

One of Yehezkel Kaufmann's major contributions to the literary criticism of the Old Testament was his brilliant observation that P can not postdate D but must antedate it.<sup>1</sup> His reasons can be briefly summarized as follows: (1) P shows no influence of either Deuteronomic legislation or of classical prophecy and (2) since the conditions of the post-exilic period were not anticipated by P, the people of the post-exilic period had great difficulty in implementing its legislation.

To offset the obvious difficulty in his thesis concerning P's apparent lack of influence in the life of the pre-exilic period, Kaufmann maintained that, although P was written during the First Commonwealth, it was not canonized until the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.<sup>2</sup>

H.L. Ginsberg, in supporting Kaufmann, has offered additional evidence for P's lack of influence prior to the Exile by suggesting that P was probably never published in pre-exilic times but remained the sole charge of the priests.<sup>3</sup> For this theory Ginsberg presented an Akkadian parallel:

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<sup>1</sup> Yehezkel Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel, translated and abridged by M. Greenberg (Chicago, 1960), pp. 153-211.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 172, 193, 200, 210-11.

<sup>3</sup> H. L. Ginsberg, New Trends in the Study of the Bible, Essays in Judaism Series #4 (N.Y.: Jewish Theological Seminary, n.d.), p. 23.

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To this we may add that a "priestly torah" is by its very nature not intended for publication. On the contrary, we find in ancient Babylonia a prohibition against publishing a "priestly torah"; on a tablet which contains some of the ceremonies which were carried on in Babylon during the new year festival (which took place during the first ten days of Nisan) we read: "Secrets of the temple Esagil. Whoever reveres the god Bel shall show them to nobody except the urigallu-priest of the temple Ekua."<sup>4</sup>

The tablet to which Ginsberg refers is that first published in 1921 by Thureau-Dangin<sup>5</sup> and translated in ANET by A. Sachs under the title "Temple Program for the New Year's Festival at Babylon."<sup>6</sup> This article intends to examine this Akkadian text in the light of Ginsberg's observations and see whether his suggestion is valid or not.

What Ginsberg has quoted above from the Akkadian text is part of a colophon which contains three lines:

21 minussunu  
niširti Esagil  
ana BĒl  
alla šešgalli Etuša  
lā ukallam  
(11. 33-5)

21 is their number;  
secrets of Esagil.  
Whoever is for Bel  
must not show (them  
to anyone) but the  
šešgallu priest of  
the Temple Etusa.<sup>7</sup>

This colophon itself is difficult on two counts. In the first place its location in the body of the text is unusual.<sup>8</sup> Normally colophons are either found at the end of tablets or at the end of compositions.<sup>9</sup> In the second place, to what does the colophon refer? Thureau-Dangin believes that the twenty one refers to the number of Sumerian lines which may have appeared before the colophon.<sup>10</sup> In our opinion, this interpretation makes little sense, for the 32 lines preceding the colophon can in no way be construed as secret.

<sup>4</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup> F. Thureau-Dangin, Rituels accadiens (Paris, 1921), pp. 127-54.

<sup>6</sup> ANET, pp. 331-34.

<sup>7</sup> The reading of šešgalli for urigalli and Etuša for Ekua is according to CAD, A, p. 351.

<sup>8</sup> E. Leichty, "The Colophon," Studies presented to A. L. Oppenheim (Chicago, 1964), pp. 147-48.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Thureau-Dangin, op. cit., p. 130.

We believe, however, that the colophon is simply misplaced and refers back to the entire composition.

But whatever the colophon refers to, it is clear that it directs the temple functionaries to keep the contents of the text to themselves. Note that such a directive is by no means unusual in Mesopotamian literature. Suffice it to quote part of another colophon found at the end of the ritual text entitled "Ritual to be followed by the kalū-priest when covering the temple kettle-drum":<sup>11</sup>

The informed person may show (this tablet) to the informed person. The uninformed shall not see it - it is among the forbidden things of Anu, Enlil and Ea, the great gods (p. 336).

Reverting now to our original Akkadian text we find that if we compare this text to sections of p<sup>12</sup> we observe some interesting parallels:

(1) In both there is a calling of the artisans for temple work (ll. 190-195; Ex. 36:2-3).

[enūm]a 1½ bēr ME.NIM.A gurgurra  
[iṣassīm]a nisiqta (!) u ḫurāša  
[ištu] makkūr Marduk ana epēš ša  
2 ṣalmē ana ūmi 6 inandinšu  
naggāra iṣassīma erēna u bīna  
inandinšu kuttimma iṣassīma  
ḫurāša inandinšu

At 1½ double hours of the morning (the šešgallu priest) calls for the metal-worker and gives him precious stones and gold from the property of Markuk for the purpose of making 2 figurines for (the ceremonies of) the 6th day of Nisannu. He calls for the wood-worker and gives him cedar and tamarisk wood. He calls for the goldsmith and gives him gold.

ויקרא משה אל בצלאל ואל  
אהליאב ואל כל איש חכם לב  
אשר נהן יהוה חכמה בלבו  
כל אשר נשאו לבו לקרבה אל  
המלאכה לעשה אותה: ויקחו  
כלפני משה אה כל התרומה  
אשר הביאו בני ישראל  
למלאכה עבדת הקדש לעשה  
אהה

Moses then called upon Bezalel and Oholiab and every skilled person whom the Lord had endowed with skill, everyone who excelled in ability, to undertake the task and carry it out. They took from Moses all the teruma-offerings that the Israelites had brought, to carry out the tasks connected with the sanctuary.

<sup>11</sup> ANET, pp. 334-38.

<sup>12</sup> The intention of comparing these two documents is neither to show any literary dependence of one document on the other, nor to show that both documents originate from a common source. The sole purpose of

In both texts, skilled persons are summoned (Akk. šasû; Heb. קרא ) to the Sanctuary in order to do specific tasks. In both cases, these artisans are given their raw materials from the property of the Sanctuary (Akk. makkūr Marduk; Heb. the Teruma offerings).<sup>13</sup>

(2) In both texts there are instructions for fashioning of objects for the temple (ll. 201-208; Ex. 25:17-21).

šalmē šunūti (!) 7 ubanni lanšunu  
ištēn ša erēni u ištēn ša bīni  
4 šiqil ḥurāši aḥzussunu  
4 dušū ana muḥḥišunu ilū  
[ištēn] ina qāt šumēlišu šēra ša  
erēni na[šī qas]su ša imitti ana  
Nabū naši šanū [ina qāt šumēli]šu  
aqraba naši qāt (!) imittišu [ana  
Na]bū naši

These images shall be 7 fingerwidths high. One is to be of cedar and one of tamarisk. (The weight of) their golden mountings is to be 4 shekels. They will mount 4 dušū stones in them. One shall hold up in its left hand a snake of cedar, its right hand raised to Nabu. The other shall hold up in its left hand a scorpion, its right hand raised to Nabu.

ועשיה כפרה זהב טהור  
אמתיט וחצי ארכה ואמה וחצי  
רחבה: ועשיה שנים כרבים  
זהב מקשה תעשה אהם משני  
קצה הכפרת: ועשה כרוב  
אחד מקצה מזה וכרוב אחד  
מקצה מזה מן הכפרת תעשו אה  
הכרבים על שני קצותיו:  
והיו הכרבים פרשי כנפים  
למעלה טככים בכנפיהם על  
הכפרת ופניהם איש אל אחיו  
אל הכפרת יהיו פני הכרבים:  
ונתה אה הכפרת על הארן  
מלכעלה ואל הארן תחן אה  
הערת אשר אתן אליך:

You shall make a cover of pure gold, 2½ cubits long and 1½ cubits wide. Make two cherubim of gold -- make them of hammered work -- at the two ends of the cover. Make one cherub at one end and the other cherub at the other end; of one piece with the cover shall you make the cherubim at its two ends. The cherubim shall have their wings spread out above, shielding the cover with their wings. They shall confront each other, the faces of the cherubim being turned toward the cover. Then place the cover on top of the ark after depositing inside the ark the pact which I will give you.

In both texts, a pair of ritual figurines is to be made by temple artisans. Likewise, in both texts, the instructions for the fashioning of the figurines are detailed as to the

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these comparisons is to demonstrate that there are several elements in this Akkadian ritual text which are found in the ritual sections of P (Ex. 25-31, 35-40; Lev. 1-16; Num. 1-9,15,18-19,26-30) so that both can be said to be of the same genre.

<sup>13</sup> Likewise, both texts specifically mention that the artisans involved worked in gold, wood and metal (Ex. 35:32-33).

material which should be used and upon what the figurines are to be mounted. In each case, the mountings are to be of gold (Akk. *hurāṣu*; Heb. זָהָב ) and specifications are given for the fashioning of the two respective mountings. Finally, the symmetrical arrangement of both pairs of figurines is clearly prescribed.

(3) In both there are cleansing rituals<sup>14</sup> (11. 353-363; Lev. 16:15-16, 27-28, 30).

nāš paṭri iṣassīma qaqqad immeri  
ibattaqma ina pagri immeri mašmašu  
bīta ukappar šipāti ša tummu bīti  
imannū papaḥ gabbi adi siḥirtišu  
iḥābma nīknakka ipaṭṭar pagri  
immeri šuātim mašmašu inaššīma ana  
nāri illak panūšu ana ereb šamši  
iṣakkanma pagri immeri šuāti (!)  
ana nāri inaddi ana šēri uṣṣi nāš  
paṭri qaqqad immeri šaniš mašmašu  
u nāš paṭri ana šēri uṣṣū mala  
ša Nabū ina Bābili ana Bābili  
ul errubū iṣtu ūmi 5 adi ūmi 12  
ina šēri uššabū

He shall summon a slaughterer who shall decapitate a ram. With the carcass of the ram, the mašmašu priest shall perform the kuppuru ritual for the temple. He shall recite the incantations concerning the temple adjuration.

He shall consecrate the entire cella including its surroundings and remove the censor. The mašmašu priest shall lift up the carcass of that ram and go to the river. Facing west he shall throw the carcass of that ram into the river. He shall then go out into the open country. The slaughterer shall do the same with the head of the ram. The mašmašu priest and the slaughterer shall go out into the open country. As long as Nabu is in Babylon, they shall not enter Babylon. From the 5th day until the 12th day of (Nisannu) they will stay in the open country.

ושחט את שעיר החטאת אשר  
לעם והביא את דמו אל מביה  
לפרכת ועשה את דמו כאשר  
עשה לדם הפר והזה אתו על  
הכפרה ולפני הכפרה: וכפר  
על הקדש מטמאת בני ישראל  
ומפסעיהם לכל חטאתם וכך

He shall then slaughter the people's goat of sin offering, bring its blood behind the curtain, and do with its blood as he has done with the blood of the bull: he shall sprinkle it over the cover and in front of the cover. Thus, he shall purge the shrine of the uncleanness and transgression of the

<sup>14</sup> This parallel has, of course, been seen by many scholars. See, for example, T. H. Gaster, *Festivals of the Jewish Year* (N.Y., 1952), pp. 138-39; S. Loewenstamm in the *Encyclopedia Miqrait*, III, (Jerusalem, 1955), pp. 595-600. For the position of the kuppuru ritual within the akītu festival, see S. A. Pallis, *The Babylonian Akītu Festival* (København, 1926).

יעשה לאהל מועד השכן אתם  
 בחוץ סמאתם:  
 ואת פר החטאה ואת שעיר  
 החטאה אשר הובא אה דמם  
 לכפר בקדש יוציא אל מחוץ  
 למחנה ושרפו באש את ערסם  
 ואת בשרם ואת פרסם: והשרף  
 אתם יכבם בגדינו ורחץ את  
 בשרו במים ואחרי כן יבוא  
 אל המחנה:  
 כי ביום הזה יכפר עליכם  
 לטהר אתכם מכל חטאתיכם  
 לפני יהוה הטהירו:

Israelites, whatever their sins; and he shall do the same for the Tent of Meeting, which abides with them in the midst of their uncleanness...The bull of sin offering and the goat of sin offering whose blood was brought in to purge the shrine shall be taken outside the camp; and their hides, flesh and dung shall be consumed in fire. He who burned them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water; after that he may re-enter the camp...For on this day, atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you of all your sins; you shall be clean before the Lord.

In both texts, rituals involving small cattle are found. Each text prescribes at least one ritual consisting of the slaughtering of the animal involved and the subsequent use of the dead animal's corpse or blood to perform the kuppuru ritual for the sanctuary. Likewise in both texts, there are specific instructions for the temple priest to bring the carcass of the animal to a place far removed from the temple area. (Akk. nārum; Heb. מחוץ למחנה) and to dispose of its body (Akk. ana nāri inaddi; Heb. ושרפו באש). The temple functionaries who dispose of the animal's body are not permitted to immediately return to the temple area. They must stay in a secluded place (Akk. ana šēri; Heb. אל מחוץ למחנה) for a specified amount of time. Finally, both texts, when discussing the kuppuru ritual make use of the verb KPR in the D (Akk. ukappar; Heb. יכפר).

From these parallels between the Akkadian text and sections of P we see that they are both of the same genre of ritual texts.<sup>15</sup> Since we know from the colophon that the Akkadian text was kept secret, it is quite likely that P, containing many sections from the same genre, was also kept secret.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The dating of these texts is another problem altogether. The majority of Akkadian ritual texts date from the Seleucid era, but since it is well known that the akītu festival and other temple ritual practices go back to Old Babylonian times, there is every reason to believe that ritual texts were written in abundance throughout the first and second millennia.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Ginsberg, op. cit., p. 23.