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Frank Moore Cross (1921-2012) Hershel Shanks October 18, 2012 6 Comments 1952 views There will be a memorial service for Professor Cross in Memorial Church in Harvard Yard on Saturday, November 10th, at 4:00 p.m. Frank Moore Cross (1921-2012)We knew it would happen, but it still shocked. Frank Cross is dead! I will leave it to scholars to write of his scholarly accomplishments. I will only write of what I know: He stood at the very pinnacle of the profession, universally respected and admired. When he spoke, others stood in awe. The Hancock Professor of Hebrew and Other Oriental Languages at Harvard University, the third oldest endowed academic chair in the United States, Cross was a specialist in the Dead Sea Scrolls, in obscure ancient languages, in the science of dating ancient inscriptions based on the shape of the letters, in the Biblical text and in archaeology, to name but a few. I've been at this desk for almost 40 years and by now I can comfortably engage with senior colleagues. In the early years, however, I was a newcomer. I was a lawyer who had never taken a course in archaeology or even in the Bible. In those days, I divided scholars into two categories: those who welcomed novices like me and the other kind, who looked at me from their empyrean heights. Frank was clearly in the former group and I valued his friendship more than I can say. Whenever I was up Boston way, I would visit Frank, often in his lovely colonial home in Lexington that neck of the wood / where once the embattled farmers stoodwhere Frank lived with his wife, Betty Anbeby that time, their daughters were out of the house and on their own. Frank raised orchids, which seemed just right for him.I would sometimes interview Frank for BAR and eventually we made a book out of these interviews. We called it Frank Moore Cross/Conversations With a Bible Scholar. [The series of interviews is available online] One of the most treasured volumes in my library is the copy Frank sent me autographed with sincere thanks to my co-author.Among the books many insights, I think my favorite is Franks identification of Mt. Sinaïin Saudi Arabia. At first it sounds crazy, but I think Frank is right. Its in northern Saudi Arabia, near the Jordanian border, in what was ancient Midian. Ives always wanted to visit the site and in recent years I knew a senior diplomat who offered to help me; he was very close to the Saudi ambassador to the United States. But even this didnt work: I could get a visa but not permission to visit the northern part of the country.In all my talks with Frank, I never heard him yell. That didnt mean he didnt have strong feelings. For example, he called John Marco Allegro, a colleague on the original Dead Sea Scroll publication team, one of the few amoral people I have known He was also a limited and sloppy scholar.When Frank and I talked about the Dead Sea Scrolls, the campaign for their release had already been won, but until that happened we skirted the issue. As I said, Frank was a member of the original scroll publication team that had refused to release the scrolls. And I was the chief screetching voice that was protesting. Moreover, Frank had scroll publication assignments that after 40 years still had not been published. We never discussed this. I had the feeling Frank agreed with me in principle, but couldnt express it. After all, he himself was vulnerable. Moreover, Frank signed the letter (with more than 80 other scholars, including Jewish scholars) defending Franks Harvard colleague John Strugnell against charges of anti-Semitism. In short, Frank and I had our differences, but I mention this because this only enhanced my respect and admiration for the man. He was willing to respect my viewpoint, as, of course, I was his.All this concerning the scrolls was a blip that faded into insignificance with the passage of time. Franks scholarly achievements have had a radiating and lasting influence. I think, for example, of his oft-cited contribution to a 1961 festschrift for William F. Albright, titled The Development of the Jewish Scripts that laid the groundwork for the modern paleography of Second Temple scripts. In 2003, 55 of Crosss scholarly articles of this caliber were collected in a volume titled Leaves From an Epigraphers Notebook.iiHe could also write for the laypersonand gracefully at that. I think of his 1958 book The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies, which was reprinted a number of times and ultimately reissued in a revised edition.iii It still worth readingand often is.I cannot close without noting that Frank had an academic sibling of equal but different stature. Frank and David Noel Freedman were students together under the tutelage of their doktorvater, William Foxwell Albright, the father of modern Biblical archaeology. Frank and Noel even wrote a joint doctoral dissertation supervised by Albright. Iv Noel died in 2008. v Now they are both gone. An age has ended.H.S. The free eBook Frank Moore Cross: Conversations with a Bible Scholar, a collection of Hershel Shanks five interviews with Frank Moore Cross, is a treasure. Cross discusses the Hebrew Bible, the origins of Israel, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the history of the alphabet, ancient Hebrew seals and ancient Hebrew inscriptions. Additional Remembrances and ResponsesWe received additional remembrances and responses by colleagues, admirers and friends of Frank Moore Cross, and we would like to share them with the Bible History Daily community. Lawrence Stager, Harvard UniversityStaff and associates of the Semitic Museum join with many others in the Harvard community and beyond who mourn the passing of Frank Moore Cross, who died on October 17th 2012, at the age of 91. Frank Cross was esteemed by scholars around the world for his original and illuminating work in Biblical studies, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the history of the Ancient Near East. Frank held one of the oldest chairs at Harvard, the Hancock Professorship of Hebrew and Other Oriental Languages, from 1958 until he retired thirty-five years later in 1992. His successor, Professor Peter Machinist, has written an elegant tribute to Frank Cross highlighting many of the major themes of his scholarly career (see below). As an archaeologist of the Levant, and as an avowed and unapologetic Biblical archaeologist in the tradition of W.F. Albright, G. Ernest Wright, and Frank Moore Cross, I would like to preface the tribute with a few remarks about Franks contributions to archaeology. Lawrence Stager, Frank Moore Cross and Leon Levy.During the excavations at Qumran in the 1950s, Cross and J.T. Milik took some time off from there to explore the Bughā (little valley) a few kilometers to the west. There they surveyed and partially excavated three forts with adjacent farms dating to the late 8th/7th centuries BCE, making them early pioneers in the archaeology of frontier desert agriculture. Frank Cross generously gave me all of their documentation as I continued this desert research for my PhD dissertation, completed in 1975, with Cross as my primary advisor. He, by the way, sat on more than three hundred PhD committees and served as primary advisor on more than a hundred of those. As Director of the Semitic Museum from 1974 to 1987, and as chief editor of its publications, many of these dissertations were published in the Harvard Semitic Museum Series. As President of the American Schools of Oriental Research, Cross became the principal investigator at the start of the excavations at Carthage (1975/1980), where we discovered the commercial harbor (mentioned by the Roman historian Appian), and excavated in the nearby Precinct of Tanit (also known as Tophet), where hundreds of human infants, as well as infants and kids, were buried in cremation urns, some with their protective monuments still standing. Frank and his former student, Professor Paul Mosca, have deciphered the incised inscriptions on these stela, but interpreted the key sacrificial terms in very different, but equally reasonable ways. Just this year, the physical anthropologist Prof. Patricia Smith and our team published a definitive article in Antiquity, proving beyond a doubt that the cremated infants (nearly all one- to two-months old) were indeed Cross had always maintained on the basis of ancient texts and inscriptions: evidence of sacrificial offerings, not venerated fetuses or newborns who died of natural causes, as several revisionists have proposed. During several seasons of our ongoing excavations at the great Canaanite and Philistine seaport of Ashkelon, Frank and Betty Anne would spend a week or more on the dig as he studied the new crop of inscriptions. In Ashkelon 1, he published numerous epigraphs from the 604 BCE destruction of the city, at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian army, as well as inscriptions from the Persian period. These were mostly pot sherds (ostraca), with painted inscriptions, many of which were quite worn and faded, written in Phoenician, Neo-Philitine, Aramaic, and Greek. From his vast knowledge and experience, Frank had an uncanny ability to decipher the most baffling messages from the past. Frequently, we could check his readings by the non-inscriptional context in which they were found. In Ashkelon 3, we published what is, to my knowledge, the first permanent pre-Classical marketplace ever excavated. Cross reading of the inscriptions, when coupled with the pottery, bones, botany, and architecture, made the interpretation of this complex as a marketplace extremely compelling. Near the Counting House lay a ostrakon recording the sale of grain. The verb in this inscription could be used of the payment in silver. A few meters away, scale weights and a balance marked the location for weighing silver (Hacksilber, cut-up pieces of jewelry and ingots) in exchange for goods and services. In the Counting House lay a pile of charred wheat, once held in a cloth sack, which had been shipped from the Sharon Plain and sold in the Ashkelon marketplace. One of the last important pupils. Leaving his post at Stager, Israel Exploration Journal 56 (2006) He dealt with a remarkable, enigmatic inscription of nine characters (12th or 11th centuries BCE) at Ashkelon. He was the first to identify the script on this locally made pottery as Cypro-Minoan. This script is now known from Crete, Ugarit, and Cyprus where it was later used to write early Greek, remains undeciphered, but Frank Cross has paved the way for its eventual decipherment by identifying it as one, if not the only, early non-Semitic script used and adapted by the Philistines when they migrated from the Aegean world and first settled in southwest Canaan. Undoubtedly, there will be tributes from around the world to the brilliant life and career of Frank Moore Cross. 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