

Walter Farber

In the summer of 1992, **Walter Farber** combined a few weeks of collating magical texts in the British Museum and in Oxford with attending the Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale in Heidelberg, which for this year had the general topic, "Assyria through the Ages." He presented a paper on the royal ritual of the "House of Bathing," *bīt rimki*. Since this text had formerly been described as an "Assyrian ritual," he concentrated specifically on the question whether there are recognizable traces of an indigenous Assyrian tradition in this longish text com-

binning incantations and magical instructions. He showed that *bīt rimki*, like all other major Akkadian ritual compendia known today, was composed largely, although maybe not completely, from texts stemming from Babylonian traditions. What had formerly been taken as traces of truly Assyrian origin could, and most probably should, now be viewed as secondary influences which entered the text when it was compiled from Babylonian source material at the Neo-Assyrian court. Farber spent much of the remainder of the summer refining this paper and getting it ready for publication in the *Comptes Rendus* of the Heidelberg meeting.

Other manuscripts finished in 1992–93 include the publication of a “non-canonical” incantation against the infamous demon Lamaštu—a text, which for reasons unknown to us, did not get incorporated into the “canonical” three-tablet version of Lamaštu rituals that he is planning to edit in monograph format. Farber’s work on this book is now a priority and is progressing well.

Although magical texts have clearly been at the center of this year’s work, other topics have also occupied his mind and his word processor. The most interesting challenge was when, on very short notice, he was asked to write about myrrh in cuneiform texts for the *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*—one of those topics where on a closer look it becomes clear that the amount of available primary sources is inversely proportional to the space devoted to their speculative interpretation in the secondary literature.
