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Zvi Rin, Shifra Rin. *'Alilot ha-'Elim: Kol Shirot 'Ugarit (Acts of the Gods: The Ugaritic Epic Poetry).* Philadelphia: Inbal Publishers, 1996. lxxxi + 881 pp.

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The Ugaritic Texts and Their Relationship to the Bible

Note to reader: Note the following conventions used herein for reproducing Ugaritic and Hebrew. X stands for the "soft" *xet*; X' stands for the "hard" *xet*; T. stands for *tet*; T' stands for the consonant "th"; and SH is used for *shin* (and in no instance will it cause confusion with the combination *samekh - he*). GAR

This massive volume represents a thoroughly revised and expanded edition of Zvi and Shifra Rin's *'Alilot ha-'Elim*, first published in 1968. The bulk of the work is the presentation of all of the major Ugaritic poetic texts in transliteration, transcription, and paraphrase, with each composition accompanied by an introductory summary and philological notes. The volume also includes a general introduction to the Ugaritic language, a vocabulary list, eleven appendices devoted to special topics, and a large bibliography. The large English section includes the general introduction and the introductory summaries to the texts.

The texts treated are as follows: the Baal cycle, the Birth of the Gracious Gods, the Wedding of Nikkal and Yarix, the Legend of Kret, the Story of Aqhat, the Rephaim texts, and sixteen more recently discovered texts (UT 601-614 and two additional pieces).

The transliteration, transcription, and paraphrase system can be illustrated as follows. UT 127:20 (p. 534) is transliterated as TT.BX' IMR WLXM (in Hebrew letters of course), with a stroke above the *xet* to indicate the velar fricative (or "hard" *xet*), and with regular *mem* as the last letter in this string (as opposed to final *mem*) to represent the Ugaritic *mem*. The transcription then reads TT.BX IMR WLXM presenting the Ugaritic words in something closer to Hebrew, with the stroke above the *xet* omitted and with final *mem* now in place as the last letter in this string. The paraphrase, which the Rins do not wish to call a translation (see below), then reads TT.BX T.LH WYLXM, in fully vocalized Hebrew, with Ugaritic IMR "lamb" now replaced by Hebrew T.LH "lamb," and with the Hebrew ww consecutive used to convey the epic style.

The paraphrases, incidentally, are new to this edition, but they were published separately under the title *Ha-Tur ha-Shelishi: Parshegen Shirot 'Ugarit* (*The Third Column: A Paraphrase of the Poetry of Ugarit*) in 1979 and again in 1992. It is infinitely more useful to have them included in this new edition than to work with them as a separate monograph.

The Rins address the question of the nature of the Ugaritic language in the general introduction. I strongly agree with their conclusion that Ugaritic is a dialect of Canaanite, but they exaggerate in several regards. First, "the opinion has increasingly become entrenched that Ugaritic is indeed one of the Canaanite dialects" (p. xi, 11) is not an accurate statement. The Rins cite such luminaries as U. Cassuto, H.L. Ginsberg, Z.S. Harris, and W.F. Albright to justify this claim, but many more recent investigators would disagree. Second, the statement "There is almost no doubt, however, that in the days of the judges and early kings, there was no difference in the phonology of 'Judean' and 'Ugaritic"' (p. xvi, 14) is far too sweeping and of course is contradicted by evidence that the Rins themselves cite, e.g., the fact that long *a* shifts to long *o* in Hebrew but not in Ugaritic. Similarly, there is no evidence for the following claim: "it is almost certain that the Ugaritic *shin* also represented two consonants [i.e., *shin* and *sin*], just like the Canaanite *shin*" (ibid.).

I repeat that I agree with the Rins' general conclusion that Ugaritic, like Hebrew, belongs to the Canaanite language umbrella. The two languages are remarkably similar, not only in grammar and lexicon; but as the Rins, standing on the shoulders of Cassuto and others, so ably demonstrate, in literary phraseology and style as well. However, the differences between Ugaritic and Hebrew cannot be dismissed with the waving of a wand.

One suspects that the Rins' scholarship has been af-

fected here by their leanings toward the "Canaanite" movement in modern Hebrew literature and thought (they cite approvingly the work of Yonatan Ratosh and Aharon Amir [p. xxix, n. 44; p. 31, n. 44], as well as an article by Uzzi Ornan in the journal *Alef* [p. xii, p. 11]). I have no qualms with their desire to use Ugaritic as a source for modern Hebrew coinages (what a marvelous idea!), or in their words: "[Why] not breathe new life into these ancient, early citizens of the Canaanite language? Why not borrow freely from the wealth of the vocabulary of Ugarit, its forms, expressions, and idioms?" (p. xxii, 20). I wish only that political and ideological leanings would not impinge on scholarly research, especially when they can mar an otherwise excellent product.

This view of the Rins, moreover, explains why no "translation" appears in the volume. As the authors make explicitly clear, if Ugaritic and Hebrew are dialects of the same language, no translation is necessary, but rather only a "paraphrase." Again in their own words: "A Hebrew edition should not 'translate' a language of Canaan into a language of Canaan, but rather present it literally, as much as possible, transcribing it in a legible form for the contemporary reader" (p. xxiii, 21).

For the actual reading of the texts, the Rins have relied on recent editions such as *CTA* and *KTU*. But the reading of UT 52: 14, which earlier scholars understood as cooking a kid in milk, has received so much attention in recent years that the Rins should not simply repeat earlier renderings uncritically (pp. 402, 414), at least not without justification. Caution is advised here, and almost without doubt the text means something else. See in detail R. Ratner and B. Zuckerman, "'A Kid in Milk?': New Photographs of *KTU* 1.23, Line 14," *HUCA* 57 (1986): 15-60.

While on the topic of recent bibliography, note that the Rins have not availed themselves of Dennis Pardee, *Les textes para-mythologiques de la 24e campagne (1961)* (Ras Shamra-Ougarit IV) (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilizations, 1988), with an extremely detailed treatment of nine of the more recently discovered texts.

The philological notes are clear and concise, with an eye to the Bible throughout. Of the many gems raised, space limitations permit me to present only one. The sexual context of UT 132, with the twofold use of the root T'-K-X (=Hebrew SH-K-X) leads the Rins to see a delightful wordplay in Isaiah 23:16 (p. 379). There the harlot's song's third phrase can be rendered not only "harlot long forgotten" (thus NJPSV) but also "harlot sexually active"; and the sixth phrase can be understood not only as "to bring you back to mind" (again NJPSV) but also "in order that you may be fornicated" (root Z-K-R).

The Rins have placed between the two covers of this book a remarkable amount of material for the Hebrew reader to gain access to the great corpus of Ugaritic epic poetry and to fully appreciate its importance for biblical studies. They are to be congratulated for this major new resource.

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