Scattered in the books of the Old Testament are a number of references to Canaanite religious beliefs and practices. One of the most interesting of these references can be found in the story about Jehu murdering the followers of Baal. This story is set against the background of a feast for Baal which Jehu organized in order to

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bring all Ba'al's followers together. The basic facts of the story are
the following. After Jehu has announced his intention to serve Ba'al
even more than Ahab did, he asks the people to call (qr) all the
prophets, followers and priests of Ba'al, because he wants to
organize a great sacrificial feast (zebah) for Ba'al. Then, apparently
after the believers have assembled for this festival, Jehu announces
a sacred meeting by ordering: qaddəšu ʻašərə, "sanctify a meeting".
This meeting clearly involves all the believers being packed in
Ba'al's temple, which gives Jehu an excellent opportunity for carry-
ing out his designs, which do not concern us here. As noted by J. A.
Montgomery and H. S. Gehman, the ʻašərə is apparently the
climax of this religious event. J. Gray gives two possible meanings
for this word. Beside the possibility of a meeting with an assembly
"precluded from contact with the profane", he also notes an ex-
planation of ʻašərə as an assembly "convoked under solemn im-
precation"; which means "a closed circle": any outsider could be
punished with a curse. Gray (p. 560) expresses some doubt about
the original reading here, as both Peshitta and Targum seem to
presuppose qir'ū rather than qaddəšu in this verse. The form ʻašərə
is comparatively rare in Biblical Hebrew. It appears also in Isa. 13
(in a difficult context), and in Joel i 14 and ii 15, both times in the
expression qaddəšu sōm qir'ū ʻašərə, "sanctify a fast, call together a
meeting". Though one could point to such parallels as qaddəšu qāhāl,
"call together an assembly", in Joel ii 16, the expression qaddəšu
ʻašərə has remained unique in North-West Semitic literature up till
now.

From a recently published Ugaritic text it now appears that this
expression is part of genuine Canaanite religious terminology. The
text KTU 1.161, first published by A. Caquot and recently re-
published by P. Bordreuil and D. Pardee, has already elicited a
number of studies. It would appear that this text is primarily con-
cerned with procuring the protection of the royal ancestors of King
Ammurapi of Ugarit after the decease of his immediate predecessor
Niqmaddu. The title of this text is spr dbh  сраз, "document of the
sacrifice of the shadows (?)". A number of known and (at least to
us) unknown ancestors of these kings are invited (gra, "to call") in
it, perhaps to take part in this sacrifice. Near the end of this text
(line 30), after a list of seven acts of offering, perhaps performed on
successive days, we find the words tqdš ʿšr, which are followed by
wishes for the well-being of the king, his family and his city Ugarit.