Compare also *UT* 1003:8-10:

| | |
|---|---|
| [8]*tn!n . lšbm* [9]*tšt .* | She (ʿAnatu) places Tunnanu into a harness,[96] |
| *trks* [10]*lmrym . . .* | She binds (him) to the heights . . . |

As Ginsberg[97] and others[98] have concluded, we have in these texts two versions of the Storm vs. Sea myth at Ugarit, one in which the victor is Baʿlu and one in which the victor is his sister ʿAnatu. While ʿAnatu placed Sea in a type of harness, Baʿlu put him into a snare.

96. Usually rendered 'muzzle, bit'; cf., e.g., Aistleitner, *WUS*[4]: 300. On the etymology, see the material in van Zijl (N 8): 66, n.3. See also Loewenstamm, "Anat's Victory" (N 62): 22-27. Contrast J. Barr, "Ugaritic and Hebrew 'ŠBM'?" *JSS* 18 (1973): 17-39.

97. H. L. Ginsberg, "Did Anath Fight the Dragon?" *BASOR* 84 (1941): 12-14.

98. E.g., L. R. Fisher, "Creation at Ugarit and in the Old Testament," *VT* 15 (1965): 316; S. E. Loewenstamm, "The Ugaritic Myth of the Sea and Its Biblical Counterparts," *Eretz Israel* 9 (1969): 96-101, esp. 98-100 (Heb.); Pope, *Job* (N 65): 329-330.

# ON RELATING "RELIGIOUS" TEXTS TO THE OLD TESTAMENT[*]

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*Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament* is a faithful rendering of *Religionsgeschichtliches Textbuch zum alten Testament* (1975), vol. I of *Grundriss zum alten Testament*, a series designed to supplement the *Das Alte Testament Deutsch* edition of the Old Testament. John Bowden, who undertook the project for the British SCM Press, has produced an accurate translation. While Americans will easily accept the many instances of British idioms, no excuse is possible for preserving German "J" in place and personal names where English "Y" is appropriate. Why should anyone across the Channel or Atlantic have to put up with "Jaminites" for example, when it is pronounced "Yaminites" everywhere? I personally sighed with relief when wiser minds saw fit to avoid "Jam" for the Canaanite Sea God. Typographical errors have been kept to a minimum, but greater care should have been taken to make sure that users would not mispronounce ancient names [e.g., Ishara could easily be misread as I-sha-ra], and to address the bibliography to the English rather than the German audience. Inevitably, there is the wrong photograph of a cuneiform tablet (p. 195).

Editor W. Beyerlin's guidelines for the format were generally observed by the contributors to *NERTOT*. Each offered an introduction to the literature of a specific ancient Near Eastern culture before proceeding with translations of selections from myths; epics; and cultic, sapiential, mortuary and historical texts. Each translated document was provided with a brief statement which frequently included bibliographical details. It should not be surprising that individual users of *NERTOT* will find certain contributions within this volume more effective or exacting than others. My prize is awarded to E. Lipiński for his section on Northwest Semitic texts. I have serious reservations, however, about every phase of H. Schmökel's presentation on Mesopotamian texts.

In his introduction, Beyerlin addresses the issues of the purpose, scope and presentation of the volume. *NERTOT*, we are told, has avoided duplicating the efforts of K. Galling's *Textbuch zur Geschichte Israels*,[1] which placed before the German audience a collection of extra-biblical texts that shed light on Israel's political history. Beyerlin directed his contributors to select materials which illuminate Israel's religious history. Beyerlin is most conscious of the shadow cast by Pritchard's *ANET* (now in its 3rd much expanded edition[2]), but only a few words were deemed necessary to justify *NERTOT* to its original, German audience. The case for making *NERTOT* available to an English-speaking clientèle, even at half *ANET*'s cost, cannot rest merely on the fact that a few items, mostly recovered or edited since the publication of *ANET*[3] (e.g., D:18-19 [= *Ugaritica* 5:3.3; *CTA* 30]; E:3, 7-8; 11-13; 15-18; 20-23; 25), are easily accessible only within the pages of *NERTOT*. Indeed, as we explore the methodological weaknesses of *NERTOT*, it will become clear that Westminster Press has seriously misunderstood its market when it decided to offer a volume which cannot satisfy the needs of American biblical scholarship.

Beyerlin's opinions regarding the purpose of *NERTOT* are presented in the "Introduction"; they are quite in harmony with those offered in the introductions of his collaborators. Recent excavations, he asserts, have produced documents "which invite comparisons with biblical traditions." Since it is "unthinkable," Beyerlin maintains, that either the OT or the religious convictions recorded in it can be grasped without recourse to ancient Near Eastern documentation, *NERTOT* is meant to facilitate the reader's task in striving toward that goal. In presenting this documentation for the comparativists, Beyerlin has asked his contributors to consider selecting materials which would highlight contrasts as well as correspondences with the biblical materials. But this selection was not limited to moments when such relationships were patently demonstrable, but was influenced by the mere suggestion of such relationships. Beyerlin did not think it necessary to delineate or even speculate on the channels which brought two literatures into correspondence (p. xxi). Thus, for example, it was not the task of *NERTOT* to offer a plausible reconstruction of how the Ugaritic mythological scenes reached the minds of post-exilic prophets. However such scenes reached their ultimate destination, Beyerlin made sure that the reader would recognize the biblical correspondences by taking it upon himself (we learn from the "Preface," p. 5) to annotate *NERTOT* with copious biblical citations. It may be that, because of the format's guidelines as drawn by Beyerlin, *NERTOT* was bound to be indulgent towards its readers' needs for more exactitude and precision. What is less excusable, however, are the capricious and unjustified liberties taken with the ancient Near Eastern materials *NERTOT* displays.

In gathering "religious" texts from the ancient Near East deemed to have relevance to biblical formulations, the problem of literary category must be confronted. Beyerlin asked his contributors to classify their materials by "genre" (p. xxii). The results are summarized in the following chart:

| Category | Egypt | Mesop. | Hatti | Ugarit | N.W. Sem. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Myth | X | X | X | X | X |
| 2. Epic | | X | | X | |
| 3. Ritual / cultic | | | X | | X |
| 4. Royal inscrip. | X | | | | X |
| 5. Treaty / Curses | | X | | | X |
| 6. Mortuary | X | | | | X |
| 7. Hymns | X | | | | |

1 K. Galling, *Textbuch zur Geschichte Israels* (2nd ed.; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1968).

2 J. B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (3rd. ed.; Princeton: Princeton University, 1969).

| Category | Egypt | Mesop. | Hatti | Ugarit | N.W. Sem. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8. Prayers / laments | X | X | X | X | |
| 9. Prophecy | | X | | | |
| 10. Wisdom/precepts | X | X | | | |
| 11. Corresp./adminis. | X[A.IV.25] | | | | X |
| 12. Votive inscrip. | | | | | X |
| 13. Incantations | | | | | X |
| 14. Seals / graffiti | | | | | X |

A glance at this table elicits a number of queries and comments:
1. Specialists in a particular field of ancient Near Eastern studies might easily reproach the selectivity of each contributor. While they might not berate the editor for deciding to limit the categories to the fourteen or so displayed above, they might protest that serious searches within each literary and cultural tradition could easily locate not only many more examples illustrative of the individual categories, but also examples which could easily fill the gaps that are so evident in the table. Thus, for example, an Assyriologist armed with the third volume of R. Borger's *Handbuch der Keilschriftliteratur*,[3] might direct attention to examples which adequately represent the third, fourth, sixth, seventh, and eleventh to fourteenth entries. What the Assyriologist might find so objectionable is not only that *NERTOT* conveys to the student of the OT a false sense of completeness, but that it has also not done justice to the literature of a particular ancient Near Eastern civilization.

2. Such an objection is confirmed upon closer inspection of the material that *NERTOT* does treat. Except for Lipiński's section on N.W. Semitic texts, each contribution contains numerous examples of severely edited texts. *NERTOT* can therefore be regarded as a compendium of excerpts from longer texts. This offering is unsatisfactory even for the reader who confines the OT within the narrowest framework, because the selections are limited to fragments cut to highlight pre-digested connections. But the student who legitimately regards the OT as a literary heritage from ancient Near Eastern times would no more accept this approach than he would tolerate excerpting biblical texts to

3 R. Borger, *Handbuch der Keilschriftliteratur*, Bd. 3 (Inhaltliche Ordnung der sumerischen und akkadischen Texte; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975).

highlight ancient documents. He would, moreover, be alarmed by the serious distortion of evidence and context encouraged by such a method, and he certainly would not be mollified by the brief explanatory and bibliographical notes attached to each text.

Of all the contributors to *NERTOT*, only H. Brunner displays an awareness of the corrosive consequences of such an approach (p. 2):

> Even stronger than the fear that notable parallels to Old Testament conceptions have been passed over is the fear that by taking these passages out of context, the religion of ancient Egypt may have been distorted, and that the fragments presented may be incomprehensible or even misleading. For the most part their content only becomes plain in the context of the larger formal units, and even more when they are seen alongside other texts of the same, or a similar, genre.

But Brunner's misapprehensions are stilled by recalling that "Proximity to statements in Old Testament texts has been the chief determining factor in the selection [of A.N.E. materials]" (p. 2). That such a solution develops from the editorial decision to gather texts dispersed through time and space, purposely selected for their alleged relationship to the OT, rather than from a documenting process which could present readers large samplings of complete texts from a given literary tradition, is not regarded by Brunner as the source of the problem he identifies. In my opinion, such insensitivity to the ancient documentation as well as to the scholarly needs of students of the Bible and of the ancient Near East stems not only from a failure to have a fully conceptualized notion of the benefits, limitations and importance of drawing parallels to the OT, but also from a failure adequately to discriminate between the secular, the religious, and the theological among Near Eastern texts.

I can only speculate as to why *NERTOT* failed to distinguish between these last categories. It is possible to blame the widely prevalent tendency to biblicize any text that is found within a limited geographical and temporal distance of ancient Israel. Since the OT is filled with a wondrous variety of literary genres, it is easy to suppose that anything found within its pages must of necessity have had theological or religious meanings. That many books and chapters found there may have acquired such significance only after the canonical process was completed is not

normally taken into consideration. For example, once texts such as those among the *megillôt* were incorporated within the canon, centuries of hermeneutical exegesis and eisegesis linked them inextricably to Israel's religious and theological heritage. Eventually each was regarded as testifying to God's great concern for man in general and for Israel in particular. By virtue of their inclusion within the canon, these texts metamorphosed into highly theological tractates, into documents which satisfied cerebral and contemplative needs. But, nevertheless, they were rarely invoked to establish patterns for religious behavior. Even after centuries of redaction, interpolation, expansion and deletion, it is difficult to extract from these texts information which would detail for us a system of belief, which would inform us about moral and ethical values specifically Israelite, or which would reveal to us something about Israel's cultic and ceremonial activities. As a matter of fact, were one to remove any of these texts from its biblical cover and present it to audiences unaffected by either Jewish or Christian traditions, such audiences could delight in its contents without being able to identify characteristically Hebraic religious or theological messages.

Even if the OT eventually understood theologically documents which still betray their secular origins, it does not follow that ancient Near Eastern texts which are similar in their literary categories ought to be regarded as imbued with theological or religious meaning. To do so, as *NERTOT* does, renders a double disservice to the evidence. To begin with, it makes it difficult for anyone to recognize that ancient Near Eastern folk, among whom the Hebrews are surely to be included, were capable of deliberating on humanistic as well as on secular subjects, and of reasoning beyond the relatively narrow confines of religious and theological perspectives. Only a strong attachment to the proposition that OT sapiential literature was necessarily religious or theologically motivated would encourage the scholar to regard the examples collected under Egyptian "Precepts for Life" [A.V. 26-29] as "religious" texts. These are no more, and no less, "religious" than any literature of the same genre which could be culled from sundry cultures and from across centuries. Biblicizing and theologizing an ancient Near Eastern document slights whatever controls are available to scholarship as it strives to establish, assess and appreciate the manner in which Israel's continuous spiritual growth transformed commonly shared—even

platitudinous—sentiments into enduring ideals. Thus, only by insisting that the Egyptian examples of wisdom literature were issued under secular circumstances, is it possible to chart the theologizing currents in post-exilic Israel which sought to derive comfort and direction from every scrap of its literary heritage.

This tendency to biblicize ancient Near Eastern documents before they are compared with Old Testament materials is compounded by *NERTOT*'s unclear program for drawing parallels between the literatures at stake. Throughout its pages annotations relate extracts from sundry compositions to passages indiscriminately collected from all pages of the OT. Little attempt is made to bolster the usefulness and enhance the value of these relationships by limiting the parallelisms to materials similar in genre or purpose. Materials written under unique or constant circumstances (e.g. the Mari letters, tomb inscriptions) are often juxtaposed with biblical examples which have been subjected to years of editing and reshaping. Even if it were granted that the aim of these citations is to suggest a relationship between phrasing and idiomatic vocabulary, it is nevertheless obvious that the editors of *NERTOT* have not adequately pondered the implications of drawing parallels between ancient literatures.

When used in literary contexts, "to relate" and "to parallel" suggest correspondences which highlight similarities, connections and associations in matters regarding direction, time, course, meaning, development and tendencies. When a citation from a biblical text is attached to a passage from an ancient text the editors of *NERTOT* are alerting the readers that some connection obtains between two pieces of literature. But what kind of connection is at stake? Why is it useful to make that connection? Why is this connection of particular relevance to comparative methodology? These questions and more are left up to users of the volume to consider and evaluate. If "to relate" an ancient Near Eastern text to the OT aims toward a philological understanding of specific biblical vocabulary and idiomatic expressions, then we can be satisfied only by having that text in its original language. If "to relate" is to compare segments of its contents, to note the prevalence of a motif, or to examine unusual imagery, then it is difficult to restrict this sort of inquiry to the literature of Israel's neighbors. Do parallel warnings against "loose women," battles among deities, prayerful expressions, magic or imprecative formulations, etc., provide insight only when they originate

among the Hittites, the Egyptians, the Canaanites and the Mesopotamians? Do we really add more to our understanding of biblical literature if we relate its passages to ancient Near Eastern fragments rather than to extracts from Stith Thompson's vast *Motif-Index of Folk Literature?*

If, on the other hand, *NERTOT* is meant to facilitate literary comparison for a readership interested in charting the development of traditions within specific genres of literature, then its editorial policy has raised insurmountable obstacles. Before any successful undertaking of the sort, it is imperative that the literature of each culture be appreciated on its own merits. But how can one truly evaluate the structure of a given narrative (myth or epic) if not enough material is presented to allow assessment of character development, theme elaboration and authorial intent? How can one begin to appreciate the poetry (laments and prayers) of a given culture if only excerpts are offered from which to analyze the variety and the quality of rhetorical devices (metaphor, simile, imagery, symbols, etc.)? How can one estimate the impact of a dead man's plaint or assess the fear of the living when only segments of texts are offered as evidence for the mood of an incantation and the tone of a funerary inscription?

My objections to *NERTOT* are, therefore, based on its editorial policies and guidelines. I am distressed by its unwarranted selections of Near Eastern documentation. I am not impressed by its ability to distinguish between the religious and the secular in literature; and I am irritated by its constant citation of biblical "parallels." I am not, however, unappreciative of efforts to present readers with up-to-date translations of texts, especially those editions which retain a healthy regard for the integrity of that documentation. It would be welcome, for example, to have the efforts of Miriam Lichtheim on behalf of Egyptian literature duplicated for the literary remains of other cultures. The French, in their *Littératures anciennes du Proche-Orient* (Editions du Cerf) series, have entertained an ambitious program of annotated renderings for a wide selection of Near Eastern materials. But, perforce, such an enterprise will remain, at least financially, beyond the means of a good proportion of biblical scholars. For now James Pritchard's *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* comes closest to fulfilling, within one volume, the ideals presented above. Despite its title, *ANET*, now in its third

edition (= 2nd edition + Supplement), has gradually moved away from the narrow aspirations it stated in the preface of the first edition (1950): "It is hoped that this volume of translations, intended primarily for students of the Old Testament, will serve to give a perspective for a better understanding of the likenesses and the differences which existed between Israel and surrounding cultures." In the second edition (1955), two sections were added, of which the second, examples from South Arabic inscriptions, can hardly be regarded as a source for biblical comparisons. By the third edition (1969), *ANET* was no longer primarily aimed at an Old Testament clientèle. Its newer texts were almost consistently presented *in toto*; gaps in the previous collections were filled, and areas of immediate interest to Near Eastern, rather than to biblical, scholarship were opened. Most striking, however, is the fact that citations aimed at relating these supplementary texts to biblical passages found conspicuous concentration in materials recovered within the perimeters of ancient Israel and (probably because of their erstwhile sensational implications) in the Mari prophetic letters. This paucity of biblical indexing allowed Pritchard to leave unaltered the list of biblical references prepared for the second edition (pp. 683-686).

Given the fact that Pritchard, *ANET*'s first editor, directed the 1955 and 1969 expansions, and that many of the original contributors prepared the last edition, it is possible to suggest that American perception regarding ancient Near Eastern literature and its relevance to the Old Testament has changed markedly over the last two decades. This development contributes toward making *NERTOT* an anachronism in American publishing and has, therefore, turned it into a volume whose value and usefulness are extremely limited.