

Baalshamem/Belshamin

I. Introduction. *Phoenician god*, →DDD. B. is a Phoenician →storm god whose name is mentioned for the first time in a building inscription of king Yehimilk from Byblos dating to around 950 (*KAI* no. 4,3). Despite several textual attestations of B. in Phoenician and Aramaic inscriptions in Lebanon and Syria, there is no iconographic representation, which can be proven by an inscription to be B.

II. Iconographic discussion. However, in current research a few depictions of pre-Hellenistic times have been attributed to B. A seal which dates to the 7th or 6th cent., possibly from Lebanon or Sardinia (see →Melqart § II.1.2.1) and now in the Louvre Museum (AO 25908; DE RIDDER 1911: pl. 18:2758; GUBEL 1980: pl. 2:1–2; GUBEL 1987: pl. 25:70; NIEHR 2003: 83f, 406 fig. 9), depicts a bearded male god sitting on a throne and holding a fenestrated axe in his right hand. In his left hand he holds a spear, the top of which spreads into a plant. A thymiaterion is placed in front of the god. The upper part of the seal is dominated by a crescent with a disc. Ascription to B. is likely, but due to the lack of an inscription this cannot be proven beyond doubt.

A statue of a standing storm god discovered near the southern gate at Karatepe can be identified as the “Weather god of heaven,” according to the hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions on the statue. The statue, standing on a pedestal formed by two →lions, depicts a standing man wearing a cap on his head. His hands are in front of his belly (CAMBEL/ÖZYAR 2003: 138, figs. 218–220). The Phoenician translations of these inscriptions (*KAI* no. 26 III 18) equate the figure to B.

A famous seal impression from Tell el-Dab‘a depicts a storm god standing on two mountains; has mostly been identified as →Baal or Baal Zaphon (DIJKSTRA 1991). The celestial traits of this seal cannot be adduced in favor of an ascription to B. as has been proposed (UEHLINGER 1990: 515) because B. was not yet attested in the Late Bronze Age but only in the first mill. (NIEHR 2003: 28–33).

A seal from La Aliseda (Spain) dating to the 7th cent. shows two enthroned male gods sitting to the right and left of a →tree of life, holding scepters in their hands. They have been interpreted as B. and Melqart (MARIN CEBALLOS 1979–1980: 224–226 with fig. 9; BLÁZQUEZ 1995: 113f). However, this has been contested in favor of an identification with →Baal Hammon and Melqart (BONNET 1988: 214 n. 74).

In the Phoenician sanctuary of the Levantine coastal site Tel Michal, where B. is epigraphically attested on an ostrakon, some small clay figurines of an enthroned male god with a tiara on his head have been found. However, the identification of these clay figurines with B. (RAINEY 1989: 381) cannot be demonstrated.

III. Selected bibliography

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