THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE UGARITIC DNIL WITH THE DANIEL OF EZEKIEL *)

by

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In the book of Ezekiel reference is made to a Daniel (Ez. xiv 14, 20, xxviii 3) whom recent scholars generally consider to be not the hero of the book of Daniel but the person mentioned in the Ugaritic Aqht Text. I shall subject this theory to a critical examination first by looking at the Ugaritic evidence, then by examining the arguments of the Ezekiel specialists, and finally by studying some extra-canonical sources.

I

Reference to a Dnil in the literature from Ras Shamra is found on only three tablets, viz. CTA 17, 19, and 20 (according to Gordon's citations: 2 Aqht, 1 Aqht, and Text 121—formerly 4 Aqht). Since the only occurrence on CTA 20 contains exactly the same phrasing as on CTA 19:120-1, the investigation can be limited to tablets CTA 17 and CTA 19.

J. C. L. Gibson2) has argued convincingly that the figure of Dnil has very little, if anything, in common with kingship:

In fact, Daniel is only once called a king (19 151), and the picture of his house and activity that we are given has more in common with the touching portrayal of a village chief... or with the idyllic atmosphere of the Patriarchal narratives... than with the trappings of urban kingship—throne-room, court of nobles, large army, military caste system (14 90-91) and the rest—that meet us in the Keret text (p. 66).

Furthermore, the occurrence of the word mlk, “king” (CTA 19:152), is open to question because: a) the sudden appearance of this title

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1) Throughout this article Herdner's citations will be followed.

at this late stage and within this context raises doubts; b) line 151 seems to end with the proper name qr.mym, repeated in line 152 (incidentally, in both cases with a word—divider after qr)—but if so, the scribe would have been unable to fit the final m into line 151 (unless he went on to the edge—but the edge shows no trace of the wedge m); c) the alternative reading is equally acceptable:3)

$qr\ [m]\ ylm.\ ysm \ "Qr-Mym, against you," \ he \ reviled,$

$ylkm.\ qr.\ mym \ "Woe \ against \ you, \ o \ Qr-Mym!"$

Thus, mlk is never an epithet of Dnil (as it is, of course, of Krt), the internal evidence lacks any indication of kingship, and the only occurrence of the word mlk in connection with Dnil is textually doubtful. Consequently, there is no evidence that Dnil is a king, and the onus of proof is on those who claim that he is a king. It seems more likely that Dnil is a village-elder or chief.

Is there any evidence that Dnil is a wise and righteous elder or chief? The word $hk$m, though occurring occasionally in connection with El, the supreme god (CTA 3:V:38; CTA 4:IV:41), does not occur once in the Aqht Text. It is, consequently, never used in connection with Dnil. But even indirectly Dnil is not portrayed as a typical sage uttering proverbial sayings, riddles, or expressing cleverness. Dnil has no reputation for diplomatic skill or special competence in business matters (like, for example, the “Prince of Tyre” in Ez. xxviii 3-5). He does not inspect the liver of the vultures to predict the future (CTA 19: 109-10)—but rips open their bodies to look for the remains of his son. Nor does he interpret the flight of the vultures, i.e. to predict future events by the direction or pattern of flight—Dnil and Pgt merely realize from the presence of the vultures over their house that a time of drought is approaching (CTA 19: 32-37). Furthermore, Dnil’s riding around his fields is not a magical action but an act of blessing (CTA 19:61-74)4). The conclusion is

3) Dividing mlk into two words (m and lk) causes two problems: a) the lack of enclitic m on lk (cf. 1. 152) and the lack of prefixed y (cf. 11. 152/157/165); b) a predicate (ysm “he reviled”) within direct speech without a qualifying subject. But both can be explained: ad a) lines 157 and 165 also lack the enclitic m; and since this first line is atypical in other respects, too (e.g. no introductory line $ymg.l... \ "he \ arrived \ at" \ as \ in \ lines \ 156 \ and \ 163), one need not expect strict conformity to pattern; ad b) the use of a narrator’s insertion (whether mlk, ysm or just ysm) is a unique feature within the corpus of mythical texts. Thus, one is unable to evaluate the probability or even possibility in this case.

4) This incident becomes “magical” only if the hapax legomenon ahl is translated “I release, I remove the spell”. However, ahl may mean “I shall free, calm, adorn, wait”