

# The West Semitic Preposition *l* Meaning "For" or "Belonging to"

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Last updated November 29, 2006

The following are examples of the use of the preposition *l* in various Semitic languages where it means "for," "belonging to," or just plain "to" in the sense of "transferred to," in other words, when it indicates ownership or transfer of ownership. I have looked mostly at "non-literary texts" because I think they are the most representative of this kind of usage. I have also looked at a few texts that may or may not use other prepositions like Ugaritic *ʿl*, in the same or similar ways. I have tried to be fairly rigorous but make no claim to having been exhaustive. In some cases, I have given a complete transcription and translation of the text; in other cases I have simply provided an outline highlighting any points of interest. While I have not been completely consistent, unless there was a compelling reason to do something else, I have translated the Semitic preposition with the English preposition "for" in these contexts. At this point, I am not attempting to make any sweeping generalizations. My principle goal is to bring as much of the material together in one place as possible. The following should be treated as working notes, little more than raw data at this point.

In the Ugaritic language and script we have:

Starting with seals:

**KTU 6:3**, a label without indication of having either seals or string holes, reads *l . rb ktykym*, "For the supervisor of the *ktykym*." van Soldt has published a thorough discussion of these so called "labels" on which I have relied for much of discussion of the Ugarit and Akkadian seal material in this post.

**KTU 6.11**, a label with seal impressions and string holes, reads *kd [. ] yn l prt*, "A pitcher of wine for Purati"

The text on this label should be compared with the Akkadian text on label RS 15.154. This label also has a seal impression and a string hole. The text reads, *1 dug geštin š[a] <sup>m</sup>a-zi-ra-[na]*, "One jar of wine belonging to 'Aḏurānu." van Soldt, 377 translates, "One jar of wine of 'Aḏurānu." I will look at a couple of other Akkadian examples later. Should we read the *l* in KTU 6.11, and perhaps other texts, as indicating "coming from" as opposed to "going to" or "belonging to" on an ongoing basis. But note RS 22.31, an Akkadian label with seal impressions and string holes that reads, *25 dug i.meš <sup>URU</sup>na-ni-i*, "25 jars of oil (for/of/belonging to) (the town of) Nanu'u." It appears to me that the genitive indicates a missing or implied preposition but it could also be a missing relative pronoun and is not to be understood as "of the town of Nanu'u" as van Soldt would translate it. He (381, n. 36) correctly speculates on a missing preposition or relative pronoun in the Akkadian label RS 22.30

**KTU 6.19** is a label that provides an interesting example of the use of the preposition that seems to be very close to that in KTU 6.11 where "a pitcher of wine for Purraṭi" is referenced. But the object is a class of animals rather than a person. There is no indication of seal impressions or string holes. It reads as follows,

tmm . dmm š'rm . l hmrn "Eight baskets of barley for asses"

**KTU 6.29**, a label with neither a seal impression nor string holes, reads,

spr 'psm	List of 'psm (boulder lines/stones?)
dt . št	that the
uryn	Uriyanu recorded (placed, established)
lmlk . ugrt	for the king of Ugarit

van Soldt translates, "Document concerning the borderlines which the uriyanu established for the king of Ugarit." As van Soldt, 385, notes, this label is to be associated with the Akkadian treaty execution document RS 17.368. The word which I translate "Uriyanu" is written <sup>LU</sup>ú-ri-ia-annu in RS 17.268 rev.:5' and therefore the Ugaritic version is likely not be a personal name.

**(KTU 6.44**, an inscription on ivory reads,

l art	Oh Aruti,
mrrt qbr	you have blessed the grave

Arutu is in the North East district of Ugarit (Astour, 5). This is not really an example of our formula. *l* to be read as the emphatic particle *la* and not the preposition *lê*. I list it here more as a caution than as an example.)

Several administrative texts from use similar constructions as some of the labels cited above.

**KTU 4.7** is a record of transfers of land holdings. Following the first line which is a heading all the following 19 lines have the same form as line 2, šd . bn . gldn . l. bn . kty, "the field of the son of GLDN to/for the son of Kathiya"

**KTU 4.44** is an allocation of weapons?/land? and jars consisting of 32 lines all having the following structure: number + šurt on the obverse or spm on the reverse + l + bnš + group name. There are a couple of minor variations but line 25 is fairly representative of the reverse:

tt spm . l bnš klnmw, "6 jars for the Klnmw people."

Line 32, one of the variants, reads, tlt spm l blšpš amry, "3 jars for Balšepšu of Amry." On the name Balšepšu see KTU 1.100:2 where *bl* is said to be the mother of *ql*. *bl*. On *ql* see KTU 4.213 where a certain *ql* is provided with wine for a trip to Egypt.

**KTU 4:88** is a record of wheels that reads in part.

- |                               |                                       |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1) ṣmdm . a[pnt]              | a pair of wheels                      |
| 2) bd . prḥ                   | in the hand(s) of Paraḥu              |
| <hr/>                         |                                       |
| 7) apnm . l . bn i[           | 2 wheels (duel?) for the son of I???? |
| <hr/>                         |                                       |
| 9) tlt [.]ṣmdm [ apnt . l . ] | 3 pairs [pairs of wheels for]         |
| 10) mṣrn [ . . . ]            | Miṣrnu                                |

I show line 7 as representative of lines 3-8, all of which begin *apnm . l .* I reconstruct line 9 while Dietrich, Loretz and Sanmartin, 244, do not. It appears to me that *bd* (in the hand[s]) in line 2 is equivalent to *l* elsewhere. It is tempting to see *prḥ* as some kind of collective with the lines that following referring to specific individuals. But *prḥ* is certainly a single individual in KTU 4.134. None of the personal names can be read in full on this tablet.

**KTU 4:128** is a record, perhaps an allocation record, of cattle feed (barley?). I provide below the first 6 lines and line 10 as representative of lines 7- 12.

- |                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| 1) ṣrm ddm kbd l alpm mrim | 20 measures of heavy (?) for fatling large cattle |
| 2) tt ddm l ṣin mrat       | 6 measures for fatling sheep and goats            |
| 3) ṣr ddm l ṣm ṣrgm        | 10 measures for "hearers of the word"             |
| 4) ṣr ddm . l bt           | 10 measures for barn(?)                           |
| 5) ṣrm . dd . l mhṣm       | 20 measures for the butchers(?)                   |
| 6) ddm . l kbs             | 2 measures for the launder(?)                     |
| ...                        |   |
| 10) dd . l krwn            | A measure for Kurwana                             |

The *bt* meaning "barn" see *bt alpm* in KTU 4.358:1. The first two lines are reminiscent of the KTU 6.19 where grain is made available to asses. These two lines show allocations to specific groups of animals. If my understanding of line 4 is correct then this line shows an allocation to a barn (the royal barn?). The next two lines are allocations to functionaries and lines 7-10 are allocations of one measure to named individuals. It is clear that lines 1 and 2 do not represent totals.

**KTU 4:149** is a record of wine for various temples and temple governmental officials, guilds and other VIPs.

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Obverse        |  |
| 1) kd . bt ilm | a pitcher (for?) house of the great gods |
| 2) rbm         |  |

----- 3) kd l išt <sub>nm</sub> -----	a pitcher for the "fire tenders"
4) kd l h <sub>ty</sub> 5) mah <sub>dh</sub> -----	a pitcher for the Ma <sub>h</sub> adian Hittite
6) kd l kbl <sub>bn</sub> -----	a pitcher for the (?) KBLBN
7) kdm . m <sub>ḫ</sub> 8) l . al <sub>ty</sub> -----	two? pitchers of m <sub>ḫ</sub> (?) for the Cypriote(?)
9) kd . l mry <sub>nm</sub> -----	a pitcher for the Mariani
Reverse	
10) šb' yn	7 wine (pitchers?)
11) l mry <sub>nm</sub>	for the Mariani
12) b y <sub>ḫ</sub> mlk	in the residence (?) of the king.
-----	
13) kdm . ḡb i <sub>š</sub> hry	two(?) pitchers (for) ḡB the I <sub>š</sub> H <sub>R</sub> ite
-----	
14) hmš yn . bd	5 wine (pitchers?) in the hands of
15) bh mlkt	the BH of the queen
16) b mdr'	in the garden (seed nursery)
-----	
17) t <sub>l</sub> t bt . il	3 (pitchers for?) the house of El Ann (?)
edge ann kd . bt . il ann	a pitcher (for) the house of El Ann (?)

This text has more than a few problems in interpretation. While the preposition *l* is used for "for" or "belonging to," it may simply mean "to" in many of the sections. It is completely missing in the sections formed by line 1-2, and line 17 to the edge of the tablet. The expression *bd*, "in the hand(s) of" is used in line 14 where one might expect *l*. Are we to understand that the preposition *l* has the same meaning as *bd* or because they are used separately that they have different meanings.

**KTU 4:168** is a record of garments and textiles for various gods and religious officials(?)

Obverse:

1) h <sub>pn</sub> . d . i <sub>q</sub> ni . w . š <sub>mt</sub>	A garment of lapis-lazuli and carnelian(?)
2) l . iyb'li	for Iyba'li
-----	
3) t <sub>l</sub> t <sub>m</sub> . l . mit . š'rt	130 wool (garments)
4) l . š <sub>r</sub> . t <sub>l</sub> trt	for the singer of Astarte
-----	

5) mlbš . ṭrmnm	Clothing (for) the Ṭrmnm.
6) k . ytn . w . b .bt	As in the past, in the house
7) mlk . mlbš	of the king, clothing was
8) ytn . lhm	given to them.

-----

9) šb <sup>c</sup> . lbšm . allm (lower edge)	7 cloths of garments(?)
10) l . ušhry	for Išhara

-----

Reverse:

11) ṭlt . mat . pttm	300 flax (garments)
12) l . mgmr . b . ṭlt .	for Mgm̄r (or the month of Mgm̄r) in 3
13) šnt	years

Only in one place is it completely clear that garments are "for" a god, in this case a goddess. This is in lines 9 and 10. Iyba'li is possibly a personal name or the name of some "perished" ba'lu. See Gordon, 356. While Mgm̄r may well be a divine name, it is also the name of a month.

**KTU 4:175** is a record of quantities of something (barley?) for individuals. Each line reads, "dd(m) l" plus a personal name or plantation. Line 6 is typical, dd l 'bdktr, "a pot for Abdu-Kathari." Line 12 designates the commodity for multiple recipients of a single "pot," dd l altt w l lmdth, "a pot for Althati (a woman) and her students(?)."

**KTU 4.216** is a record of wine allocations or sales to various temples(?), guilds(?) and gods(?). The names are likely all in the plural. Except for the first line which specifies that wine is the subject. Each line, including line 1, begins with a number or the words *kd* or *kdm* followed by the preposition *l* followed by a name of something. We are to understand each line as meaning some number of pitchers of wine for someone or something. When there is only one pitcher *kd* is used, when two pitchers are intended *kdm* (dual) is used, otherwise, a number is used. This "shorthand" is not uncommon in administrative texts.

**KTU 4.219 + 220+ 221** (all from the same tablet) is similar to KTU 4.216 except here a sale is clearly intended. It may be that the second part of the text reflects delivery dates. See Dietrich, Loretz and Sanmartin, 296-197.

**KTU 4:230** is similar to KTU 4.216 in almost every way. In lines 4, 5 8, 9, and 10? the preposition is missing.

**KTU 4.242** is a lengthy list of grain allocations or sales to towns and, on the reverse, individuals (guild members [?]). Line 2 may contain our formula but vocabulary and syntax of this line is very difficult. However, our formula clearly can be seen in lines 45 and 49. Both lines contain *l . r'ym*, "for headsmen" although the

subject in line 45 is unclear and the meaning of *kbd*, perhaps "heavy shekel" or a big pot, is unclear in line 49.

**KTU 4.269** may well be a school tablet. A couple of the words (*mḫšm* in line 8 and *ḫms* in line 35) are likely misspelled or miswritten. The plural does not seem to be used consistently (see line 2 for example) and the sections are of several different constructions. Within the text's 35 lines, there are nine sections set off by a scribe line. Each section, or in the case of lines 4-18 group of sections, is a record of one or more transactions, deliveries of grain and wine.

**Obverse:**

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1) spr . ḫpr . bt . k[ ]       | Record of rations for the Temple of K????           |
| 2) tš' . 'šrh . dd . l . bt[ ] | 19 pot(s) for the Temple of ????                    |
| -----                          |   |
| 3) ḫmš . ddm . l . ḫtyt        | 5 pots for the (lady) Hittite                       |
| -----                          |   |
| 4) tltm . dd . kšmn . l . gzzm | 60 pots of spelt for the shearers (of sheep)        |
| -----                          |   |
| 5) yyn                         | Yyn (a personal name)                               |
| 6) šdqn                        | Šdqn (a personal name)                              |
| 7) 'bd . pdr                   | servant of Pdr (perhaps a divine name)              |
| -----                          |   |
| 8) mḫšm (read mḫšm)            | Butchers(?):  |
| 9) tgt                         | Tgt (a personal name)                               |
| 10) w . lmdh                   | and his apprentice;                                 |
| 11) ytil                       | Ythil   |
| 12) w . lmdh                   | and his apprentice;                                 |
| 13) rpan                       | Rpan  |
| 14) w . lmdh                   | and his apprentice;                                 |
| 15) 'bdrpu                     | Abdirapu  |
| 16) w . lmdh                   | and his apprentice;                                 |
| 17) 'dršp                      | Adurishpu   |
| 18) w . lmdh                   | and his apprentice.                                 |
| -----                          |   |
| 19) krwn b . gt . nbk          | (From?) Kurwanu in the winepress of Nb/p(?)k        |
| 20) ddm . kšmn . l . ḫtn       | two pots of spelt for Ḫatnu;                        |
| 21) ddm . l . trbnn            | two pots (of spelt?) for Trbnn                      |
| -----                          |   |
| 22) ddm . š'rm . l . trbnn     | two pots of barley for Trbnn                        |
| 23) ddm . š'rm . l . ḫtn       | two pots of barley for Ḫatnu                        |
| 24) dd . š'rm . l . ḫmr . ḫtb  | a pot of barley for the ass (that fetches) firewood |



6) ksp . d . nkly . b . šd	Silver which was spent for the field,
7) mit . ḥmšt . kbd	105 heavy (shekels)
8) l . gmn . bn . usyy	for Gamanu son of Usyy;
<b>Lower edge:</b>	
9) mit . ttm . kbd	116 heavy (shekels)
10) l . bn . yšm <sup>c</sup>	for the son of Yašme <sup>c</sup> u;
-----	
11) mit . arb <sup>c</sup> m . kbd	140 heavy (shekels);
12) l . lly . bn . <sup>c</sup> myn	for Lilliyu son of <sup>c</sup> amyanu;
-----	
13) mit . ḥmšm . kbd	120 heavy (shekels);
14) d . škn . l . ks . ilm	which was deposited for the cup of the gods.
-----	

Because of the clear differences in style and subject between text in lines 1-5 and the text in the remainder on the tablet, one wonders if this is a school text. In any case, in lines 6-14 the preposition *l* is intended in this text to mean amounts paid "to" someone or something.

**KTU 4.357** is a record of the transfer(?) of fields (*šd[m]*) to some 32 presumably different people. Each line has the form: number (missing if *l* is intended) *šd[m]* *bd* Personal Name. One is remained of KTU 4.88 and 4:149 where *bd* and *l* may mean the same thing. Then again, they may not. This issue of *bd* possibly equaling *l* needs further work.

**KTU 4.381** does not use the preposition *l* but I think it informs the issue of the use of *l* in Ugaritic. Its contents are interesting in that the obverse is in ideograms (Akkadian?) and reverse in alphabetic cuneiform (Ugaritic). The tablet is badly broken. The obverse is a list of oil jars (DUG.MEŠ = *karpatū*) and the reverse is a list of some kind of transactions. A typical line (20) reads, ḥmš <sup>c</sup>l ykn[     ], "5 'upon' Yakuni[     ]." Preposition in lines 18-23 is consistently <sup>c</sup>l and likely means something like "upon the credited of" or "on the account of" as opposed to owned free and clear. See Gordon, 100, 456; Sivan, 199; and Segert, 196. But note that Gordon, 100, provides an example (KTU 2.33:26) where <sup>c</sup>l and *l* are substituted for each other. Virolleud PRU II, 28 provides other possible examples.

**KTU 4.692** has a record of land transfers on the obverse. The reverse appears to simply be a list of names following the word *yšḥm*, perhaps the members of the guild acting as witnesses. The obverse is reproduced with the translation of a few lines below. And here I use "of" rather than "for" to translate the preposition.

1) ubdy . yšḥm	Land grand(?) of the Yšḥm
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- 2) šd . bn . krmt . l . atn      The field of the son of Krmt to Atn  
 3) šd . bn . tan . l . ihyn      The field of the son of Tanu to Ihyn  
 4) šd . bn . krtm . l . bn . atnb  
 5) šd . bn . mdd . l . mznt  
 6) w . šd . bn . nḥlh . l . gmrđ  
 7) šd . bn . kwn . l . [gm]rd

Notice the *w* at the beginning of line 6. What is it doing there? Does it indicate that 6 and 7 form a single entry of sort since both land transaction go to Gamiradu?

The above examples are to be contrasted with the label KTU 4.712, for example, which reads,

šb<sup>ᶜ</sup> [ᶜ]šrm **b** ḥrṣb<sup>ᶜ</sup>      Seven (supervisors of) ten **in** Ḥrṣb<sup>ᶜ</sup>

**KTU 6:70** is on a jar handle and is written in the cuneiform short alphabet from Sarepta in Lebanon. Based on the verb "*p'l*" and the relative pronoun "*z*" the language is more Phoenician like than Ugaritic like.

- 1) 'gn z p'l yd[?]      An amphora which Yiddinba'alu made  
 2) n/rb 'l z lḥšb' l[h?] for Chudashi, his(?) lord

I have discussed [elsewhere](#) the issue of the relative plus the preposition that is seen in line 2. See Gen 29:9 and 1 Samuel 21:8 for example of this structure in Hebrew.

I've already noted a couple of Akkadian labels that are of interest. See my comments under KTU 6:11 above. A few others are also of interest. These are studies in some depth by van Soldt. Of course, they don't use the West Semitic preposition *l* but rather the Akkadian relative pronoun *ša* or the prepositions which, in some contexts, is used in the same way.

**RS 17.545** and **RS 19.75** are labels found in the Southern Palace Archive but in different rooms. Neither has a seal impression but **RS 19.75** has string holes and **RS 17.454** likely did. They both read,

tup-pu ri-kíl-li ša lugal kur kas-ga-miš  
 Tablet concerning the treaty of the king **of** Karkamiš

van Soldt, 386, following Nougayrol, 292, reasonably speculates that these labels may have been associated with two of the following: **RS 17:230**, **RS 17,146**, **RS 18.115**, **RS.18.19**. Here and in the following examples, *ša* should be understood more like *b* in **KTU 4.712**.

**RS 22.07** has both seal impressions and string holes. It reads,

pa 4 zì.KAL.KAL pa 4 zì.da ša Mkur-wa-na

Which vonSold translates, "A parīsu and 4 (BÁN) of course flour and a parīsu and 4 (BÁN) of (regular) flour of Kurwānu."

Does this mean "for" Kurwānu, "belonging to" Kurwānu or "from" Kurwānu?

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