It is generally accepted that Ps. xxix has close parallels with Baal mythology. Yahweh’s theophany in the thunder-storm (vv. 3-9), his exaltation in the divine assembly (v. 1) and enthronement as king over the cosmic sea (v. 10) are all paralleled in the Baal mythology of the Ugaritic texts ¹). Certain other parallels with the Ugaritic texts have also been suggested and it has been argued that Ps. xxix was originally written as a Canaanite psalm in honour of Baal ²), but it is not my intention to evaluate these claims here. Rather, it is my purpose here first of all to draw attention to a noteworthy feature of this psalm which is paralleled in Baal mythology but which has hitherto remained unnoticed, namely the sevenfold manifestation of the deity in the thunder. It has often been noted ³) that it is a striking feature of this psalm that the voice of Yahweh (qôl Yahweh) is depicted as resounding in the thunder seven times (vv. 3, 4a, 4b, 5, 7, 8, 9). However, so far as I am aware, the parallel of Baal’s seven thunders has never previously been noted ⁴). In the Ugaritic text RS 24.245 lines 3b-4 we read of Baal:

¹) Cf. especially the account of Baal’s defeat of Yam in CTA 2 and Baal’s theophany in the storm in CTA 4. vii. 25-37.


⁴) However, D. N. Freedman and C. F. Hyland, “Psalm 29 : a structural analysis”, HTR 66 (1973), p. 241 n. 5, do note that CTA 29 enumerates the name of Baal seven times in a list of gods while the Akkadian parallel (RS 20.24) has Adad bêrêš Ḥâzi followed by the name of Adad a further six times.
3b štšt. brqm (lb)  Seven lightnings (he had),
4 ʻšmt. ʻs[r] ʻ. ʻs. brg.y(b)  Eight storehouses of thunder were
the shafts of (his) lightnings.

This, of course, is an example of the well-known phenomenon of
the graded numerical sequence 5). M. Haran has pointed out that
this literary device is not only employed to denote an indefinite num-
ber but can also be used to indicate a definite number—either the
first or the second in the sequence—the parallel number not being
intended to be taken literally but having the nature of what he calls
“automatism”. In this connection, he suggests that the numerical
sequence seven/eight in Ugaritic and the Old Testament actually
serves to indicate the definite number seven 6). I would adduce the
following points in support of this understanding of the seven/eight
sequence: (i) As is well-known, seven is a highly significant number
in Ugaritic and in the ancient near east generally. One would there-
fore expect it to be frequently encountered in graded numerical se-
quences. This is in fact the case, but whereas the sequence seven/
eight in Ugaritic is exceedingly common, the sequence six/seven is
very rare 7). This supports the view that the seven/eight sequence
(and not the six/seven sequence) denotes seven. (ii) It is noteworthy
that in the Aqhat text (CTA 19.i.42-4) we read that Baal failed for
seven/eight years whereas in the Baal text (CTA 6.v.8-9) we read of
simply a seven year cycle in the conflict between Baal and Mot
(whether intended literally or symbolically being unimportant for
the present purpose). (iii) So far as the particular seven/eight sequence
relating to Baal’s lightnings and thunders is concerned, it is surely
significant that we have other evidence attesting the specifically
sevenfold nature of Baal, to which attention was drawn above in note 4.

It may therefore be maintained that RS 24.245 lines 3b-4 allude
to both Baal’s sevenfold lightnings and thunders, just as Ps. xxix
depicts Yahweh’s thundering seven times. Furthermore, it is interest-
ing at this point to note that the parallel may be drawn even closer
by looking at the context in both passages. Ps. xxix is clearly related
to the well-known enthronement psalms and, indeed, v. 10 actually

5) Cf. W. M. W. Roth, “The numerical sequence x/x + 1 in the Old Testa-
ment”, VT 12 (1962), pp. 300-11, Numerical Sayings in the Old Testament. A Form
Critical Study, SVT 13 (1965); M. Haran, “The graded numerical sequence and
the phenomenon of ‘automatism’ in biblical poetry”, SVT 22 (1972), pp. 238-67.
6) M. Haran, esp. p. 256.