

Like the heart of a cow for her call,
Like the heart of a ewe for her lamb.
So's the heart of Anath for Baal.
She seizes the godly Mot --
With sword she doth cleave him.
With fan she doth winnow him -
With fire she doth burn him.
With hand-mill she grinds him -
In the field she doth sow him.
Birds eat his remnants,
Consuming his portions.
Flitting from remnant to remnant.^7

Following the demise of Mot, Baal is "resurrected". He comes to life and mates with Anath reviving the drought stricken land. This is the core of the religious system. Baal and Anath are the most important deities in the worship of the people because agriculture was so important. It was mandatory to have a good and long rainy season if the harvest was going to be plentiful. There was constant fear of famine. The gods were worshipped so that their favor would be incurred in behalf of the worshipper. G. Ernest Wright explains the meaning of this myth in the lives of the Canaanites as they sought to explain the way nature worked:

From April to the end of October there is no rain, apart from a very occasional and unseasonable shower. Only those vegetables and plants can grow which can secure what water they need from the heavy morning dew. Toward the end of October the rains begin and continue, on and off, throughout the winter to the end of April... In April as a result of the rains, the whole countryside is covered with verdure, including beautiful wild flowers of all sorts. By the end of May these have all disappeared, and the landscape is barren except for the occasional tree of thornybush which can survive the dry season . . . The Canaanite, personifying the forces of nature, had a reasonable answer. Rain-and-Vegetation (the god Baal) was killed each Spring after a great battle with Death (Mot) or with the "Devourers" and "Renderers," who at Ras Shamra were a group of beings fulfilling the same function. Thus through the summer months death and the destructive forces reigned supreme. Why do rains begin again in the fall? Because death is vanquished by Baal's everloving but warrior wife, and Baal comes back to life. Why does verdure cover the land in the spring? Because of the mating of Baal and Fertility, his wife (either Anath or Ashtoreth)."⁸

The three goddesses, Athtarat (Astarte or Ashtoreth in Old Testament, Judg 2:13), Anath (in Old Testament used in the name of the town Anathoth and as Shamgar's progenitor in Judg 3:31), and Athirat (Asherah in Old Testament) present an intricate set of relationships. Astarte the evening star was the feminine form of Ashtar; she was called Ishtar in Mesopotamia. Aphrodite by the Greeks, and Venus by the Romans. Anath's original character is uncertain. Athirat (Asherah) was primarily goddess of the sea and the wife of El. She is also called Elat, the feminine form of El. All three were concerned mainly with sex and war. Their sex life was both maternal and sensuous. How soon sacred prostitution was practiced is a matter of some doubt but there is no doubt that both male and female temple prostitutes were used in the cult of Canaanite religion.⁹ Ironically, the goddesses were considered sacred prostitutes and as such were called the "Holy Ones." The idols representing these goddesses are often nude and sometimes have exaggerated sexual features.¹⁰

The fertility deities were also goddesses of war. In the Baal Epic, Anath