is further supported by the fact that in line 52 appeal is made to the gods Dawn and Sunset (*Šḥr-w-Šlm*) *šmmb*, for it is grotesque to imagine that serpents would be ravaging foals *in heaven!*

dt. Since the abode of El is described in the Ugaritic myths (IAB, i. 5; IIAB, iv. 21; IID, vi. 47, etc.) as lying at the *mbk nbrm qrb a p q thmtm*, it is apparent that, whatever its etymology may be, the word *dt* falls within the same general category as *apq*. In line 66 it stands parallel to *yblt* 'stream'.—On the analogy of Heb. *miqweh hammayim* (Gen. 1:10) and of the Koranic *maïma' al-babrain* (Sura 18:59ff.), a derivation from $\sqrt{w-d}$ 'forgather', in the sense of 'junction, confluence', seems not impossible.

mnt. Cf. Akkadian n. *minûtu* and vb. *manû* ('count'), in the sense of 'spell, recite a spell', e.g. ZA 32 (1918/19), 176:70; KAR 62:4; *Utukkê Limnûti*, iii. 98 (= Thompson, *Devils*, i. 10); cf. also Enûma eliš iv. 91: *imanni šipta, ittanamdi tâša*. Similarly too in the Aramaic incantation, J. A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* (1913), no. 15.5, *knyty wmynty 'lykwn rwḥyn*.—The specific sense may perhaps have evolved from the widespread notion that *counting* is ominous; cf. T. H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* (New York, 1969), § 146.

šmrr. This is a *verb* (*/lntk*), not a proper-name or epithet, as has been supposed. Were it the latter, we should expect it to be repeated, as is *qšr*, in the conclusion of the paragraph.—For the meaning, cf. Job 20:14, *m^erôrat p^etânîm*; Syr. *mêrtā*, 'poison'.

qšr. A fanciful "portmanteau" name, compounded of $\sqrt{-q-š}$ 'twist', and $\sqrt{q-š-r}$ 'bind', i.e. 'Twist-and-Twine'.—For such fanciful names of animals, cf., besides Heb. and Ugar. *leviathan* and *qltn* (Isa. 27:1; I*AB, i. 2), Heb. *zarzîr motnayîm* 'greyhound(?)', strutting cock(?) (Prov.

30:31); Eg. *'wn ib* 'rapacious of heart', a serpent (Metternich Stele, 189); *nh*; *hr* 'Grim(?)'-face', a crocodile; *dsr tp* 'Head-rearer', a cobra, on the "Horus cippi" (cf. K. Seele; *JNES* 6 [1947], 47, nn. 47, 56); and Hesiod's *anosteos* 'polypus', and *pheroikos* 'snail' (*Works and Days*, 524, 571; cf. A. B. Cook, *Classical Review* 8 [1894], 381f.; Gilbert Murray, *The Rise of the Greek Epic* [1907], 69).—Comparable also is Syriac *q-r-q-r-n-â*, the name of a *serpent*, which Immanuel Löw (*Fauna und Mineralien der Juden* [1961], 41) would explain as a corruption of **'q-d-q-d-n-â* from $\sqrt{'q-d}$ 'twist', but which might be derived alternatively from $\sqrt{q-r-r}$ = Akkad. *qarāru* 'roll' (*KAR* 389:21; *CT* 40:23, l. 28); cp. Ugar. *km bṭn yqr* (ID: vi. 14).⁹—Similar too is Syr. *š-w-š-m-r* 'crocodile', which Lagarde (*ZDMG* 50:650) derives from Sanskrit *ṣumṣamāra* 'child-killer' (see Löw, 95.).—It is perhaps worth observing that in several parts of the world it is deemed ominous to call snakes by other than periphrastic names; cf. J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 3:410f.

lnb mlhš abd. The construction—strangely missed by previous commentators—is the same as in Jer. 49:7 *'āb^edāb 'ēšāb mibbānīm*; Amos 2:14, *w^e'ābād mānōs miqqāl*; Job 11:20 *ūmānōs 'ābad minn^ehem*. Similar is Ugaritic *wbYm mnḥ labd* "Yet, Sea has not lost (his) composure," in IIIAB, A:3.—For the general sense, cf. Jer. 8:17.

yṭq. All commentators agree that this word connects with Arabic *w-t-q* (with which L. Köpfler, *VT* 8 [1953], 175f., would in turn combine Heb. *yqš*). I would suggest, however, that it is here used (as in Arabic) in the *figurative* sense of 'forge ties of amity, treat with confidence'.¹⁰ The point then depends on an effective *double entente*: instead of binding, i.e. restraining, the reptile (whether physically or magically) the impotent human snake-charmers are as good as binding it in ties of friendly alliance, i.e. are as good as "in cahoots" with it!—The figurative sense of the verb finds ready parallels in Heb. *q-š-r*, Akkad. *rakāsu*, Hittite *išḫiya-*, etc. Thus, in the Hittite myth of *The Slaying of the Dragon (Illuyankas)*, a derivative of *išḫiya-* is used to describe the physical binding of the monster (*KUB* XVII. 5.ii, 15; *KBo*. III.7:39f. *nu MUŠ illuyankan išḫimanta kalelēt*), whereas the noun *išḫiul* (de quo vide H. Otten, *JCS* 5 [1951], 130) is a common term for 'pact'. It was evidently in order to bring out the figurative nuance that the writer chose this word instead of the simpler *yasr*, which latter is indeed employed (according to the most likely restoration) in the companion text, RŠ 24.251, obv. 6, [*ya*]sr n[ḥš], when reference is made to the actual binding of the serpent.

yšlḥm. As a parallel to *yṭq* 'binds in alliance', this verb refers to the practice of *concluding alliances by a rite of commensality*, i.e. partaking of food together, e.g., in OT, Gen. 14:18–20

⁹ Cognate is Akkad. *garāru* (see Th. Bauer, *ZA* 41 [1923], 216–17) = Heb. *g-r-r*, *k-r-r*, *g-l-l*; Arabic *k-r-k-r*; Eth. *g-r-g-r* (see Gaster, *JAOS* 76 [1950], 15.) Cf. also Akkad. *qanānu* (see Johnston, *AJSL* 29:224). On the other hand, if the Syriac word means 'crocodile', as maintained by Löw, it may be simply a corruption of **q-r-q-d-n-â* = Greek *krokodēilos* (with common interchange of *l* and *n*).

¹⁰ In IIAB, vii. 39 I would read *nṭt'*, 'are terrified', for the commonly accepted *nṭq*. Cf. IAB, v. 30; I*AB, ii. 7: Isa. 41:10, 23 **t-t'* || *y-r'*; see Ehrlich, *Randglossen*, 4:150; Eitan, *HUCA* 12/13 (1937), 76. The word appears also in the larger Karatepe inscription, iii. 2. (Herdner, however, rules that *nṭq* alone is possible.)

(Abraham and Melchizedek); 26:30 (Isaac and Abimelech); Josh. 9:11–14 (Gibeonites and Israelites). Note too that in Obad. 7, the expression, 'anšê laḥm^ekā stands parallel to 'anšê b^erîṭ^ekā and is explained by the (hypermetrical) gloss šelôm^ekā (there in the sense of Akkad. šulmu 'pact, agreement'); see fully Gaster, *Myth, Legend, etc.*, § 52. There is thus a further *double entente*: by leaving the serpents free to prey on their victims the impotent snake-charmers are virtually serving them their meals, and this in turn is tantamount to being in alliance with them!¹¹

y'db ksa wytb. A conventional cliché (exactly like Greek *strōnuein thronous*, de quo vide H. Hepding, *Attis* [1906], 136f.; E. Rohde, *Psyche*⁷, 1: ch. iii, n. 26) for regaling a guest at a meal; cf. IIAB, v. 108–9 t'db ksu wyttb. So too in the Hittite *Song of Ullikummi*, A iv. 45–50, 52, ed. Güterbock, *ašannaši GišŠÚ-an [= kišḫiyan] tiyandu / tiyer*, and in the Egyptian *Tale of Astarte and the Sea*, iii–y3 = Wilson, in *ANET*, 18. Cf. also Heb. yšb l'kl, Gen. 37:25; Exod. 32:6; 1 Sam. 20:24.

Lines 61–70

Concerning Ḥôron, see: P. Montet and R. Boucher, *RB* 14 (1935), 153–65; W. F. Albright, *AJSL* 53 (1936), 1f.; idem, *BASOR* 84 (1941), 7–12; Ch. Virolleaud, *RÉS* 1 (1937), 36–41; T. H. Gaster, *Orientalia* 11 (1942), 61f.; G. Posener, *JNES* 4 (1945), 240–42; J. Gray, *JNES* 8 (1949), 27–34; S. Sauneron, *Rev. d'Égyptol.* 7 (1950), 121–26; B. Maisler *JNES* 10 (1951), 260f.; V. Leibovitz, *Eretz Israel* 3 (1954), 46–50; M. Sayncer, *Karthago* 15 (1969–70), 67–74. Cf. also: Ch. Virolleaud, *Annales du Service de l'Antiqu.*, 20 (1920), 235–49; K. C. Seele, *JNES* 4 (1943), 243f.; W. Helck, *Die Beziehungen Aegyptens und Vorderasiens* (1962), 489f.; P. Xella; in *Annali dell'Istituto Orientale di Napoli* 32 (1972), 271–86.—Whether he underlies the Ptolemaic Hêrôn must at present remain an open question; cf. C. Plassart, in *Syria* 16 (1935), 279f.; C. Picard, *Syria* 17 (1936), 315f.; H. Seyrig, *Syria* 16 (1935), 417f.; R. Dussaud, *Syria* 16 (1935), 394; R. Weil, *Rev. d'Égyptol.* 9 (1938), 167f.; F. Cumont, in *Mélanges syriens offerts à M. René Dussaud*, (1939), 1–9.—In the Ugaritic *Epic of K-r-t*, C iv. 58–59 and apparently also in IIIAB, B:7 he is invoked in a comminatory formula, as are his consort and her co-wives in the Arslan Tash First Amuletic Plaque (6th cent. B.C.?), and he plays a major role in our companion text, RŠ 24.251.—If Albright is correct in connecting his name with Ar. ḥaur 'pit', this would indicate his *infernal* character.

On hearing of the serpents' depredations, Ḥôron behaves exactly as does Yahweh when he is enraged; cf. especially Isa. 42:15 "I will devastate mountains and hills and make all their grass to wither. I will turn rivers to holms and dry up the pools (where 'āgammmîm 'pools',

11 Caquot's suggestion that the words, lny ydy ḥmt blm ytq nḫš yšlḥm nḫš qšr are to be read as *optative* clauses, i.e. "May the deity here expel the poison; may he bind the serpent; may he feed the serpent 'qšr,'" has against it the fact that this would require the jussive *yd* instead of *ydy*. Moreover, in ll. 22–23, where the reference is to the goddesses 'Anat and 'Aṭrt, we should then require *feminine* forms of the verbs, viz., *td*, *ttq*, *išlḥm*. Also, *blm* usually introduces a new incident or episode and can scarcely mean simply 'here'.

might perhaps elucidate the obscure 'dt of our text'); *ibid.* 19:5–7 (of Egypt), "The water will be drained from the lake(s) (*mēbhāyām*; cf. Arabic *baḥr*), and the rivers run dry and parched; rush and reed will shrivel; the sedges [*ārôt*; cf. Eg. *rw*] beside the Nile . . . and all that is sown beside the Nile will wither, etc."; *ibid.* 10:33 "See, the LORD of Hosts, the one and only Lord, is lopping boughs with fearful strokes." Here, however, the rampage has a more specific purpose: Ḥōron wants to rout the serpents from their accustomed haunts beside scrub and water.—There is evidence that Ḥōron was popularly identified with the Egyptian Horus (see Albright, *BASOR*, loc. cit.). His role here may therefore represent a Canaanite adaptation of that attributed to Horus in the so-called "Horus cippi"—charms against snakes, scorpions and the like.

bḤrn pnm trgn. The construction of this phrase can scarcely be separated from that of *bDnil pnm tšmḥ* in IID, iii. 8–9. This shows that *pnm* is the subject and that *trgn*—whatever it may mean and regardless of whether the final *-n* be radical or the energ. suffix—is to be parsed as *3rd pl. impf.*, in agreement with it. What is being described is Ḥōron's visual reaction to the news of the serpent's depredations, and the subsequent passage shows that he was in an ugly mood. The precise meaning of the verb is still to be determined.¹²

wtlkl bnwth. Since $\sqrt{t-k-l}$ (= Heb. *škl*) refers primarily to a *mother's being bereaved of her offspring*,¹³ the subject can only be the mare (typical of *all* mares), and this chimes with the characterization of her (in line 1) as a *solicitous mother*.—*bnwt* = Akkad. *binûtu*, *sensu* 'creatures, breed'. This is proved by the equivalence of *bny bnwt*, as a title of El, with Akkad. *bân binûti*, a title of Nabu, as I have pointed out in *JAOS* 70 (1950), 15.—The copula in *wtlkl* is the Heb. *wāw explicativum*. This and the immediately following phrase (*ykr 'r dqdm*) are to be construed as circumstantial clauses, explaining the reason for Horon's mood; see below, on *tlu* . . . *tplg* in lines 68–69.

ykr 'r dqdm. The root of the verb is *n-k-r* = Akkad. *nakāru*, 'be hostile', in a transitive sense. I see no reason for taking these words—as previous commentators have done—to mean "he estranged himself (i.e. quitted; cf. Syr. *n-k-r*, Ethpa.) from the city of Q-d-m," the less so since this would surely require the reflexive form followed by a preposition. The simple meaning, "He was venting hostility against the city of the East" makes perfect sense. The subject is *the serpent*, not Ḥōron, and what is implied is that through fear of the sun's intervention he turns his spleen against the city whence she is about to set forth on her mission. That city

12 Connection with Ar. *r-d-y*, Heb. *r-š-y* gives just the wrong sense.—Since the PS form of Heb. *r-š-y* is still unknown and could have been **r-š-g* just as well as *r-š-y*, could *pnm trgn* perhaps equate with *pānīm rā'īm* in Gen. 40:7, Neh. 2:13, and with *rô'ā pānīm* in Qoh. 7:13, i.e. *Ḥōron was visibly upset?*—Alternatively, could $\sqrt{r-g-n}$ connect with Heb. $\sqrt{r-m}$ in Ezek. 27:35 *r'mw pnyw* (*//šmmw // š'rw š'r*), on the analogy of Heb. *d-š-n* = Arab. *d-s-m*; Ugar. *p'n* = Heb. *p'm*, etc.? (Cf. Ar. *r-g-m* 'vex', etc.).

13 True, in Gen. 42:36; 43:14 the word is used of the bereavement of *males*, but this may be merely a transference. In any case, the reference is always to loss of children *whom one already has*.

would naturally be the *place of sunrise* (cf. *qdm* || *špr*, BH i. 7–8). In support of this interpretation it may be observed that in the companion text, RŠ 24.251, rev. 21–22, in a passage where a direct appeal is being made to the Sun, the plight of the ‘city of the east’ (*r qdm*) is mentioned in particular as likely to engage her special interest and solicitude (*bl tbb [n] l(?)azd, 'r qdm . . .* “Canst thou not tes[t] for thyself that I am not exaggerating [cf. Ar. *z'd*] ? Why, the city of the east . . .”).

Aršb. This—as I had seen independently of Astour—is to be identified with *Araššib*, an element of personal names from Nuzi, Chagar Bazar and Karatepe, answering to the Hittite-Hurrian *Aranza/ib*, i.e. the Tigris.—Since Qdm (Eastland) was, according to the Egyptian *Travels of Sinube* (B 29), the specific designation of an area just east of Byblos, it is apparent that Ḥōron is represented as traversing the entire breadth of the Syrian Desert, and even beyond it. In much the same way Ḥoremḥeb mentions Byblos and Carchemish as the western and eastern extremes of his dominions (cf. D. Redford, *BASOR* 211 [1973], 37), while Aššurnaširpal speaks in the same sense of Lebanon and ‘the far side of the Tigris’ (*Annals*, ii. 127; iii. 121; ‘Standard’ *Inscription*, 8 [= AKA, 216]).—For the style, *Aršb rbt wAršb trrt* (= Akkad. *šerru* ‘small’), cf. IK:108–9, 134, 210–11, 276–77, *Udm rbt . . . Udm trrt*; *ibid.* iv. 8–9; 19–20; v. 25–26 *Ḥbr [rb] t Ḥbr [t] r[rt]* (*restituit* Ginsberg); Sennacherib, *Taylor Prism*, ii. 39 *Šidūnu rabū ālŠidūnu šeḥru*; Strabo’s ‘Armenia the Great’ and ‘Armenia the Less’ (XI. 12.3), and such designations as ‘Greater Zâb (Ar. *Zâb el-kebîr*; Syr. *Zâbâ rabbâ*) and ‘Lesser Zâb’ (Ar. *Zâb es-šegîr*; Syr. *Zâbâ za'urâ*); cf. also *Šidon rabbâb*, Josh. 11:8, *Ḥamath rabbâb*, Amos 6:2. Here, of course, the combined expression means simply “every square inch of the terrain.”—Ḥōron’s object is to dislodge the serpents which find therein a favorite habitat: cf. Num 21:6f.; Deut. 8:15; Esarhaddon, in Luckenbill, *ARAB* ii. 209, 229; T. E. Lawrence, *Revolt in the Desert*, 93; J. A. Montgomery, *Arabia and the Bible* (1934), 8f.; I. Löw, *Fauna u. Mineralien der Juden* (1969), 26f; Midrash Tanḥumâ, *B^ešallah* 17; Sifre 11.18:68; Targ. Jer. Deut. 1:19 (see Rashi, ad loc.); Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the O. T.* (New York, 1969), § 182. To this end he shakes the clumps of scrub where they might be lurking, uproots bracken under which they might be hiding, convulses palms beneath which they might be sheltering, and carries away such ‘waters in the desert’ beside which they might be abiding. (The palm, it may be added, is a prominent feature of the Mesopotamian landscape: cf. Herodotus, i. 193; Strabo, XIV. 1.14; TB *Soṭab* 46b; *Berachot* 31: *šintâ d^eBabel*; cf. I. Löw, *Flora der Juden*, ii [1924], 313; Frd. Delitzsch, *Wo lag das Paradies?* [1881], 133, n. 29.)

r'r is mentioned in Jer. 17:6 as a tree or hardy shrub which grows in parched places (LXX: *agriomurikē*; Vulg.: *myricae*; vulgo: juniper); cf. Löw, *Flora*, iii. 401.

ubšht 'š mt. Lit. “and from the shoots (cf. Heb. *šāp*; Akkad. *ših̄tu*, etc.) dead wood/twig(s), i.e. bracken”—not ‘the tree of Death’ (whatever that may be), as supposed by Loren Fisher and M. Tsevat (through a mistaken combination of *šht* with Heb. *šapat!*).—For *mt* used of a tree, cf. Job 14:8 and Akkad. *mītu* (specifically of a *palm!*), K 3240.33; cf. also Jude 12, *dendra . . . dis apothanonta ekrizōthenta*; conversely, Paralip. Jeremiae 9.3, *to thumiama tōn dendrōn tōn zōntōn*.

'R'Rm yn'Rnb, SSnm ySynb, 'Dtm y'Dynb, YBLtm YBLnb. Note the play on words.—Since (a)

the verbs stand parallel, and both *ysYnb* and *y'dYnb* are clearly in the 3rd. sg. masculine (b) their common suffix *-b* indicates that each governs an object in the singular; and (c) the feminine nouns, *'dt* and *yblt* can scarcely be the subjects of verbs with masculine prefixes, the only possible construction (contrary to previous commentators) is that the subject of these clauses is Ḥôron and that they relate what he does (or intends to do) to each of the objects mentioned. The singular nouns are to be understood, of course, in a collective sense, and the suffix *-m* is simply the enclitic *-ma*, the repetition of it (as well as the order of words) heightening the dramatic effect.—The distinction between the simple form *ydy* in line 64 and the “energetic” forms, *yn'rb*, *ysynb*, *y'dynb* and *yblnb* in lines 65–67 may indicate that the former is asyndetic, indicating *intent*, whereas the latter states what actually happened.

yn'rb. Cp. Heb. *nī'er* ‘shake, toss’. For the specific sense, cf. (si vera lectio!) Isa. 33:9.

ssnm. Cp. Akkad. *sissinu*; Heb. *sansan* (Can. 7:9); Syr. *snsn'* ‘fruitstalk of a date-palm’ (Virolleaud).

ysynb. As a parallel to *yn'rb*, this must mean something like ‘shake’. It may therefore be derived plausibly from a $\sqrt{n-s-y}$, akin to Akkad. *nasāsu* II—a verb which is indeed applied to the motion of some part (*kimmatu*) of a palm-tree, in e.g. *Maqlû* vi. 81. Cognate also are Arabic *n-š-n-š* and Syriac *n-s*. Not improbably, this $\sqrt{n-s-s}$ is to be recognized also in Isa. 59:19 *kî yābô' kânnābār šār rūāḥ YHWH nōsēsāh bô*, where the verb is usually taken as a Pil. form of $\sqrt{n-w-s}$ ‘flee’.—G. R. Driver, *JTS* 31 [1930], 9, 45; *ibid.*, 38 [1937], 39 finds a Heb. $\sqrt{n-w-s}$ II ‘shake’, in Isa. 10:29 *ḥārēdāb hārāmāb, gibē'at Šā'ul nāsāb* (*NEB*: ‘is in panic’), but this spoils the point, which is that the *gibē'āb*, high ground to which people would naturally flee for refuge, is now, as it were, itself in flight from them.—Astour divines the sense correctly, but his comparison with Ar. *n-s-s* ‘drive violently’, violates the normal correspondence of sibilants, the cognates of that Ar. root being Akkad. *nāšu* and Heb. *nūš* in Ps. 69:21.—For the parallelism of our word with Heb. $\sqrt{n-r}$ we may perhaps compare UT 133:7 *bym B'l ysy*, which might comport with *nī'er bayyām/bē'tôk bayyām* in Ps. 136:15; Exod. 14:27. In view, however, of the mutilated state of that Ugaritic text, this can be regarded as no more than a shot in the dark.—Lastly, a Šaph'el from a by-form $\sqrt{n-w-s}$ *sensu* ‘dangle’ may perhaps be detected in VAB ii. 12 *rišt lbmth šnst*, where the verb is usually explained from Heb. *šannes* (= *š-n-š*!) in 1 Kgs. 18:46.

'dtm. On this word (|| *ybltm* = Heb. *yābāl* ‘stream’), see above on *'dt* (line 3).

y'dynb. Cp. Heb. $\sqrt{'d-b}$ (Job 28:8); Arab. *'d-'(y)*; Syr. *'d-'* ‘pass on, advance’. The form is Pi'el, in a factitive sense.—Since in Targ. *'d-b* commonly renders Heb. *'b-r*, and since *'dt* corresponds approximately to Heb. *'āpîq* (see above on line 3), we may aptly compare Job 6:15, *Ka'āpîq nēḥālîm ya'ābôrû*.

ḥṛrb. Dialectical variant for *ḥzrb* = Heb. *ḥāšer* II; cf. *Ugaritica* V, no. 1: 17–18.

tlu ḥt km nḥl, tplg km plg. The imperfect tense of the verbs shows that these are circumstantial clauses describing something that happens concurrently with Ḥôron's reaching the

lady's house; they pave the way for the next episode. (For the asyndetic construction, cf. S. R. Driver, *Hebrew Tenses*³ [1892], §§ 76, 165, 167).—The clue to the meaning lies in the fact that the simile contained in the words *km nḥl* is elsewhere employed to denote *violent onrush*, e.g. in Isa. 30:28; 59:19; Akkad., KAR 253, obv. ii. 25 (of a demon), *kīma mīli uzzaza*; IV Rawlinson, 50, d55, *kīma mīli nāri isḥupšū*; cf. also in classical literature, Aeschylus, *Supplices* 469, *kakōn de plēthos potamos hōs aperchetai*; Herodotus, iii. 81, *aitheei . . . cheimmarbō potamō bikelos*; Horace, *Sat.*, I. vii. 26, *ruebat flumen ut hibernum*. The verbs will be 3rd. pl. impf., the subject being the serpents.—*tlu ḥt*, as a parallel to *tplg*, is difficult. I offer four suggestions:

(a) A word *ḥt* occurs in IIIAB, B:26 *t'ny ilm ḥt mlak Ym*, where, by combination with Heb. $\sqrt{ḥ-t-t}$ Ginsberg (*ANET*, 130) renders "The gods are cowed with terror at the messengers of Yam"—a rendering which, I would add, might be supported by the parallelism of *ḥtt* and *'nb* in Isa. 31:4. In OT, $\sqrt{ḥ-t-t}$ (and nouns derived from it) always refers to the *experience*, rather than the *infliction*, of terror, i.e. *trepidation*. It often stands parallel to $\sqrt{b-w-š}$ or $\sqrt{y-r-}$. In Jer. 46:5 it expresses the state of warriors who turn tail; *ibid.*, 14:4, the sorry condition of rainless soil; while in Job 39:22 *w^elō' yēḥat* || *yisḥaq lappahad* refers to an intrepid warhorse. Hence the meaning will be "They (i.e. the serpents) were incapable (*l'-y* II) of being cowed," and this would accord perfectly with the following *km nḥl*, etc., describing their violent on-slaughter and diffusion. For the construction, cf. SS 64 *wlu šb'n* "and are incapable of being satisfied," *ḥt* being an *accusativum modi*, as in Heb. *šag^ebū yeša'* (Job 5:11) and *gāb^erū ḥayil* (Job 21:7).—The objection to this is, however, that Akkad. *ḥattu* (*ḥātu*) 'terror, pavor' (syn. *pirittu*) and Arabic $\sqrt{ḥ-t-t}$ 'be enfeebled' would lead us to expect *ḥt* rather than *ḥt*,¹⁴ and the word actually appears in this form in IIK, vi. 1, 13–14, where *mt dm ḥt* "Death, on the one hand, be thou enfeebled," stands in antithesis to *š'tqt dm li* "Sha'taqat, on the other, wax strong/prevail ($\sqrt{l'-y}$ I)." But perhaps, though synonymous, *ḥt* is etymologically distinct from *ḥt* and connects rather with Akkad. *utiutu*, registered as a virtual synonym of *ḥattu* and *pirittu* in A viii/2, 258.

(b) The clauses *tlu ḥt km nḥl*, *tplg km plg* may stand in *antithetical* rather than *synonymous* parallelism. In that case, the sense would be, "They now are unable to rage (*vel sim.*) like a torrent, but are reduced to a mild trickle, like a rill." The contrast would be the same as that between *mē baššilo^aḥ babol^ekīm l^e'aṭ* and *mē hannābār ḥā'ašūmīm w^ebārabbīm* in Isa. 8:6–7. The etymology and precise meaning of *ḥt* would, however, still have to be determined.

(c) Caquot suggests that *ḥt* is an error for *ḥmt* 'venom', the sense then being that the serpents' venom lost its potency and became diffused rather than concentrated. But such diffusion would surely have *increased*, rather than *diminished* the peril to the beasts of the field, for the poison would then have been shed over the plants and herbage on which they feed! If,

14 This objection would presumably hold also if, as CAD suggests, Akkad. *ḥattu* (*ḥātu*) derive from a lost *ḥa'ū*. Virolleaud and Caquot-Szzycey-Herdner, *Textes Ougaritiques* (1974), 1:130, prefer to render *t'ny ḥt mlak ym* as "You will answer the tablets of the messengers of Yam"; but one answers *words* or *persons*, not *tablets*.

however, we accept this emendation, might not *tlu* be derived rather from $\sqrt{l\text{'-}y}$ 'I be powerful, prevail'? In that case, an apt parallel could be found in the Egyptian Turin Papyrus, where it is said that venom coursed through Re's limbs "like the Nile coursing along its river-bed" (*mtw ttnf m iw.f m' ttt H'py m ht.f*; cf. E. A. W. Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians* [reprint: 1969], i. 376).

(d) Lastly, retaining the derivation of *tlu* from $\sqrt{l\text{'-}y}$ 'I', it has occurred to me that *ht* may be an error for *h < s > t*, adverbial infinitive of $\sqrt{h\text{'-}s-y}$ = Heb. *h-s-b* 'divide, i.e. branch out'—a word actually used of *waters* in 2 Kgs. 2:8, 14; Isa. 30:28. This would provide a perfect parallel to *p-l-g* (by which, indeed, it is constantly rendered in Targ.). The sense would then be, "They branched out vehemently." It must be confessed, however, that this use of $\sqrt{l\text{'-}y}$ is strained. On the whole, therefore, our first interpretation (a) seems the most plausible.

Lines 70–76

sgrt. Since this word here stand parallel to *mnt* 'had employed spells' (see above on line 4, *mnt*), it may perhaps contain the additional nuance of *performing a specific magical operation*, for the barring of doors against demons and the like is indeed mentioned in ancient Semitic magical texts, e.g. *Ašakkê Maršûti* iii. 110 (= Thompson, *Devils*, ii. 3) *qēm Ašnan elleti bāba kamā pirik [ma]*; *ibid.* 'Tablet D', 25 (= Thompson, i. 159); K. Frank, *Babylonische Beschwörungsreliefs* (1908), 59, n. 5; E. Ebeling, *KAR* 25, obv. i. 25, [*ina pan ḫ*] *dalti ḫsikirti [linā]*; Lajard, *Culte de Venus*, Pl. xvii. 7 (= Frank, 90) *ḫdaltu ḫsikkūru lū tiddā*; Second Amuletic Plaque from Arslan Tash, rev. 1, *n'lt mn'l*.—The barring of doors against *witches* is common in modern popular usage: cf. *Handwörterbuch d. deutschen Aberglaubens*, viii. 1201f.

b'db 'dbt tlt pth bt mnt. Previous commentators have taken *tlt* to be a noun denoting some kind of metal, i.e. "she made the entrance of the house (like) a sheet of metal (ironclad)," but (a) no such word is elsewhere attested, and (b) this leaves *mnt* in the air, for the usual rendering 'the house of spells/incantations' really makes little sense. I would therefore parse *tlt* as an adverbial infinitive (Pi'el) qualifying '*dbt mnt*, i.e. "she had placed charms three times over/in triplicate," and take *pth bt* as *locative*, i.e. 'at the entrance to the house' (cf. Gen. 18:1; Lev. 17:6; Josh. 20:4, etc.).—*tlt* may then have the sense of a vague plural, viz. 'many, umpteen'; for this usage, cf. H. Usener, in *Rhein. Mus.*, NF 58 (1903), 1–47; R. Mueller, *Die Zahl Drei in Sage, Dichtung und Kunst* (Teschen, 1903); Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, Z 71.1. Alternatively, however, it may be more specific and refer to the common *threefold* performance of magical acts; cf. Akkadian *šalāšu* in this sense in e.g. *CT* XXIII. 34.35, *šipta III-šu ana eli qaqqadišu tamanna*; *Legend of the Worm*, rev. 26 *šipti III-šu ana eli tamannû*; *namburbi*-text, Ebeling, *LKA* 14.23 = Capliče, *Orientalia* 34 (1965), 127, 128.—An illuminating parallel from a later age and different clime is afforded by Ovid, *Fasti* vi. 155f., where Cranae (or Carna), goddess of door-hinges, thus drives away the child-stealing witches (*striges*) from the infant Procas, later king of Alba and father of Numitor: *Protinus arbuteâ postes ter in ordine tangit / Fronde, ter arbuteâ limine fronde notat*.—For the practise of reciting spells over, or suspending *tabellae defixionis* at the entrances of houses, cf. Harper, *Letters* i. 24f; Frank, *Beschwörungsreliefs*, 17, rev. 9–11: *šiptu ḫUL.DUB Ê.BAR. RA adi bābi imannû, bāba utamma adi innassaḫûni*; First Arslan Tash Amuletic Plaque, 24–27 (according

to F. M. Cross' improved reading in *BASOR* 197 [1970], 46), *lmzst ḥlp* "Flit away from the doorpost"; cf. also Deut. 6:9.

ptḥ bt . . . For the absence of any indication of the speakers in the ensuing dialogue we may compare the analogous usage in Egyptian narrative spells; cf. E. Dréton, *Le théâtre égyptien* (Cairo, 1942), 50.

wubn. Rhythm and parallelism show that this is a *verb* || *istql* 'I have arrived' (cf. || *m-ḡ-y*, ID 170–71; IID 24–25; VAB, B.17–18), and the form seemingly indicates that the root is *primae adef*. A suitable sense could therefore be obtained by parsing it as 1st sg. impf. energ. of a root akin to Ar. *-w-b* 'return' in the specific sense of 'come home in the evening'.¹⁵—According, however, to L. Fisher (*UF* 3 [1971], 356), a fresh examination of the tablet establishes the reading *wuba* rather than *wubn*. In that case, we may perhaps think of a passive form of *√b-w-* 'come', in the specific sense of 'be admitted as an overnight guest'; cf. Lane, *Lex.*, s.v.; cf. also, in OT, Gen. 8:11; Deut. 33:7.

km nḥšm. Caquot renders, "Donne-moi le lézard venimeux [see next note] *aussi bien que* les serpents," while Astour restores *km < mbr > nḥšm*. Both interpretations seem to me to miss the delightful subtlety of the phrasing: the lady is making coy and oblique suggestions of what she really wants, like the modern gold-digger's "a mink coat, maybe?" and *km* has the force of 'something like, for instance'.—In general, the situation is not unlike that of Saul's demanding of David one hundred Philistine foreskins as bride-price for the princess Michal (1 Sam. 18:20–27).

yḥr. This word has been cleverly identified by Caquot with Arabic **wahr* 'a species of poisonous lizard' (de quo, v. Bochart, *Hierozoicon*, i. 1073; Jāḥiẓ, *Ḥajawan*, vi. 127f.; I. Löw, in *Goldziber Festschrift* [1911], 136). Provisionally, I have accepted this explanation. It should be observed, however, that it disturbs the balance of the parallel clauses, *tn km nḥšm* . . . *tn km mbry wbn bṯn itnny*. Possibly, therefore, *yḥr* should be parsed as a vocative 'O Ḥōr(on)', the shortened (caritative) form, if not simply a scribal error, being paralleled by *Yṯp* for *Yṯpn* in IID 7, 16 (both times, apparently, vocative!) and by *Aliy* for *Aliyn* in I*AB, v. 7; cp. *Anglicè* 'Will' for 'William', etc. In that case, we should probably delete the first *km* as an error occasioned by the following clause, and the preceding note should be modified accordingly.

ytt. For the definite tense *sensu* 'I hereby give' cf. Gen. 20:16; 23:11–13.

15 Perhaps we are to suppose that Ḥōron, taking it for granted that the chatelaine of the mansion is a married woman, calls from a distance pretending to be her husband returning from work. But, as the sequel shows, she is up to his tricks and shrewdly outsmarts him.

V

Not the least intriguing feature of this text is its affinity to the style of the narrative spells contained in the Egyptian "Horus cippi" (e.g. the Metternich Stele)¹⁶ and in the Turin Papyrus (circa 1500 B.C.).¹⁷ This is not to say, of course, that the stories are identical, but to suggest only that certain literary conventions of the genre may have passed, in popular usage, from Egypt to Canaan. It may also have been under the influence of such Egyptian texts that the principal character in our charm (as likewise, it would seem, in the companion piece, RŠ 24.251) is the god Ḥôron, for it is now well known that Horus came to be assimilated to him (cf. W. F. Albright, *BASOR* 84 [1941], 7–12). Their roles, however, are by no means the same.

The following are the more arresting parallels:

<i>Ugaritic</i>	<i>Egyptian</i>
1. A mare appeals to the Sun-goddess (Š-p-š) for aid against serpents.	1. The sacred cat of Bastet appeals to the Sun-god (Re') for aid against serpents, scorpions, etc.
2. Various deities are cited who might be able to help by means of spells.	2. Thoth, the agent of the Sun-god, rallies various deities, reciting their names.
3. The serpent is called by a fanciful name, viz., 'Twist-and-Twine' ('qšr).	3. The reptiles bear fanciful names, viz., 'Head-rearer' (<i>dsr tp</i>), 'Grin(?)-face' (<i>nhz hr</i>).
4. If the emendation of <i>ht</i> to <i>hmt</i> be accepted in line 68, the serpent's poison is likened to a river in spate.	4. In the Turin Papyrus, the serpent's poison is said to flow through the limbs of Re' like the rushing Nile.
5. The door is barred to Ḥôron by a woman who is in terror of the serpents.	5. The door is barred to Isis by a woman in terror of the scorpions which accompany her.
6. The dialogue between Ḥôron and the lady lacks indication of the speakers.	6. In Egyptian narrative spells, dialogues are sometimes introduced without indication of the speakers; cf. Drioton, <i>Theâtre Égyptien</i> , 24, 50.

16 W. Gollenschief, *Die Metternichstele* (1877); A. Moret, *RHR* 72 (1915), 213–57; Drioton, *Le théâtre égyptien*, 82–90; K. Seele, *JNES* 6 (1947), 43–52; Nora Scott, *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* 9 (1951), 201–17.

17 W. Pleyte and F. Rossi, *Papyrus de Turin* (1869–76); Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, 1:372–88.

7. The serpents attack under cover of darkness. In the companion text, RŠ 24.251, the Sun-goddess is expressly besought to "gather in the deep darkness (*isp ḡrpl*)."
7. Thoth answers Isis' appeal by observing that until Horus is cured of snakebite (or scorpion's sting) darkness will prevail; and when he is indeed cured, the cry goes up, "As the sun lives, so the poison dies."¹⁸

Addendum

In connection with the role of Ḥôron it should be observed that in the Egyptian Papyrus Harris (late 19th Dynasty) he is represented as rendering impotent the fangs of wild beasts and as protecting crops against them (i.7; ii.12).—On second thoughts it occurs to me that *bḤrn pnm trḡn* in line 61 might indeed mean "Ḥôron showed a benevolent mien" (cf. Arabic *r-d-y*; Heb. *r-ṣ-b*), for such benevolence would not really be inconsistent with his then going on a rampage, seeing that he would have been acting in support of his suppliant. The expression might be paralleled, in point of general sense, by Ps. 44:4 and by Job 33:26, particularly if in the latter passage the word *bit^lrû'āh* be taken as an Aramaism for Heb. *b^lrāṣōn*. Nor need it be objected that, according to Ginsberg, the Ugaritic cognate of Heb. *r-ṣ-b* appears in IJK, 1:45 as *r-ṣ-y*, for the reading there is uncertain and might well be *hrṣ* rather than *yrṣ* (cf. Caquot-Szyncer-Herdner, *Textes Ougaritiques*, 1:554).—Lipiński's rendering, "his face became green," on the strength of Heb. $\sqrt{r}^{\prime}n$, seems to me impossible, for *r^l-n* refers to *freshness* or *luxuriance*, not to *color* (cf. Ps. 92:11)!

¹⁸ Most translators take this to be a dire threat, but may it not be simply a statement of fact?—In the Ugaritic charm, RŠ 24.251 the dissipation of the deep darkness also has the purpose of enabling the various deities more easily to locate the venom, evidently spilled over plants and vegetation.