IN MEMORIAM

Anson Rainey

(1930–2011)

In his research and in his personal life, Anson Rainey bridged cultures, creeds and languages. Born in Dallas, Texas in 1930, he made his home in Israel; trained at a Baptist seminary, he converted to Judaism in 1980; after studying theology and biblical Hebrew, he also became an expert in Akkadian, Ugaritic, Egyptian, Phoenician and ancient Near Eastern archaeology and history. He was a highly productive scholar who authored nine books (three during his retirement), edited or translated ten more, and wrote over 300 articles and reviews. Rainey first arrived in Israel in 1960 to study archaeology, Egyptian, Coptic and Phoenician at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, as part of his doctoral studies at Brandeis University. On completing his thesis, The Social Structure of Ugarit, he returned to Israel in 1962 to teach Historical Geography at the American Institute of Holy Land Studies (now the Jerusalem University College), a connection he was to maintain for the rest of his life. He also had a long-running connection with Bar Ilan University, where he taught Historical Geography part-time from 1982 until his death.

Rainey was a key scholar of the Department of Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Cultures at Tel Aviv University, beginning as an instructor teaching Ugaritic and Akkadian in 1962 in the days of Yohanan Aharoni, whom he admired greatly. Rainey received tenure in 1967, became Associate Professor in 1970 and Full Professor in 1981. Until his retirement in 1998, he taught Ugaritic, Akkadian, Ancient Hebrew, Phoenician, Egyptian and Historical Geography of the Land of the Bible. He served on the editorial boards of the periodicals *Tel Aviv* and *Israel Oriental Studies* (both Tel Aviv University publications) and participated in numerous Tel Aviv University Institute of Archaeology excavations as a volunteer and area supervisor at sites such as Ramat Raḥel (1961); Arad (1963, 1964, 1967); Lachish (1966, 1968); and Khirbet Rabud (1968–1969); and eventually as a staff member at Tel Beersheba (1969–1976); Tel Michal (1977–1980); Tel Gerisah (1981–1983, 1986, 1988, 1995); and Tel Harasim (1997–1998).

In Israel and as a visiting scholar at Harvard University (1976–1977), the University of Pennsylvania (1983–1984; 1988–1989; 1995–1996), UCLA (2001), Konkuk University in Seoul, Korea (2002), and the University of Melbourne, Australia (2002), Rainey taught

students from all over the world; he kept in touch with many of his former pupils, advising, helping and encouraging them.

Rainey was a leading expert in the study of the Amarna letters: his four-volume *Canaanite in the Amarna Tablets* (1996) is a standard work in the field. After retiring from Tel Aviv University, Rainey collated Amarna tablets in London, Oxford, Berlin and Moscow (he had studied the Cairo tablets at the first opportunity, in the early 1980s) and prepared a new edition of the Amarna tablets. He was very proud of being the sole living scholar who had personally read every extant Amarna tablet.

Rainey's other passion, historical geography, also epitomized his interest in the interaction of ancient languages and cultures. He revised Yohanan Aharoni's *The Carta Bible Atlas* (2002) and subsequently developed it into *The Sacred Bridge* (2006), co-authored with R. Steven Notley, a historical atlas of the land of the Bible and the ancient Levant.

Rainey was a vigorous scholar with strong opinions and considerable joie de vivre. At eighty, he was still immensely active and relishing controversy. Last summer, he participated in the SBL conference in Atlanta, enjoyed a successful lecture tour in the United States and was busy preparing his translation of the Amarna letters. On his eighty-first birthday, he was suddenly hospitalized and diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, which turned out to be too far advanced to treat. He died a month later. He is survived by his third wife, Tsipi Cochavi-Rainey, and his son Yoni.

Deborah Sweeney