

common occurrence in languages is the intrusion of a consonant into a word to which it does not legitimately belong (e.g. the *d* in the German *niemand* = no man, no one; the *d* in Mond = moon; in Hebrew the *l* in כרמל = plantation, cf. כרם; the *l* in בנשל = bud). If we examine Sheol in the light of this common feature of language, we find in the verb שחח in the sense of *to be waste or desolate* (Isai. vi. 11. Until cities be waste R.V.) a satisfactory word and idea from which to derive the Hebrew term for Underworld. On the basis of this derivation, Köhler remarks, that though Sheol is best translated by *Underworld*, its etymological history suggests the *un-world*, a region where all the life of a world has ceased, a waste place where activity is not. The feminine gender of Sheol, it is suggested, may be accounted for by its being associated with the feminine ארץ as its deepest extremest part or by the word representing a no longer extant ארץ שחח. Incidentally, it may be remarked that Köhler distinguishes three verbs שחח. The first = to gaze: the second = to make a din or roar—with its substantive שחח din, crash: the third = be waste, desolate—with its substantive שחח = waste, desolation. The phrase שחח שחח of Psalm xl. 3 brings, in its first word, a common synonym for Sheol and its second word has the sense of desolation. In this circumstance, Moffatt's translation "lonesome pit" is in agreement with Köhler's "Wassergrube der Oede" and seems better than "horrible pit" (R.V.) or than "the tumultuous pit" (Cohen op. cit.).

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AN EPIC OF THE BRONZE AGE

H. L. GINSBERG. *The Legend of King Keret, a Canaanite Epic of the Bronze Age. Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research: Supplementary Studies*, Nos. 2-3, 1946. Pp. 50. \$1.25.

Dr. H. L. Ginsberg, of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, who is already well known for his numerous and important contributions to the study of the Ras Shamra-Ugarit texts, offers in this monograph a complete edition of the Keret epic, which has been published in instalments by Virolleaud over a period of years. After a short preface, there follows an introduction (pp. 4-12), which consists of four sections dealing with (i) progress in the publication of the Ugaritic poetical texts (ii) the purposes and method of the present edition (iii) the contents, purpose and wider implications of the Keret epic (iv) bibliography. The last section, besides covering publications relating to the Keret texts, provides a guide to the general bibliography of Ugaritica to the end of 1942, and, in addition, includes publications of new texts from Ugarit (and Palestine) during the years 1940-1945. The introduction is followed by the text of the three tablets, which make up the Keret epic, in transliteration, together with an English translation (pp. 14-32). Pages 33-50, which are closely printed, are devoted to a commentary on the text. There are two plates of photographs (of Col. 1 and Cols. 1-3 of KRT A).

Reference may be made first to two matters of special interest which are discussed in the introduction. In the first place, Dr. Ginsberg pleads for the adoption of a fresh designation of the three Keret tablets (p. 5). Hitherto they have been customarily designated I K, II K and III K. Since, however, it is now recognised that III K should be placed before II K, there is much to be said for the employment of a fresh designation which corresponds to the correct sequence of the tablets. Dr. Ginsberg proposes, therefore, that KRT A should be substituted for I K, KRT B for III K, and KRT C for II K. Agreement by scholars on the use of sigla is always an important matter, and it is much to be hoped that Dr. Ginsberg's designation of these tablets will commend itself to workers in this field. Secondly, as is to be expected, Dr. Ginsberg addresses himself to the problem of the geographical and historical background of the Keret epic. With regard to the former, he, in company with the great majority of scholars to-day, rejects the "Negebite" hypothesis (p. 6f). Indeed, it is not at all certain that *ngb* in these texts is a geographical term (p. 8, and footnote 24). Nor does the view that the action of the epic takes place in northern Palestine—the view championed by such scholars as de Vaux and de Langhe—find favour with him (p. 7f). His own conclusion is that the

epic " deals with a milieu which was closely connected with what was later known as southern Phœnicia by cultural ties, and not too far removed from it in space " (p. 8). On the question of the historical background of the epic, Dr. Ginsberg finds plausibility in Pedersen's conjectures that Keret was a hero from whom a dynasty, which was still reigning when the epic was composed, claimed to be descended, and that the epic was composed to prove the legitimacy of this dynasty. To these conjectures of Pedersen, Dr. Ginsberg adds the suggestion that the epic may have been composed to justify the succession of Keret's younger son in preference to his first-born. All this is possible, but, as Dr. Ginsberg clearly recognises, it is no more than speculation (p. 8).

The limits of a review make it impossible to treat adequately here of the translation and the commentary, the latter packed as it is with a mass of interesting and important philological material. All that a reviewer can do is to pass a general judgment on this, the main, part of Dr. Ginsberg's work as a whole, while allowing himself a remark or two on some points of detail. It may be said at once that this part of the work is first-rate, and will prove of great value to students of the Old Testament and of Semitic philology alike. We may refer now to three points of detail. First, attention may be drawn to some explanations of Hebrew words which are, to the reviewer at least, new—e.g., *ʿōlā* " burnt offering " may, it is suggested, have meant originally " tower offering " (p. 37, on lines 70 f of Col. 1 of KRT A) ; and again, *ṣṣā'im* " shades " may, Dr. Ginsberg thinks, mean literally " those gathered " (p. 41, on lines 3-4 of Col. 3 of KRT B). Secondly, Dr. Ginsberg's view that Jb. xxxvi. 3 f (cp. xxxii. 10, 17 ; xxxvii. 16) does not contain a substantive from the root *yā'*, but from the root *d'w*, which in Arabic means " called," the substantive meaning, therefore, " word, speech " (p. 42, on line 24 of Col. 4 of KRT B), the reviewer believes to be correct, having reached it himself independently, following upon his detection of this Arabic root in Prov. xxiv. 14 and xxix. 7 (see *Journ. of Theol. Studies*, xxxviii, p. 401 f). And thirdly, it is of some interest that the writings of the Rabbis can frequently be used fruitfully in the study of these texts—see, e.g., p. 38 (on lines 96-103a of Col. 2 of KRT A) ; p. 39 (on line 118—not 117 which is a misprint—of the same Col. of the same tablet); and p. 45 (on lines 51-53a of Cols. 1-2 of KRT C).

Scholars will wish to express their warm thanks to Dr. Ginsberg for this most able study, as they will also to the Editorial Committee for its initiation of the series of studies of which it forms a part. This series will meet a real need, and future issues (one or two numbers are, so the Editorial Announcement informs us, planned to appear shortly) will be eagerly awaited.

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