

On the Rise and Fall of Canaanite Religion at Baalbek: A Tale of Five Toponyms

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The city of Baalbek, in present-day Lebanon, has been a subject of interest to students of the Bible for more than a millennium. Since the tenth century C.E., many have identified it with Baal-Gad (Josh 11:17) and/or Baalath (1 Kgs 9:18).¹ Since the beginning of the eighteenth century, others have connected it, in one way or another, with Bikath-Aven (Amos 1:5). In 1863, these and other suggestions were reviewed by John Hogg in a lengthy treatise.²

The etymology of the toponym, which appears as *B^cl**bk*** in classical Syriac and as *Ba^labakku* in classical Arabic, has been widely discussed since the eighteenth century. Many etymologies have been suggested, most of them unconvincing.³ Part of the problem is that a combination of etymologies is needed, for the name of the place changed over the centuries as its religious significance evolved.

In this article, I shall attempt to show that the rise and fall of Canaanite religion at Baalbek from the Bronze Age to the Byzantine period can be traced with the help of five toponyms: (1) *Mbk Nhrm* (Source of the Two Rivers),⁴ (2) *בקעת און*

¹ See Richard C. Steiner, “The Byzantine Biblical Commentaries from the Genizah: Rabbanite vs. Karaite,” in *Shai le-Sara Japhet* (ed. M. Bar-Asher et al.; Jerusalem: Bialik, 2007), *258; and Conrad Iken, *Dissertationis philologico-theologicae* no. 15: De Baal-hamon et Baal-gad (Hague, 1749).

² John Hogg, “On the Supposed Scriptural Names of Baalbec, or the Syrian Heliopolis; and on the Chief Heliopolitan Inscriptions, Temples, Deities, and Sun-Worship,” *Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature of the United Kingdom* second series 7 (1863): 247–334.

³ See appendix below.

⁴ This is probably a “poetic toponym” rather than an ordinary toponym. This rhetorical figure, known as *utamakura* in Japanese, is common in Japanese poetry, e.g., *Arisoumi* (Rocky Coast Sea).

(Valley of Idolatry), (3) בעל בכי (Baal of Weeping), (4) עין בכי (Spring of Weeping), and (5) *B^clbbk/Ba^clabakku* (Baal-Bacchus). All of these are Semitic; the Greek name of Baalbek, *Heliopolis*, will not be discussed.⁵

I. *MBK NHRM* (SOURCE OF THE TWO RIVERS)

Toponym 1, probably a *poetic* toponym,⁶ is *Mbk Nhrm*. In the Baal cycle (*KTU* 1.4 IV 21 and parallels) and in a Ugaritic serpent incantation (*KTU* 1.100.3), Il's abode is said to be located there. A full review of the literature on this toponym is beyond the scope of this article,⁷ but one piece of evidence should be mentioned. Othmar Keel, followed by Mark S. Smith, notes that a seal from the Akkadian period at Mari depicts "a god of the type El enthroned, between the springs of two streams, on a mountain."⁸ If this is really a depiction of Il's abode, it suggests that the latter was above ground, even if the "source of the two rivers" was partly subterranean.

In my view, the Ugaritic toponym (and perhaps the seal from Mari) should be compared with modern descriptions of Baalbek, such as: "Baalbek was a natural centre for the upper part of the Beqaa, being located at its highest level, at *the source of two important rivers*. . . ."⁹ The two rivers in question are Lebanon's greatest rivers, the Litani and the Asi (Orontes), which, according to Ellen Churchill Semple, "rise in a swampy, indeterminate watershed near Baalbek at an altitude of 3,500 feet."¹⁰

⁵ The significance of this toponym is disputed. According to Frank Moore Cross (*Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973], 7 n. 13, cited in n. 85 below), it shows that Baal-Hadad had solar features at Baalbek. According to Youssef Hajjar (*La triade d'Héliopolis-Baalbek* [3 vols.; Leiden: Brill (vols. 1–2); Montreal: Y. Hajjar (vol. 3), 1977–85], 3:216–17), the early Greek colonists mistakenly identified Baal-Hadad with Helios based on a trivial iconographic feature.

⁶ See n. 4 above.

⁷ For the literature up until a decade ago, see Marvin H. Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts* (VTSup 2; Leiden: Brill, 1955), 72–81; Dennis Pardee, *Les textes para-mythologiques de la 24e campagne (1961)* (Ras Shamra-Ougarit 4; Paris: Editions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1988), 206 n. 24; Baruch Margalit, *The Ugaritic Poem of Aqht: Text, Translation, Commentary* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), 428–31; Mark S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle* (VTSup 55; Leiden: Brill, 1994–), 225–30; and Dennis Pardee, "The Ba'lu Myth," *COS* 1:244 n. 16.

⁸ Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (New York: Seabury, 1978), 47–48; idem, "Ancient Seals and the Bible," *JAOS* 106 (1986): 309; Smith, *Baal Cycle*, 226.

⁹ Friedrich Ragette, *Baalbek* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1980), 16 (emphasis added).

¹⁰ Ellen Churchill Semple, "The Influence of Geographic Conditions upon Ancient Mediterranean Stock-Raising," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 12 (1922): 19. See also Erwin M. Ruprechtsberger, *Vom Steinbruch zum Jupitertempel von Heliopolis/Baalbek (Libanon)*

According to Richard F. Burton and Charles F. Tyrwhitt Drake, the true (scientific) sources of the Litani and the Asi are the ‘Ayn el-Baradah and the Naba‘ el-‘Illá, located “within one short mile of each other” and only five or six miles west of the ruins of Baalbek.¹¹ The two sources “are separated by a mere ground wave; . . . whilst two distinct river-valleys, running north and south, have been formed by the erosion of the twin streams.”¹² It has been argued that Baalbek’s location explains its rise to prominence as a religious center:

A more appropriate setting for the abode of gods who represented such material phenomena as rain and tempest, fertility and growth, would be difficult to imagine. Situated near the highest point of the Beqa‘a, controlling the watershed between the Orontes river to the north, and the Leontes river to the south, Baalbek combined aspects of a city in a plain with that of a high place, and was thus predestined to become a centre of religious worship.¹³

Since Baalbek was occupied already in the Early and Middle Bronze Ages,¹⁴ it could well have been a religious center in the Late Bronze Age, when the Ugaritic texts were written (and even in the Akkadian period, when the seal from Mari was manufactured). I suggest, therefore, that Ugaritic *Mbk Nhrm* refers to the site of Baalbek.¹⁵

II. בקעת און (VALLEY OF IDOLATRY)

Toponym 2 is בקעת און (Amos 1:5). It is generally agreed today that this toponym, like בקעת הלבנון (Josh 11:17; 12:7), refers to all or part of the Bekaa Valley

(Linzer archäologische Forschungen 30; Linz: Nordico, Museum der Stadt Linz, 1999) 10: “Nahe Baalbek entspringen der Orontes und der weniger bekannte Leontes (Litanni).”

¹¹ Richard F. Burton and Charles F. Tyrwhitt Drake, *Unexplored Syria: Visits to Libanus, the Tulúl, el Safá, the Anti-Libanus, the Northern Libanus, and the Áláh* (2 vols.; London: Tinsley Brothers, 1872), 1:41, 53–58.

¹² *Ibid.*, 1:59.

¹³ Ragette, *Baalbek*, 22. So too Nina Jidejian, *Baalbek* (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 1975), 46–47.

¹⁴ Jidejian, *Baalbek*, 15; Hajjar, *La triade*, 3:293.

¹⁵ Ug. *mbk* (“source, spring”) is believed to be derived from the same root as *nbk* (“fountain, spring”) in Ugaritic and Hebrew. It is, therefore, remarkable that J. T. Milik has, for his own reasons, suggested deriving *Baalbek* from Phoenician **Bʿl-nbk*, “Baal of the source” (“Les papyrus araméens d’Hermoupolis et les cultes syro-phéniciens en Égypte perse,” *Bib* 48 [1967]: 595); cf. Friedrich Ragette, *The Temple Triad of Baalbek* (Architektur der Welt 9; Weimar: VDG, 2004), 6; Hajjar, *La triade*, 1:141–43, 3:218–19; idem, “Baalbek, grand centre religieux sous l’Empire,” *ANRW* II.18.4 (1990), 2479–80. It is a pity that phonetic problems and the rabbinic evidence (see below) make it impossible to accept this etymology. Otherwise, one might have claimed that the modern toponym derives indirectly from the Ugaritic phrase!

(*al-Biqāʿ*) of Lebanon. This identification appears to have been made already by the Karaite exegete Japhet b. Eli in the tenth century: “from Bikath-Aven’: this is a place known as *al-Biqāʿ*, in the vicinity of Damascus.”¹⁶

In 1703, a new element was added to this theory when Henry Maundrell published the journal of a trip he had made from Aleppo to Jerusalem in 1697. In the entry for April 25, we read:

Having gone one hour beyond *Meshgarah*, we got clear of the Mountain, and enter’d into a Valley called *Bucca*. The Valley is about two hours over, and in length extends several days Journey. . . . It is inclosed on both sides with two parallel Mountains, exactly resembling each other; the one that which we lately pass’d over between this and *Sidon*, the other opposite against it toward *Damascus*. The former I take to be the true *Libanus*, the latter *Anti-Libanus*. . . .¹⁷

After the book was printed, the author sent “Corrections and Additions,” which, in the first edition, appear at the end. One of these afterthoughts contains a stimulating suggestion:

After the words, *and enter’d into the Valley of Bocat*; add; This *Bocat* seems to be the same with *Bicath Aven*, mention’d *Amos* I.5, together with *Eden* and *Damascus*; for there is very near it in Mount *Libanus* a place call’d *Eden* to this day. It might also have the name of *Aven* that is *vanity* given it, from the Idolatrous worship of *Baal*, practis’d at *Balbeck* or *Heliopolis*, which is situate in this Valley; this Valley is also mention’d in the Journal of *Wednesday May* the 5. and in both places instead of *Bucca* I would have it *Bocat*.¹⁸

Maundrell’s journal appears to have been an instant best-seller, with French, German, and Dutch editions following in 1705 and new English editions appearing every few years beginning in 1707. His suggestion concerning *בִּקְעַת אֵוֶן* quickly became the conventional wisdom, thanks to William Lowth’s commentary on prophets and Augustin Calmet’s dictionary.¹⁹

¹⁶ Ms London BL Or 2400 (Margoliouth catalogue 282), 160 line 2: *מבִּקְעַת אֵוֶן וְהוּא מוֹצֵעַ יַעֲרֵף בְּאַלְבִּקְאֵעַ פִּי נְאֻחִיָּה דְמִשְׁק*.

¹⁷ Henry Maundrell, *A Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem at Easter, 1697* (1st ed.; Oxford: Theater, 1703), 118.

¹⁸ This afterthought appears on pp. 119–20 of the second edition (1707), “in which the Corrections and Additions, which were sent by the Author after the Book was Printed off, are inserted in the Body of the Book in the proper places.” Maundrell substituted *Bocat* for *Bucca* to show the connection with *Bicath Aven*. It seems that both forms were used for *בִּקְעַת הַלְבָנוֹן* during the Ottoman period. *Bucca* is presumably the form heard from the local Arabs; in Arabic, *buqʿah* means “swamp” (see at n. 10 above). *Bocat*, used also by S. Ronzevalle (“Notice sur un bas-relief représentant le simulacre du Jupiter Heliopolitanus,” *CRAI* [1901]: 469), is no doubt the form used by the Ottoman rulers. In Turkish, the Arabic feminine singular ending is pronounced with *t* in all positions, as in *kismet* and *sherbet*.

¹⁹ William Lowth, *A Commentary upon the Larger and Lesser Prophets being a Continuation of Bishop Patrick* (London: R. Knaplock et al., 1727), 429: “*Bikath-aven*: The Word signifies the

Maundrell's suggestion has stood the test of time. Frank Moore Cross speaks of "the Baʿl of the 'Biq'at Baʿl' (Baalbek; cf. Amos 1:5)."²⁰ Shalom M. Paul, in his commentary on Amos 1:5, writes: "The first location, 'the vale of Aven,' is a cacophemism referring to a deity (most likely Baal) worshiped in that region. Compare *בֵּית-אֵל* ('Bethel'), which is also designated *בֵּית אֵן* ('Beth-aven' = 'house of iniquity'). . . ."²¹

If *בַּקְעַת אֵן* is indeed comparable to *בֵּית אֵל* = *בֵּית אל*, it is legitimate to ask whether the original form of the toponym was *בַּקְעַת אל** rather than *בַּקְעַת בעל**. It appears that Hosea uses *אֵן* exclusively for *אל*, just as he (like all biblical authors) uses *בִּשְׁת* ("shame") exclusively for *בעל* (Hos 9:10); his dysphemisms preserve the initial consonant of the original.²²

It is not unreasonable to suggest that Amos's usage was the same, especially in view of the alliterative wordplay in Amos 5:5 (*וּבֵית אֵל יִהְיֶה לְאֵן*). If so, we may conclude that *בַּקְעַת הַלְבָּנוֹן*—or at least the portion of it near Il's abode at Baalbek (the *Sahlat Ba'albak* or the *Biqā' al-Ba'alabakkī*)²³—was known in Amos's time as *בַּקְעַת אל**. It was this phrase that Amos changed to *בַּקְעַת אֵן*.²⁴

There is no reason to doubt that the connection of Baalbek with Il was still known in the time of Amos. Indeed, as late as the Roman period, a god named *Connaros* appears in three inscriptions (two Latin, one Greek) found at Baalbek.²⁵

Plain of Vanity; from whence some conjecture it was a Place in Syria remarkable for Idolatry; as *Bethel* is called *Beth-aven* for that Reason, *Hos. v. 15*. . . Mr. *Maundrell* in his *Travels* observes, that not far from *Damascus* there is a Plain still called the *Vally of Bocat*, which he supposes the same with *Bikath-aven* here mentioned. . . ." Augustin Calmet, *An Historical, Critical, Geographical, Chronological and Etymological Dictionary of the Holy Bible in Three Volumes* (trans. S. D'oyly and J. Colson; London: J. J. and P. Knapton, 1732), 1:668: "He calls that city *Bikath-aven*, which the Heathen called *Bikath-Baal*, and which at present goes by the name of *Baal-beck*, the Valley of Baal."

²⁰ Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 7 n. 13.

²¹ Shalom M. Paul, *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 52. Paul (p. 53) rightly rejects the notion that *בַּקְעַת אֵן* means "the Valley of On (Heliopolis)." Even though Baalbek was called Heliopolis in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, there is no evidence that it was known to Semites as *אֵן* at that time, let alone in the time of Amos. For the alleged evidence of the Septuagint, see C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Twelve Minor Prophets* (trans. J. Martin; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1868), 244.

²² Contrast his nonderogatory substitute for *בעל* set forth in 2:18–19. Hosea seems to have worked out a system of substitutes in order to "make no mention of the name of other gods" (Exod 23:13).

²³ For the latter designation, see J. Sourdel-Thomine, "al-Biqā'c," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd ed.; Leiden: Brill; London: Luzac, 1960–2009), 1:1214. For the former, see Burton and Drake, *Unexplored Syria*, 45–46.

²⁴ There is no way of knowing whether Amos (or Hosea) would have felt the need to change *אל* (*Ps 36:7*) and *ארזי אל* (*Ps 80:11*) as well, but the fact that these phrases are grammatically plural may well have made them less specific and, hence, less objectionable.

²⁵ Jean-Paul Rey-Coquais, "Connaros le puissant," *Syria* 55 (1978): 361–70; Hajjar, *La triade*, 1:81–83, 3:241; idem, "Baalbek," 2483, 2504.

Connaros is believed to be the epithet of Il found in Phoenician ʿl qn ʿrs, “El, creator/possessor of the earth” = Hittite ^dEl-ku-ni-ir-ša or Aramaic ʿl qwnr.²⁶ The two Latin inscriptions from Baalbek record donations made in obedience to an oracular response of the god *Connaros*.²⁷ Thus, it appears that Il remained at Baalbek as an oracular deity until Roman times.

III. בעל בכי (BAAL OF WEeping)

Toponym 3 is בעל בכי, attested in rabbinic literature (*m. Maʿaś* 5:8; *t. Maʿaś* 3:15; etc.) in the phrase שום בעל בכי, “garlic of Baalbek.” That בעל בכי is Baalbek was pointed out five centuries ago by R. Obadiah Bertinoro, but his discovery was forgotten, because his transcription of Baalbek (בעל ביד according to a manuscript reading) became corrupted (to בעל בין and then to בעל) in the printed editions of his Mishnah commentary.²⁸ The identity of בעל בכי was rediscovered by Joseph Schwarz (who cites Bertinoro’s comment and, unaware of the corruption, rejects it!)²⁹ and accepted by later scholars of rabbinic literature.³⁰

Unfortunately, Schwarz missed the significance of this identification because he took the *yod* of בכי בעל to be the relational (*nisbah*) suffix ליחוס כמו ראובני (שמעוני). According to his analysis, the mishnaic phrase is not שום בעל בכי, “garlic of Baʿal-Beki” but שום בעל בכי, “Baalbekian garlic.” Now, the latter reading is highly unlikely because the vocalization in medieval manuscripts of the Mishnah is בכי, the pausal form of the word for “weeping.” The same vocalization is assumed by the medieval commentaries on the Mishnah.³¹ Nevertheless, Schwarz’s analysis appears

²⁶ Rey-Coquais, “Connaros,” 363–64; Hajjar, *La triade*, 3:241–42; Edward Lipiński, *Dieux et déesses de l’univers phénicien et punique* (OLA 64; Studia Phoenicia 14; Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 59–60.

²⁷ Hajjar, *La triade*, 1:82–83 ([*ex*] *responso dei Conna[ri]*), 3:241; idem, “Baalbek,” 2504 (*ex resp dei Connari*).

²⁸ See the commentary and the notes to the commentary ad loc. in משנה זרעים עם שינויי נוסחאות מכתבי יד של המשנה (ed. N. Sacks; Jerusalem: Institute for the Complete Israeli Talmud, 1972–75), 2:244, 246.

²⁹ Joseph Schwarz, *תבואות הארץ* (Jerusalem, 1845), 37a–37b. The discussion of Bertinoro is omitted in the English and German editions of the work: *A Descriptive Geography and Brief Historical Sketch of Palestine* (trans. I. Leeser; Philadelphia: A. Hart, 1850), 61; and *Das heilige Land* (Frankfurt am Main: J. Kaufmann, 1852), 37.

³⁰ Adolphe Neubauer, *La géographie du Talmud* (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1868), 298; Isidore Lévy, “Cultes et rites syriens dans le Talmud,” *REJ* 43 (1901): 194; Immanuel Löw, *Die Flora der Juden* (4 vols.; Vienna/Leipzig: R. Löwit, 1924–34), 2:142; A. Sammt, *Die sechs Ordnungen der Mischna* (6 vols.; ed. E. Baneth et al.; 2nd ed.; Wiesbaden: H. Kanel; Berlin: Itzkowski, 1924–33), 1:149 n. 13; Saul Lieberman, *תוספתא כפשוטה, באור ארוך לתוספתא* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1955–), 2:707.

³¹ See, e.g., Elijah Menahem b. Moses of London, *פירושי רבנו אליהו מלונדריש ופסקיו* (ed.

to have misled his successors. Among modern scholars, only Rudolf Kittel, Stanley A. Cook, and Stefan Wild have recognized that בעל בכי means “Baal of weeping.”³²

The meaning of this toponym is unmistakable. It has long been known that ritual mourning for Tammuz was common in the ancient Near East. In his commentary on Ezek 8:14, Moshe Greenberg writes:

Wailing for Tammuz (in his several forms) was a women’s rite practiced widely over the Near East through centuries. A seventh-century B.C.E. Assyrian day-book ordains *bikitu* “weeping” on the second of the month of Tammuz. As late as the tenth century C.E., the pagan Sabaeans of north-Syrian Haran kept a wailing (*al-Bukat*) for Tammuz in his month. . . .³³

But what of the Canaanites? In 1916, W. Carleton Wood was still able to write: “It is not known that the wailing for Tammuz, or Adonis, had any place in Canaanite worship; but if so, then, mourning was a method of disclaiming responsibility for the death of the agricultural god and of making supplication for his return at the time of the spring feast, as for instance at Byblos.”³⁴

The discovery and decipherment of Ugaritic shed new light on the question. Weeping for Baal appears in the Ugaritic Baal cycle. When Anat finds Baal dead, she weeps: *‘d tšb^c bk tšt k yn udm^ct*, “she drinks weeping until she is sated, tears like wine” (*KTU* 1.6 I 9–10). This weeping for Baal can hardly be separated from the toponym that means “Baal of Weeping.”

IV. עין בכי (SPRING OF WEEPING)

Toponym 4 is עין בכי. Like בעל בכי, it is a Phoenician toponym known only from rabbinic literature (*b. ‘Abod. Zar.* 11b).³⁵ This toponym, reminiscent of the

M. Y. L. Sacks; Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1956), 144: “Some interpret it as a toponym similar to Bochim in Judges [2:1, 5].” Most Jewish commentators took בעל בכי either as garlic from בעל בכי or as a variety of garlic that causes tearing of the eyes; see Isaac b. Melchizedek of Siponto, פירוש הריבמ”ץ לרבנו יצחק ב”ר מלכי צדק מסימפונט למשנה זרעים (ed. N. Sacks; Jerusalem: Institute for the Complete Israeli Talmud, 1975), 311, and the parallels cited there in nn. 79–81.

³² Rudolf Kittel, *Studien zur hebräischen Archäologie und Religionsgeschichte* (BWANT 1; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1908), 138 n. 2; Stanley A. Cook, *The Religion of Ancient Palestine in the Light of Archaeology* (Schweich Lectures 1925; London: Pub. for the British Academy by H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1930), 219 n. 1; Stefan Wild, *Libanesische Ortsnamen: Typologie und Deutung* (Beiruter Texte und Studien 9; Beirut: Franz Steiner, 1973), 222–23.

³³ Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 22; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 171.

³⁴ W. Carleton Wood, “The Religion of Canaan: From the Earliest Times to the Hebrew Conquest,” *JBL* 35 (1916): 211.

³⁵ Cf. Lévy, “Cultes,” 194.

biblical בכות אלון, “oak of weeping” (Gen 35:8) and perhaps עמק הבכא (Psa 84:7),³⁶ appears in an addendum to a list of five major idolatrous temples, a list that begins with the temple of Bel in Babylon and the temple of Nebo in Borsippa. The addendum lists two additional temples, including (according to one version) נדבכה בכי שבעין בכי. This appears to be equivalent to what is today called the Acropolis of Baalbek, that is, the Sanctuary of Jupiter Heliopolitanus.³⁷

In any event, it is clear that this temple is located in a place named after a spring (cf. עין גדי, etc.). The place in question is usually identified with בעל בכי = Baalbek, which is located near a spring whose Arabic name is Rās el-^cAyn.³⁸ In the words of Jesaias Press, “the spring found in בכי בעל is called עין בכי, and after its name the city is sometimes called עין בכי.”³⁹

The identification of עין בכי with Baalbek is virtually certain, because there was no idolatrous temple complex in the ancient Near East that was more prominent in the time of the rabbis than that of Baalbek. Writing in Caesarea ca. 335, Eusebius points to Baalbek as a place where ancient pagan practices, including cultic prostitution, could still be seen in his last years:

And, that such were the things which they did, when assimilating themselves to their Deities, we can readily shew from this, that the Phenicians our neighbors, as we ourselves have seen, are busied with these things, even now, in Baalbeck; the ancient injurious excesses and corrupting paths of vice, being persevered in there, even to this time; so, that the women there enter not into the bands of lawful marriage, until they have been first corrupted in a way contrary to law, and have been made to partake in the lawless services of the mysteries of Venus.⁴⁰

A century later, Rabbula, bishop of Edessa, and Eusebius, bishop of Kenneshrin, went “to Baalbek, city of the heathens, and entered the house of their idols . . . in

³⁶ So Yoshitaka Kobayashi, “Baca, Valley of,” *ABD* 1:566.

³⁷ Rargette, *Baalbek*, 27. In Akkadian, *natbāku* is used of a course of bricks (*CAD* vol. 11 N2, p. 119). In Biblical Aramaic, נדבך refers to a course of stone or timber (Ezra 6:4). In later Jewish Aramaic, it probably came to refer to the topmost course of a temple podium and then to the entire podium. It was thus very similar to the term *stylobate*, which can be found used in both of these ways today. For a different view, see Lévy, “Cultes,” 201–5.

³⁸ For this spring, see Edward Robinson, *Later Biblical Researches in Palestine, and in the Adjacent Regions* (Boston: Crocker & Brewster, 1856), 506; William M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book: Lebanon, Damascus and Beyond Jordan* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1886), 336–37; Theodor Wiegand, *Baalbek: Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen und Untersuchungen in den Jahren 1898 bis 1905* (3 vols.; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1921–25), 1:22–23; and see further below.

³⁹ Jesaias Press, ארץ ישראל: אנציקלופדיה טופוגרפית-היסטורית (Jerusalem: R. Mass, 1946–55), 112. Cf. Pinchas Neaman, אנציקלופדיה לגיאוגרפיה תלמודית (Tel-Aviv: J. Chachik, 1972), 1:281; and B. Z. Segal, הגיאוגרפיה במשנה (Jerusalem: Ha-Makhon le-heker ha-mishnah, 1979), 46. I am indebted to Menachem Jacobowitz for the last reference.

⁴⁰ Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, *On the Theophania* (trans. Samuel Lee; Cambridge: Duncan & Malcolm, 1843), 74. For the dating of this work, see Aryeh Kofsky, *Eusebius of Caesarea against Paganism* (Jewish and Christian Perspectives 3; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 276–77.

order to break them.”⁴¹ This probably refers to the temple of Bacchus. The temple of Jupiter was closed by Theodosius in ca. 380 C.E.,⁴² but the temple of Bacchus resisted the Christians until it was destroyed by fire together with its idols in ca. 554.⁴³

The prominence of Baalbek’s main temple derived, in part, from the popularity of its chief deity, Jupiter Heliopolitanus. According to M. Avi-Yonah:

This is one of the best known gods of antiquity, of whom we have scores of figurural representations and more than a hundred inscriptions, scattered over the whole of the empire. It should be noted in this connection that the Phoenicians were particularly zealous in spreading this cult.⁴⁴

In the second century A.D. the worship of the Heliopolitan god assumed new intensity. The immense temples at Baalbek were completed in the time of Antoninus Pius; the worship of the god spread to Palestine, where coins were struck with his image at Neapolis, Eleutheropolis (Beit Guvrin) and Nicopolis (Emmaus) in the years 158–218.⁴⁵

All of this makes it unlikely that the rabbis would have omitted Baalbek’s temple complex from their list. In the words of Isidore Lévy: “if ‘En-Baki is not Heliopolis, then the most famous of the holy cities of Roman Syria does not appear on the list that claims to enumerate them.”⁴⁶

There is reason to believe that the main spring of Rās el-‘Ayn was a sacred spring. The German excavators in 1898–1905 found semicircular niches, presumably for cult statues, next to the spring, at the spot where the water emerged from the ground with particular force.⁴⁷ Remains found in the 1970s by Haroutune Kalayan indicate that (1) the circular basin of the spring was constructed during the Roman period; (2) the basin was surrounded by a ballustrade; (3) there was a podium temple nearby; (4) a road led from the temple of Bacchus to Rās el-‘Ayn.⁴⁸ The spring may well have been consecrated to Jupiter Heliopolitanus, identified with Hadad-Baal, like the other spring that provides water to Baalbek, ‘Ayn el-Jūj.⁴⁹

I suggest that the spring of עין בכי was the site of ritual weeping for Baal. It is even possible that the spring was viewed as a weeping eye, perhaps the eye of the

⁴¹ S. Ephraemi Syri, *Rabulae Episcopi Edesseni, Balaei, aliorumque opera selecta* (ed. J. J. Overbeck; Oxford: Clarendon, 1865), 169 line 26–170 line 1.

⁴² Ragette, *Baalbek*, 68–69; idem, *Temple Triad*, 7; Hajjar, *La triade*, 3:382.

⁴³ Ragette, *Baalbek*, 71; Jidejian, *Baalbek*, 67; Hajjar, *La triade*, 3:382.

⁴⁴ M. Avi-Yonah, “Mount Carmel and the God of Baalbek,” *IEJ* 2 (1952): 120. For details, see Hajjar, *La triade*, 2:523–58.

⁴⁵ Avi-Yonah, “Mount Carmel,” 124.

⁴⁶ Lévy, “Cultes,” 193.

⁴⁷ Wiegand, *Baalbek*, 1:22–23.

⁴⁸ Haroutune Kalayan, “Baalbek, un ensemble récemment découvert,” in *Liban: Les grands sites, Tyr, Byblos, Baalbek = Dossiers d’Archéologie* [Paris: Archeologia S.A.] 12 (1975): 29–30.

⁴⁹ For the latter, see Hajjar, *La triade*, 3:275.

earth or of Baal himself.⁵⁰ In that case, עין בכי would mean “eye of weeping” as well as “spring of weeping,” and בכי would refer to the weeping of the spring as well as the weeping of the Baal worshipers sitting beside it.⁵¹ The Roman road leading from the temple of Bacchus to the spring of weeping at Rās el-ʿAyn may have been used for an annual funeral procession for Baal. According to Plutarch (*Is. Os.* 13.356B; 15.357A), when Isis was in mourning for Osiris, whom “the Greeks came to identify . . . with Dionysus,” she “came to Byblus and sat down by a spring, all dejection and tears.” Here we have another case of weeping at a Phoenician spring for a dead god.

V. B^ʿLBK/BA^ʿLABAKKU (BAAL-BACCHUS)

Toponym 5 is *Baalbek* itself, vocalized *Baʿlabakku* in classical Arabic. Most modern scholars derive this toponym from בעל בקעה. However, as demonstrated in the appendix below, this etymology is highly problematic. A far more plausible etymology was suggested in a footnote by Claude Reignier Conder in 1887:

In the course of inquiry I have never met with any explanation of the name Baalbek, which is spelt with Caph. Possibly in this we should recognize Bacchus. . . . A Bacchic dance is shown on the interior of the smaller temple at Baalbek (on a bas-relief showing the thyrsus with Pan's-pipe, and horns, which I copied in 1881). . . .⁵²

⁵⁰ Cf. Ibn Ezra's commentary to Lam 1:16 and Wilhelm Gesenius, *Hebräisches und chaldäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament* (2nd ed.; Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1823), 565: “Das Auge ist eine (Thänen-) Quelle, und diese Beobachtung mochte es seyn, die den sinnlichen Menschen bestimmte, beydes durch ein Wort auszudrücken. So im Pers. *čašm* Auge, *čašme* Quelle.” So too TLOT 2:877, s.v. עין *ʿayin* eye: “The eye appears somewhat more frequently as the source of tears . . . , which early engendered the metaphor *ʿayin* = ‘spring.’” We are dealing with a very old metaphor with mythological overtones. It is attested in Akkadian as well as Hebrew and can thus probably be reconstructed for Proto-Semitic. In Hebrew, it appears to be a dead metaphor, but it is occasionally revived, e.g., Jer 8:23: וְעֵינַי מְקוֹר דִּמְעָה and b. *ʿErub.* 19a: שׁוֹבֵבִין וּמוֹרִידִין דְּמַעוֹת . . . Cf. also the English expression “weeping spring.”

⁵¹ According to some, מספד הדד רמון בבקעת מגדון, “the mourning of Hadad-Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo” (Zech 12:11), belongs here as well. For the controversy, see Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Zechariah 9–14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 25C; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 343–44.

⁵² Claude Reignier Conder, *Syrian Stone-Lore; or, The Monumental History of Palestine* (New York: Scribner & Welford, 1887), 70. Conder ties his etymology of *Baalbek* to an etymology of *Bacchus*, “whose name has been derived from Baku, to weep (cf. the Biblical *Bochim* (Judges ii. 1) and *Baca* (Psalm lxxiv. 6).” The latter etymology probably derives ultimately from an entry in the lexicon of Hesychius, discussed in section VI below. Although there is no reason to believe that *Bacchus* has any etymological connection with the Semitic root for “weeping” (see n. 72 below), the Mishnaic Hebrew names of *Baalbek* show that Conder was not entirely wrong in comparing the toponym *Bochim*.

Conder's interpretation of the bas-relief in the smaller, better preserved temple of Baalbek has stood the test of time. During the German excavations of Baalbek in 1898–1905, Otto Puchstein once again noted Dionysiac motifs in the reliefs decorating the smaller temple and gave it the name that it still bears: "Temple of Bacchus."⁵³ The presence of Dionysiac motifs in the reliefs was reaffirmed by Henri Seyrig and C. Picard.⁵⁴ It is true that the attribution of the temple to Bacchus was questioned by some in the past,⁵⁵ but the most recent study, by Peter W. Haider, considers the attribution a proven fact.⁵⁶ According to Haider, there was even a small sanctuary dedicated to Bacchus at Baalbek before the temple of Bacchus was built (140/150 C.E., during the reign of Antoninus Pius). The sanctuary, which lies in the same *temenos* as the later temple, is decorated with a frieze depicting animals associated with Dionysus as well as the head of a youth with the label "Dionysos."⁵⁷

Residual effects of the cult of Bacchus, with its wine-drinking rituals and competitions,⁵⁸ can perhaps be seen in a medieval description of Baalbek. In the introduction to his geographical treatise (tenth century C.E.), al-Muqaddasī writes: "There are no greater drinkers of wine(s) than the people of Baalbek and Egypt."⁵⁹ In his description of the city, he gives its ruins and its grapes equal billing: "Baalbek is an ancient city in which there are sown fields and wondrous things, the source of grapes."⁶⁰

It is hard to imagine a closer phonetic match than that between *Ba^llabakku* and *Ba^lal-Bacchus*, both with a geminated voiceless aspirated velar stop.⁶¹ *Baal-*

⁵³ Wiegand, *Baalbek*, 2:86.

⁵⁴ Henri Seyrig, "La triade héliopolitaine et les temples de Baalbek," *Syria* 10 (1929): 319–25; C. Picard, "Les Frises historiées autour de la cella et devant l'adyton, dans le temple de Bacchus at Baalbek," *Mélanges syriens offerts à monsieur René Dussaud, secrétaire de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, par ses amis et ses élèves* (Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 30; Paris: P. Geuthner, 1939), 1:319–43.

⁵⁵ For discussion and literature, see Jidejian, *Baalbek*, 30–31; Ragette, *Baalbek*, 40, 43–44; Hajjar, *La triade*, 3:339–40.

⁵⁶ Peter W. Haider, "Götter und Glaubensvorstellungen in Heliopolis-Baalbek," in Ruprechtsberger, *Vom Steinbruch zum Jupitertempel*, 127: ". . . dieses zweifellos Dionysos/Bacchus geweihten Tempels." Ragette's recent discussion (*Temple Triad*, 38–39), in contrast to his earlier one (see the preceding footnote), mentions no other possible attribution.

⁵⁷ Haider, "Götter," 126.

⁵⁸ John M. Dillon, "Dionysus," *ABD* 2:201–2.

⁵⁹ Muhammad b. Aḥmad al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-Taqāsi fi Ma^rrifat al-Aqālim* (ed. M. J. de Goeje; Leiden: Brill, 1906), 34 line 11.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 160 lines 14–15. For other sources, see Seyrig, "La triade," 350.

⁶¹ In Latin and Greek, such stops are often written *cch* and *κχ*, with the aspiration represented only in the second (released) half; cf. LXX Ζααχουρ = זכור (Num 13:4), Σοαχωθ = סוכו (Num 33:5), etc. See also n. 72 below. Greek βάαχοι appears in the Syriac version of Pseudo-Callisthenes as *bkw*; see Karl Brockelmann, *Lexicon Syriacum* (Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1928), 73 s.v.

Bacchus may be compared with other double names such as *Zeus-Belos*, attested in Herodotus and Philo of Byblos.⁶² Since Hadad-Baal and Bacchus-Dionysus are both fertility gods⁶³ portrayed (frequently) with bull horns,⁶⁴ syncretism between Hadad-Baal and Bacchus-Dionysus is by no means unnatural. Indeed, Julius Wellhausen seems to have viewed this syncretism as self-evident, speaking of “Baal-Dionysus” and “the Baal whom the Greeks identified with Dionysus.”⁶⁵ Edward Lipiński believes that the Semitic god depicted as Dionysus on Sidonian coins from the Roman period is Baal: “A Baal, god of vegetation who dies and is reborn following the rhythm of the seasons and the stages of grain growing and viticulture, seems to be a better candidate for this fusion of the Greek god [= Dionysos] with an indigenous deity.”⁶⁶ Seyrig conjectures that, like Bacchus, “the Baal of the Bekaa was regarded as the dispenser of vintages.”⁶⁷

This proposal raises new questions. How does it relate to the view that “the Greeks . . . considered Baal-Haddad [*sic*, for Hadad] as equivalent to Helios, the sun, and therefore called Baalbek Heliopolis.”⁶⁸ And how does Baal-Bacchus relate to the other gods of Heliopolis, especially Jupiter, Venus, and Mercury? It is generally assumed that Baal-Hadad was identified at Baalbek with Jupiter. Some schol-

⁶² Philo of Byblos, *The Phoenician History* (ed. Harold W. Attridge and Robert A. Oden, Jr. (CBQMS 9; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1981), 53; cf. “Melkarthos, who is also known as Heracles” (ibid., 53), “Zeus, called both Demarous and Adodos (= Hadad)” (ibid., 55), “The Phoenicians say that Astarte is Aphrodite” (ibid., 55), “The Phoenicians call him (Muth) Death and Pluto” (ibid., 57), “the goddess Baaltis who is also Dione” (ibid., 57), “Kronos, whom the Phoenicians call El” (ibid., 63).

⁶³ For Baal as the Canaanite god of fertility, see Gregorio del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion according to the Liturgical Texts of Ugarit* (trans. W. G. E. Watson; Bethesda, MD: CDL, 1999), 28; Alberto R. W. Green, *The Storm-God in the Ancient Near East* (Biblical and Judaic Studies 8; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 191, 193, 195–96, 199, 205, 207, 214, 257, 267, 284, 291. For Dionysus as the Greek god of fertility, see *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (3 vols.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 1:631, s.v. “Dionysos.”

⁶⁴ See Green, *Storm-God*, 291 (Baal); Margit L. Süring, *The Horn-Motif in the Hebrew Bible and Related Ancient Near Eastern Literature and Iconography* (Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1980), 167, 170–71 (Baal); Ed Greenstein, “הפנתאון הכנעני והשקפתו בכתבי אוגריט,” in *Ancient Gods: Polytheism in Eretz Israel and Neighboring Countries from the Second Millennium BCE to the Islamic Period* (ed. M. Kister et al.; Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2008), 62 (Baal); and Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (trans. J. Raffan; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 64 (Dionysus).

⁶⁵ Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1885), 414, 447.

⁶⁶ Lipiński, *Dieux*, 169.

⁶⁷ Seyrig, “La triade,” 350.

⁶⁸ Ragette, *Temple Triad*, 19–20; cf. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 7 n. 13, cited in n. 85 below; Jidejian, *Baalbek*, 5: “The Ptolemies of Egypt who probably associated the Semitic Baal with the Egyptian Rê and the Greek Helios, the Sun, called the city Heliopolis”; Leisten, “Baalbek,” 439.

ars believe that Bacchus was identified with Mercury.⁶⁹ I have no quarrel with any of these views, for they all relate to an earlier time period. I shall suggest below that Baal came to be identified primarily with Bacchus and that Heliopolis came to be called *B^cl**bk*** only after the temple of Jupiter was closed by Theodosius in ca. 380 C.E. and the priests of Baal-Jupiter presumably moved next door to the temple of Bacchus.

VI. BAAL OF WEEPING > BAAL-BACCHUS

How did *B^cl**bk**/Ba^clabakku* (Baal-Bacchus) replace the original Phoenician toponym בעל בכי (Baal of Weeping)? On one level this looks like a simple metanalysis: the final vowel of בעל בכי was reanalyzed as the relational (*nisbah*) suffix so that שום בעל בכי changed its meaning from “garlic of Ba^cal-Beki” to “Baalbekian garlic.” The Syriac and Arabic forms of the toponym would then be back-formations derived from the new adjective.

On another level, the replacement is a folk etymology that may reflect historical events. The *terminus ante quem* for the change is 411 C.E., the date of the earliest Syriac manuscript (BL Add. ms 12150) in which the form *B^cl**bk*** is attested.⁷⁰ The *terminus post quem* is two centuries earlier, when the tannaitic sources that contain the form בעל בכי were edited. A more speculative *terminus post quem* is ca. 380 C.E., when the temple of Jupiter was closed and the pagans of Baalbek were left with only one major temple, the temple of Bacchus. It is reasonable to assume that, at that point, the cult of Baal-Jupiter was transferred from the temple of Jupiter to the temple of Bacchus, and Baal came to be identified primarily with Bacchus. Thus, the end of the fourth century would have been the perfect time to change the name of the city to Baal-Bacchus.

Evidence for a folk etymology around that time can be found in the Greek lexicon of Hesychius of Alexandria (fifth century C.E.). That lexicon lists an alleged Phoenician (Φοίνικας) noun βάλχος with the meaning κλαυθμός (“weeping”)

⁶⁹ Seyrig, “La triade,” 314 n. 1, 325, 348–53; Hajjar, *La triade*, 3:170–71, 340–41; idem, “Baal-bek,” 2489, 2496–97.

⁷⁰ It appears in the Syriac translation (ca. 400 C.E.?) of Eusebius’s *On the Theophania*; see n. 91 below. The Greek original presumably had the form *Heliopolis*. It is difficult to know what to make of Syriac *B^cl**dbk*** in the Peshitta to Josh 19:45. The form is found in all manuscripts of the Peshitta, including one from 598/599 and three from the seventh century (*The Old Testament in Syriac According to the Peshitta Version* [Leiden: Brill, 1972–], part II, fascicle 1b, 49) and is traditionally understood as a variant of *B^cl**bk*** (Hasan Bar Bahlul, *Lexicon Syriacum auctore Hassano Bar-Bahlule* [ed. R. Duval; Paris: Reipublicae typographaeo, 1901], 1:416). But the fact that it renders בני ברק, which is nowhere near Baalbek, makes *B^cl**dbk*** look like an inner-Syriac corruption.

alongside the divine name Βάκχος = *Bacchus*.⁷¹ Greek κλαυθμός is the regular translation equivalent for בכי in the LXX. It seems clear that Βάκχος = κλαυθμός = בכי cannot be separated from Baal-Bacchus = בעל בכי. Indeed, it would appear that Hesychius (or his source) deduced that βάκχος means κλαυθμός in Phoenician from the Semitic name of Heliopolis, at a time when the old form of the name still survived alongside the new form.⁷²

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The prominence of Baalbek as a pagan religious center in the Roman period is based on a long tradition. Baalbek witnessed both the rise of Canaanite religion in the Bronze Age and its fall in the Byzantine period, a trajectory that can be traced with the help of five Semitic toponyms: (1) *Mbk Nhrm* (Source of the Two Rivers), (2) בקעת און (Valley of Idolatry), (3) בעל בכי (Baal of Weeping), (4) עין בכי (Spring of Weeping), and (5) *B^clbk/Ba^clabakku* (Baal-Bacchus).

Toponym 1, a poetic toponym describing the location of Il's mountain abode, is attested in the Ugaritic Baal cycle and in a Ugaritic serpent incantation. Very similar phrases (e.g., "at the source of two important rivers") are used by modern scholars to describe the location of Baalbek. The rivers that rise near Baalbek are Lebanon's greatest rivers, the Litani and the Asi (Orontes). This toponym must refer to Baalbek.

⁷¹ *Hesychii Alexandrini Lexicon* (ed. M. Schmidt; Jena: Sumptibus Frederici Maukii, 1858–68), 1:355.

⁷² For the view that βάκχος is actually derived from the Northwest Semitic passive participle meaning "bewailed," see Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons* (1858; London: S. W. Partridge, 1903), 21; John Garnier, *The Worship of the Dead* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1909), 321; and Michael C. Astour, *Hellenosemitica: An Ethnic and Cultural Study in West Semitic Impact on Mycenaean Greece* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 174–75. Astour argues that βάκχος can represent the form בכי because כ was frequently rendered כχ "without direct relation to whether or not the *kaph* had a dageš (forte or lene)." However, the evidence cited by Astour to prove that Greek geminated כχ (see n. 61 above) could be used to render ungeminated כ is not convincing. One piece of evidence cited by Astour, Ζακχου = זכי (Neh 7:14) has a geminated כ despite Astour's erroneous transcription *Zakāy*. Another piece of evidence cited by him, (Βεελ)σεπφωγ = בעל (צפון) (Exod 14:2) is equally invalid, because the Greek is presumably a rendering not of the Hebrew toponym but of its Aramaic equivalent, which has a geminated פ; see, e.g., Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1990), 468b s.v. צפון, צפון. For Aramaic influence on the transcription of proper names in the LXX (including perhaps the first half of בעל צפון!), see Jan Joosten, "The Septuagint as a Source of Information on Egyptian Aramaic in the Hellenistic Period," in *Aramaic in Its Historical and Linguistic Setting* (ed. Holger Gzella and Margaretha L. Folmer; Veröffentlichungen der Orientalischen Kommission 50; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008), 97–99.

Toponym 2, from Amos 1:5, refers to בקעת הלבנון, the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon—or, at least, the portion of it near Il's abode at Baalbek. It is usually thought to be a cacophemism for בעל בקעת (Baal's Valley), but Hosea's use of און for אל (and בשת for בעל), suggests that the real name was אל בקעת (Il's Valley). Il's association with Baalbek appears to have persisted until the Roman period, for his epithet, *qn ʿrs*, “creator/possessor of the earth,” appears as *Connaros* in Greek and Latin inscriptions from Baalbek.

Toponyms (3) and (4) are the original Phoenician names of Baalbek, preserved only in rabbinic literature. They allude to the weeping for Baal in Canaanite mythology, recorded in the Ugaritic Baal cycle and apparently recreated in a ritual at the sacred spring (modern Rās el-ʿAyn) near Baalbek. It is possible that the spring was viewed as a weeping eye, perhaps the eye of the earth or of Baal himself. If so, עין בכי means “eye of weeping” as well as “spring of weeping,” and בכי refers to the weeping of the spring as well as the weeping of the Baal worshipers sitting beside it. Another case of weeping at a Phoenician spring for a dead god is known from Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride*.

Toponym (5) is the later name of the city, known from classical Syriac and classical Arabic. It is usually thought to be derived from בעל בקעה (Baal of the Valley), but it is really a hyphenated name reflecting syncretism between Semitic Baal and Roman Bacchus. The name probably arose at the end of the fourth century, when the temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus was closed by Theodosius and the pagans of Baalbek were left with only one major temple, the temple of Bacchus. Hadad-Baal had previously been identified with Jupiter Heliopolitanus; however, the new fusion of Hadad-Baal with Bacchus-Dionysus was by no means unnatural, since both were fertility gods portrayed (frequently) with bull horns.

On the linguistic level, the change appears to be a folk etymology involving a simple metanalysis: the final vowel of בעל בכי was reanalyzed as the relational (*nisbah*) suffix so that שום בעל בכי changed its meaning from “garlic of Baʿal-Bekī” to “Baalbekian garlic.” If so, the Syriac and Arabic forms of the toponym are back-formations derived from the new adjective. Evidence for this folk etymology is preserved in the Greek lexicon of Hesychius of Alexandria (fifth century c.e.), which lists an alleged Phoenician (Φοίνικες) noun βάρραχος with the meaning “weeping” (γλαυθμός) alongside the divine name Βάραχος = *Bacchus*.

The change from toponym 4 to toponym 5 can thus be viewed as the product of a chain reaction. Political change in the Roman Empire led to the closure of the main temple of Baalbek and the consolidation of cults there. The consolidation of cults led to a theological change—the identification of Baal with Bacchus. The theological change in turn triggered a linguistic change—a folk etymology that changed the name of the city from בעל בכי (Baal of Weeping) to *Bʿl/bk/Baʿlabakku* (Baal-Bacchus).

It was not until ca. 554 c.e. that the temple of Bacchus was destroyed by fire together with its idols. There is evidence that the celebration of pagan feasts and the

offering of sacrifices then shifted to private homes.⁷³ This continued until 579 C.E., when Tiberius sent an officer to Heliopolis who “arrested numerous heathens, recompensed them as their audacity deserved, humbling them and crucifying them, and slaying them with the sword. And on being put to the torture, and required to give the names of those who were guilty like themselves of heathenish error, they mentioned numerous persons in every district and city in their land”⁷⁴ This inquisition probably made it too dangerous to continue the ritual weeping for Baal-Hadad at the sacred spring. After two millennia or more, the last vestiges of Canaanite religion at Baalbek were eradicated.

APPENDIX:

BAAL’S VALLEY (BIQ^ĀAT BA^ĀAL), BAAL OF THE VALLEY (BA^ĀAL BIQ^ĀĀH)

Since the eighteenth century, scholars have tried to uncover the etymology of *Baalbek*, but many of the suggestions that have been put forward are unconvincing. In 1856, Edward Robinson cited a few of them and wrote:

. . . but as yet no satisfactory etymology or origin of the latter portion has been discovered. No ancient form is known, either in Hebrew or Aramaean, from which it can be well derived.⁷⁵

This sentiment was echoed later by writers in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1901), the *Dictionnaire de la Bible* (1912), and the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1960).⁷⁶

The etymology cited most often today derives Baalbek from בעל בקעה, “Baal of the Valley.” This etymology, frequently attributed to Ernest Renan or Otto Eissfeldt, is found already (in a slightly different form) in Campegius Vitringa’s commentary on Isaiah (1714–1720). In discussing Isa 57:5, Vitringa refers to “Baal-beek h. e. בעל בקעה Baalis Vallis.”⁷⁷ The etymology was subsequently included in

⁷³ *The Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History of John Bishop of Ephesus* (trans. R. Payne Smith; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1860), 210–12.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 209–10.

⁷⁵ Robinson, *Later Biblical Researches*, 524.

⁷⁶ Frants Buhl, “Baalbek,” *JE* 2:387: “The meaning of the second part of the name is inexplicable . . .”; A. Legendre, “Baalbek,” *Dictionnaire de la Bible* (ed. F. Vigouroux; Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1912), 1:1327: “Mais la seconde partie du mot n’est pas aussi facile à expliquer, et l’on n’a jusqu’ici trouvé aucune étymologie bien satisfaisante”; J. Sourdél-Thomine, “Baʿlabakk,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1:970: “Various hypotheses have been made as to the etymology of its name, in which the Semitic *Baal* . . . can be seen, but none seems entirely satisfactory.”

⁷⁷ Campegius Vitringa, *Commentarius in librum prophetiarum Jesaiae* (Louvain: Franciscus Halma, 1714–20), 2:752 = (Herborn, Germany: Johan. Nicolai Andreae, 1715–22), 2:878.

the dictionaries of Augustin Calmet (1732) and John Brown (1759).⁷⁸ In later centuries it was adopted by Joseph Schwarz, Renan, Edward B. Pusey, S. Ronzevalle, Theodor Wiegand, Eissfeldt, and many others down to the present day.⁷⁹

It did not take long for the flaws in this etymology to be noted. Already in 1749, Conrad Iken wrote that it “lacks any basis because Baalbek is written in Arabic with *k* and without [final] *ʿ*, whereas *valley* has *q* and *ʿ*—apart from the fact that it [the name] should not be *Bʿl Bqʿh* but rather *Bqʿt Bʿl*.”⁸⁰ The first problem pointed out by Iken has proved intractable, and it has been cited by several scholars as a reason for rejecting the etymology.⁸¹

In fact, there are three phonological features of the Arabic form that are left unexplained by the etymology in question: (1) the unemphatic *k* (instead of emphatic *q*); (2) the gemination of the *k*;⁸² (3) the absence of the second *ʿ* (made more inexplicable by the retention of the first *ʿ*). By contrast, the toponym **בקעת הלבנון** (Josh 11:17; 12:7) survives in Arabic in forms that exhibit none of these problems: *al-Baqʿah/Buqʿah* and *al-Biqāʿ*.⁸³ This contrast greatly magnifies the seriousness of the three problems.

Problems 2 and 3 have been largely ignored by proponents of the etymology; only problem 1 has received any attention at all. In response to problem 1, Renan,

⁷⁸ Calmet, *Dictionary*, 1:668: “*Bikath-Baal*, . . . which at present goes by the name of *Baal-beck*, the Valley of *Baal*”; John Brown, *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible* (London: J. Beecroft, 1759), 115, s.v. *Aven*: “*Aven*, a plain in Syria. It seems to be the same with that of *Baal-beck*, or valley of *Baal*. . . .”

⁷⁹ Schwarz, *Descriptive Geography*, 61; Ernest Renan, *Mission de Phénicie* (Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1864), 320 n. 3; Edward Bouverie Pusey, *The Minor Prophets* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1885), 1:241; Ronzevalle, “Notice,” 471; Wiegand, *Baalbek*, 2:145; Seyrig, “La triade,” 354; Otto Eissfeldt, “Die ältesten Bezeugungen von Baalbek als Kultstätte,” *Forschungen und Fortschritte* 12 (1936): 51–53 = idem, *Ras Shamra und Sanchunjaton* (Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1939), 31–36; Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 7 n. 13; Thomas Leisten, “Baalbek,” *Brill’s New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, 2002–), 1:439.

⁸⁰ Iken, *Dissertationis*, 240.

⁸¹ See Cook, *Religion*, 219 n. 1: “The Talmudic and Arab spellings are against any connection with the *Beḳaʿ* or valley”; René Dussaud, “Temples et cultes de la triade héliopolitaine a Baʿalbeck,” *Syria* 23 (1942–43): 53 n. 3: “Cependant, come le dernier terme *BQʿ* n’a avec *BKK* qu’une lettre commune, il est difficile d’accepter cette identification”; Jean-Paul Rey-Coquais, *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1967), 32. Cf. B. Mazar, **בעל הרמון** in **מקראית**, 289: “It is difficult to accept the view of Eissfeldt that Baalbek is none other than **בעל בקעה**.” See also the sources cited in nn. 75–76 above. Ronzevalle (“Notice,” 470) attempts to solve the problem by citing Mishnaic Hebrew **בלבק**, but this a ghost form (see below).

⁸² Ronzevalle (“Notice,” 469) shows that the gemination is attested already in pre-Islamic poetry.

⁸³ See *ibid.* and Sourdrel-Thomine, “al-Biqāʿ,” 1:1214. For our purposes, it hardly matters whether these forms were originally a transcription of the Phoenician name or a translation of it, using a native Arabic word for “swamp” (*baqʿah/buqʿah*) or “swamps” (*biqāʿ*). See also n. 18 above.

followed by A. Legendre in the *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, cited a form בעלבק from “Midrasch Kohéleth, IX.”⁸⁴ The spelling *Baalbeq*, used by some prominent modern scholars,⁸⁵ appears to follow Renan and Legendre.

Unfortunately, בעלבק is a ghost form, the product of a series of errors. The form found in modern printed editions of *Eccl. Rab.* 9 is בלבקי (not בעלבק), and that is the form cited in 1868 by Adolphe Neubauer.⁸⁶ Neubauer takes בלבקי, a plant name, as a derivative of our toponym. He takes the words בלבקי יין in *Qohelet Rabbah* to mean “Balbekian wine.”⁸⁷ Since Baalbek was later known for wine drinking,⁸⁸ this collocation might seem to be evidence for the identification of בלבק with Baalbek. However, this evidence is based on an egregious misreading of the text, since the two words in question belong to different phrases! In printed editions, the passage in question reads: . . . המערב מים ביין, בלבקי בשמן . . . [a swindler] who mixes water into wine [or] *balbaqi* into oil . . .” A manuscript of *Qohelet Rabbah* has מי גלבקי for בלבקי, and the *Aruch* has an even better reading, citing מי גלבקי (‘‘glaucium juice’’) from the parallel passage in the *Sifra*.⁸⁹ It has long been agreed that גלבקי < γλαύκιον is the correct reading of this lexeme, preserved by a number of witnesses.⁹⁰ In short, the alleged word for ‘‘Balbekian,’’ בלבקי, is a corrupt form, which Renan corrupted even further to בעלבק.

It is clear, therefore, that there is no basis for the transcription *Baalbeq*. Our toponym has an unemphatic *k* in Arabic and Syriac, as does בעל בכי in Mishnaic Hebrew. Syriac *B^clbk* cannot be attributed to Arabic influence, for it is attested in a number of early manuscripts: BL Add. ms 12150 from 411 c.e. (the oldest dated Syriac manuscript),⁹¹ BL Add. ms 14652 from the sixth or seventh cen-

⁸⁴ Renan, *Mission*, 320 n. 2; Legendre, ‘‘Baalbek,’’ 1328.

⁸⁵ See, e.g., Pope, *El*, 75, 77; Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 7 n. 13: ‘‘The Ba‘l of the ‘Biq‘at Ba‘l’ (Baalbek; cf. Amos 1:5) evidently had solar features to judge by the Greek name of Baalbeq: Heliopolis’’; Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 24A; New York: Doubleday, 1989), 256. More recent examples can easily be found on the Internet.

⁸⁶ Neubauer, *La géographie*, 298 n. 1.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ See at n. 59 above.

⁸⁹ Lieberman, *תוספתא בפשוטה*, 10:387.

⁹⁰ See Immanuel Löw’s note in Samuel Krauss, *Griechische and lateinische Lehnwörter im Talmud, Midrasch und Targum* (Berlin: S. Calvary, 1899), 2:155; and Jastrow, 243–44 s.v. גלבקי.

⁹¹ Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, *On the Theophania . . . a Syriac version edited from an ancient manuscript recently discovered* (ed. Samuel Lee: London: Society for the Publication of Oriental Texts, 1842) book 2, par. 14. For Lee’s English translation of the passage, see at n. 40 above. For this manuscript, see William Henry Paine Hatch and Lucas Van Rompay, *An Album of Dated Syriac Manuscripts* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2002), 152; Martin Bailey, ‘‘Fragments of the World’s Oldest Christian Manuscript Found in Egyptian Monastery,’’ *The Art Newspaper* (www.theartnewspaper.com), posted February 18, 2008.

ture,⁹² and BL Add. ms 14640 from the late seventh century.⁹³ Arabic *Bʿlḥk* is attested on coins of the Omayyad caliphs minted at Baalbek in the seventh century.⁹⁴ The etymology that derives Baalbek from בעל בקעה, “Baal of the Valley,” must be abandoned.

⁹² S. *Ephraemi Syri, Rabulae Episcopi Edesseni, Balaei*, xviii and 169 line 27.

⁹³ *Iohannis Ephesini Historiae Ecclesiasticae Pars Tertia* (CSCO 105; ed. E. W. Brooks; Paris, 1935), i and 154 line 13.

⁹⁴ Jidejian, *Baalbek*, 71–72. The earliest one, with the name of the city in both Greek and Arabic, still shows Emperor Heraclius and his son with the Christian cross.

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