

"Receive, Baal, godly tidings,
 Yea receive, O Son of Dagon:
 A wild-ox is [born] to Baal,
 A buffalo to Rider of Clouds."
 Puissant Baal rejoices.

The Tale of Aqhat

ANET, 149-155

Fig. 68

The rich epigraphic harvests of the French excavations of 1930 and 1931 at the site of ancient Ugarit included large portions of three tablets, and a possible fragment of a fourth, belonging to an epic about a youth whose name is spelled *a-q-h-t* and conventionally vocalized *Aqhat*. The text was at first called the Epic of Daniel, or Danel, for Aqhat's father; but on the one tablet of which the first line, containing the title of the composition to which the tablet belongs, is preserved, it reads "Pertaining to 'Aqhat,'" and closer study reveals that the text really tells about Daniel only what concerns Aqhat.

AQHT A

(i)

(about 10 lines missing at top)

II Sam. 21:16, 18,
 20, 22; Gen. 14:5;
 Deut. 2:11, 20;
 3:11, 13

[. . . Straightway Daniel¹ the Raph]a²-man, (1)
 Forthwith [Ghazir³ the Harnamiyy⁴-man],
 Gives oblation to the gods to eat,
 Gives oblation to drink to the holy ones.
A couch of sackcloth he mounts and lies,
A couch of [loincloth] and 'passes the night'.
 Behold a day and a second,
 Oblation to the gods gives Daniel,
 Oblation to the gods to eat,
 Oblation to drink to the holy ones.
 A third, a fourth day, (10)
 Oblation to the gods gives Daniel,
 Oblation to the gods to eat,
 Oblation to drink to the holy ones.
 A fifth, a sixth, a seventh day,
 Oblation to the gods gives Daniel,
 Oblation to the gods to eat,
 Oblation to drink to the holy ones.
 A *sackcloth couch* doth Daniel,
 A *sackcloth couch* mount and lie,

¹ The name means "God judges." Judging the cause of the widow and the fatherless is Daniel's special concern; see v 4-8 etc. His wife's name, Danatiya (v 16, 22), is from the same root.

² This Rapha is perhaps identical with the aboriginal giant race of Canaan.

³ As a common noun, *gar* means "boy."

⁴ Perhaps connected with *Hrum*, a Syrian locality named in an early Egyptian source (Harnaim).

A couch of loincloth and pass the night.
 But lo, on the seventh day,
 Baal approaches with his plea:
 "Unhappy is Daniel the Rapha-man,
 A-sighing is Ghazir the Harnamiyy-man;
 Who hath no son like his brethren, (20)
 Nor scion hath like his kindred.
 Surely there's a son for him 'like' his brethren's,
 And a scion like unto his kindred's!
 He gives oblation to the gods to eat,
 Oblation to drink to the holy ones.
 Wilt thou not bless him, O Bull El, my father,
 Beatify him, O Creator of Creatures?
 So shall there be a son in his house,
 A scion in the midst of his palace:
 Who sets up the stelae of his ancestral spirits,
 In the holy place the protectors of his clan;
 Who frees his spirit from the earth,
 From the dust guards his footsteps;
 Who smothers the life-force of his detractor, (30)
 Drives off who attacks his abode;
 Who takes him by the hand when he's drunk,
 Carries him when he's sated with wine;
Consumes his funerary offering in Baal's house,
 (Even) his *portion in* El's house;
 Who plasters his roof when it leaks,
 Washes his clothes when they're soiled."—
 [By the hand] El takes his servant,
 Blessing Daniel the Rapha-man,
 Beatifying Ghazir the Harnamiyy-man:
 "With life-breath shall be quickened Daniel the Rapha-
 man,
 With spirit Ghazir the Harnamiyy-man.
 [With life-breath] he is *invigorated*.¹
 Let him mount his bed [. . .]. (40)
 In the kissing of his wife [she'll conceive],
 In her embracing become pregnant.
 [By conception] (and) pregnancy she'll bear
 [A man-child to Daniel the Ra]pha-[man].
 So shall there be a son [in his house,
 A scion] in the midst of his palace:
 [Who sets up the stelae of his ances]tral spirits,
 In the holy place [the protectors of his clan];
 Who frees [his spirit from the e]arth,

¹ This does not imply that Daniel's vigor was previously below average.

Isa. 51:17-18

[From the dust gu]ards his footsteps;
[Who smothers the life-force of his detractor],
Drives off who attacks [his abode;
Etc.]”

(After line 48 some 10 lines are missing, but the first 4 of these were obviously identical with lines 31-34 above. After that it was related that somebody was instructed to tell the good news to Daniel.)

(ii)

(Another 10 lines, approximately, missing here. The messenger obeyed instructions and addressed Daniel as follows: “. . . A son shall be borne thee like thy brethren’s,

A scion like unto thy kindred’s:
Who sets up the stelae of thine ancestral spirits,
In the holy place)

the pro[te]ctors of thy clan;
Who frees thy spirit from the earth], (1)
From the dust etc., etc.” (2-8c)
(see above, i 25 ff.)

Daniel’s face lights up, (8d)
While above his forehead shines.
He *parts his jaws* and laughs, (10)

Places his foot on the footstool,
And lifts up his voice and cries:
Now will I sit and rest
And my soul be at ease in my breast.
For a son’s born to me like my brethren’s
A scion like unto my kindred’s
Etc., etc.

Daniel goes to his house,
To his palace Daniel betakes him. (25)

Into his house come skillful ones,¹
Daughters of joyful noise, *swallows*.
Straightway Daniel the Rapha-man,
Forthwith Ghazir the Harnamiyy-man,
Prepares an ox for the skillful ones, (30)

Gives food to the [ski]llful ones and gives drink
To the daughters of joy[ful noise], the *swallows*.
Behold a day and a second,
He give[s f]ood to the skillful ones and dr[in]k
To the daughters of joyful noise, the *swallows*;

A third, a fo[urth] day,
He gives food to the skillful ones and drink

¹ “Artistes.”

To the daughters of joyful noise, the *swallows*;
A fifth, a sixth day,
He gives food to the skill[ful] ones and d[rink]
To the d]aughters of joyful noise, the *swallows*.

Lo, on the seventh day,
Away from his house go the skillful ones, (40)
The daughters of joyful noise, the *swallows*.—
[. . .] the fairness of the bed [of conception],
The beauty of the bed of *childbirth*.

Daniel sits [and cou]nts her months.
A month follows a month;
A third, a fou[rth (a fifth?) month.
But in the fifth (sixth?) month,
He goes [to the shrine of . . .].
(ten lines of col. ii and all of cols. iii-iv missing)

(v)

(Some 13 lines missing at the top. The preserved portion begins in the middle of a speech of the craftsman-god addressed to Daniel:)

“. . . (abraded except for traces) (1)

I myself will bring the bow,
Even I will convey the *darts*.”
And behold, on the seventh day—
Straightway Daniel the Rapha-man,
Forthwith Ghazir the Harnam[iyy]-man,
Is upright, sitting before the gate,
Beneath a *mighty tree* on the threshing floor,
Judging the cause of the widow,
Adjudicating the case of the fatherless.
Lifting up his eyes, he beholds:

From a thousand fields, ten thousand acres,¹ (10)
The march of Kothar² he espies,
He espies the onrush of Khasis,³
See, he bringeth a bow;
Lo, he conveyeth *darts*.

Straightway Daniel the Rapha-man,
Forthwith Daniel the Harnamiyy-man,
Loudly unto his wife doth call:
“Hearken, Lady Danatiya,
Prepare a lamb from the flock
For the desire of Ko[th]ar wa-Khasis,⁴
For the appetite of Hayyin⁵ of the Handicrafts.

¹ i.e. in the distance. ² “Skillful,” a common name of the craftsman-god.
³ “Clever,” another of his names. ⁴ “Skillful and Clever.” ⁵ “Deft.”

Give food, give drink to the godhead; (20)
 Serve, honor him,
 The Lord of Hikpat-El,¹ all of it.
 Lady Danatiya obeys,
 She prepares a lamb from the flock
 For the desire of Kothar wa-Khasis,
 For the appetite of Hayyin of the Handicrafts.
 Afterwards, Kothar wa-Khasis comes.
 The bow he delivers into Daniel's hand;
 The *darts* he places upon his knees.
 Straightway Lady Danatiya
 Gives food, gives drink to the godhead;
 She serves, honors him, (30)
 The Lord of Hikpat-El, all of it.
 Kothar departs for² his tent,
 Hayyin departs for² his tabernacle.
 Straightway Daniel the Rapha-man,
 Forthwith Ghazir the Harnamiyy-man,
 The bow doth [. . .] . . . , upon Aqhat he doth . . .
 [. . .]:
 "The choicest of thy game, O my son,
 The choicest of thy game . . . [. . .],
 The game of thy . . . [. . .]."³
 (some 12 lines missing)

(vi)

(Some 19 lines missing. Then come 15 broken lines which tell about a feast and about the warrior-goddess Anath coveting Aqhat's bow: Aqhat will have been entertaining her tête-à-tête.)

[She lifts up her voice and] cries: (16)
 "Hearken, I pray thee, [Aqhat the Youth!
 A]sk for silver, and I'll give it thee;
 [For gold, and I'll be]stow't on thee;
 But give thou thy bow [to me;
 Let] Yabamat-Liimmim⁴ take thy *darts*."
 But Aqhat the Youth answers: (20)

"I vow *yew trees* of Lebanon,
 I vow sinews from wild oxen;
 I vow horns from mountain goats,
 Tendons from the hocks of a bull;
 I vow from a cane-forest reeds:
 Give (these) to Kothar wa-Khasis.

¹ *hkpt il*, the name of the craftsman-god's "estate."

² Or "from," if Daniel's tent is meant rather than Kothar's.

³ Perhaps Daniel here impresses upon his son the duty of offering some of his game to the gods.

⁴ Alternative designation of the Maiden Anath.

He'll make a bow for thee,
Darts for Yabamat-Liimmim."¹
 Then quoth the Maiden Anath:
 "Ask for life, O Aqhat the Youth.
 Ask for life and I'll give it thee,
 For deathlessness, and I'll bestow't on thee.
 I'll make thee count years with Baal,
 With the sons of El shalt thou count months.²
 And Baal when he gives life gives a feast, (30)
 Gives a feast to the life-given and bids him drink;
 Sings and chants over him,
 Sweetly serenad[es] him:
 So give I life to Aqhat the Youth."
 But Aqhat the Youth answers:
 "Fib not to me, O Maiden;
 For to a Youth thy fibbing is loathsome.
 Further life—how can mortal attain it?
 How can mortal attain life enduring?
 Glaze will be poured [on] my head,
 Plaster upon my pate;³
 And I'll die as everyone dies,
 I too shall assuredly die.
 Moreover, this will I say:
 My bow is [*a weapon for*] warriors. (40)
 Shall now females [*with it*] to the chase?"
 —[Loud]ly Anath doth laugh,
 While forging [a plot] in her heart:
 "Give heed to me, Aqhat the Youth,
 Give heed to me for thine own good.
 [. . .] I'll meet thee in the path of arrogance,
 [Encounter thee] in the path of presumption,
 Hurl thee down at [my feet and trample] thee,
 My darling great big he-man!"—
 [She stamps with her feet and traverses the earth.
 There, [she is off on her way]
 Towards El of the Source of the Floods
 [In the midst of the headwaters] of the Two
 Oceans.
 She penetrates El's field [and enters
 The pavilion] of King Father Shunem.⁴
 [At El's feet she] bows and falls down, (50)
 Prostr[ates herself, doing him reverence].

¹ Yew-wood, horn, sinew, and tendon go into the making of a composite bow; reed into that of arrows.

² i.e. shalt be immortal like them.

³ My hair will turn white.

⁴ One of El's names.