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Political Contacts or the Hebrews with Assyria and Babylonia

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Political Contacts of the Hebrews with Assyria and Babylonia.

(Concluded.)

Olmstead believes Hezekiah realized that Egypt was indeed a broken reed and decided to make his peace with the Assyrian king and therefore sent the above-mentioned tribute to Sennacherib after his return to Nineveh. But is it probable that Hezekiah would pay such a heavy tribute after the Assyrian monarch had been so completely crushed, had evacuated Palestine, and was now in far-away Nineveh? We are rather inclined to believe that Sennacherib is telling us an untruth to gild the termination of his campaign and to cover up his shame and disgrace. An untruth of this type is nothing unusual in the annals of the Assyrian kings. It is quite commonly known that the Assyrian kings oftentimes tell monumental lies on their monuments. A case in point is Sennacherib's description of the drawn battle at Halulê on the lower Tigris, in 691, against the Babylonians and Elamites, the most boastful description of a battle that has come down to us from Assyria. Sennacherib took the fenced cities of Judah, it is true, but Jerusalem remained inviolate according to the promise of the Lord; nor does the Assyrian anywhere assert to have taken it.

It is commonly held among scholars that 2 Kings 18 f. (Is. 36 f.) treats of two invasions of Sennacherib. In reply to this theory let it suffice to state that the Bible plainly speaks of only one campaign and that the cuneiform records make no mention of another expedition against Judah in the days of Sennacherib.

The great Assyrian king died as foretold by Isaiah. While he was worshipping in the shrine of Nisroch at Nineveh, he was assassinated by his two sons Adrammelech and Sharezer. Nisroch has been identified with Marduk. But for one thing, Marduk is regularly transliterated as Merodach in the Old Testament. We prefer to

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connect Nisroch with the Assyrian Nusku. The Hebrew נִסְרוֹךְ would then be a scribal error for נִסְרוֹךְ. The ן and the ך can easily be mistaken the one for the other. (Cp. the Table of Alphabets in Gesenius's Hebrew Grammar.) We realize that there are difficulties connected also with this identification; but that is the best one we know of at the present time. The names of Sennacherib's sons, Adrammelech and Sharezer, who committed the atrocity in 681 (2 Kings 19, 36 f.), plainly correspond to the Arad Malik and the Nabu-shar-usur of the cuneiform records. Sharezer is merely a shorter form for Nebo-sharezer. The first part of an Assyrian name can easily be dropped.²⁸⁾ The Babylonian Chronicle speaks of only one as the assassin, without mentioning him by name.²⁹⁾ But that presents no real difficulty. The latter probably refers to the actual assassin, while the Biblical account includes the accomplice. Moreover, 2 Kings 19, 37 is supported by a statement of Esarhaddon, the son and successor of Sennacherib. He says: "They [his brothers] revolted, and to secure the kingship, Sennacherib they killed."³⁰⁾

Sennacherib was followed by his son Esarhaddon (681—669). Internal troubles at his accession and the invasion of the tribes east of Assyria led to the revolt of Sidon, whose only mentioned ally was Sanduarri of the Taurus region. Egypt may have been in the background of the revolt. Esarhaddon marched against the rebels, took and destroyed Sidon in 677, and made a treaty with Tyre. After these successes he returned to Nineveh.

However, he was not long permitted to rest on his laurels. Soon he again proceeded against the West, the chief objective this time being Egypt, the cause of constant revolt among the Syro-Palestinians. But before undertaking the journey across the blazing sands to its border, Esarhaddon determined to win over or at least to tame the Arab tribes east and southeast of the Gulf of Akabah and in the Sinaitic peninsula.

In spite of these precautions his first attempts to conquer Egypt failed (674—673). This roused the Westland to new efforts, and new states revolted, among which were Tyre, Ashkelon, and Judah (2 Kings 21; 2 Chron. 33). His second campaign against Egypt (671) was crowned with success. The dream of former Assyrian monarchs had come true. Egypt now became an Assyrian province, administered by Assyrian officers. On his march homeward Ashkelon and Tyre surrendered; and Manasseh, king of Judah, was led captive

28) A. T. Olmstead, *History of Assyria*, p. 343. .

29) H. Winckler, *Keilinschriftliches Textbuch zum Alten Testament*, p. 65.

30) Quoted in Olmstead's *History of Assyria*, p. 338. For the reign of Sennacherib see pp. 283—315 of the work just referred to and the same author's *History of Palestine and Syria*, pp. 455—481.

to Babylon, where Esarhaddon loved to dwell.³¹⁾ Doubtless Manasseh did not go into captivity alone; it is not beyond the range of probability that other prominent citizens of Judah were led away as well and that it was at this time that Esarhaddon brought in the captives mentioned in Ezra 4, 1 f., to fill the waste territory caused by the deportation of the Jewish unfortunates. During his term of imprisonment and punishment, Manasseh repented and was restored to the throne, 2 Chron. 33, 10 ff. The story of Manasseh's restoration is fully supported; for we know that Ashurbanipal, the successor of Esarhaddon, carried captive to Nineveh the Egyptian rebel Necho of Sais and after his duly sworn allegiance sent him back to his post. Likewise the Arabian rebel Abiate' (Abiyatha) succeeded in placating Ashurbanipal and was made king in place of a certain Iauta' (Yatha).³²⁾ It is of no consequence that Manasseh's restoration is not mentioned in the Assyrian annals; it was a matter of minor importance in the affairs of the conqueror.

Esarhaddon's successor on the throne of Assyria was Ashurbanipal (Sardanapalus). His long reign marked the height of Assyrian expansion and came to an end ca. 626. In Egypt Esarhaddon's death was greeted by Tirhaka the Nubian as an opportunity to restore his own rule. That brought the Assyrian army to Egypt, in 667. For this expedition Manasseh of Judah, the kings of Ammon, Moab, Edom, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gaza, Cyprus, and others, twenty-two vassal kings in all, had to furnish land forces and marines and, besides, had to admit the Assyrian tribute collectors to their cities and provide for them.³³⁾

About 640 Ashurbanipal penetrated Elam and destroyed Susa. First of all Assyrian kings, he entered the palace of the kings of Elam and opened their treasure-house. All the spoil which the Elamites had in former times carried off from the land of the two rivers or which had been given them in payment by Shamash-shumukin of Babylon and the palace furniture became Assyrian prey. The temple tower of the chief shrine was torn down, and much booty was carried off to Assyria. To this period probably belongs Ezra 4, 9 f., where the author of an Aramaic letter incorporated into the Book of Ezra lists men of Babylon, Susa, Dahha, and Elam as part of the nations settled in Samaria by the great and noble Osnapper, whom scholars commonly identify with Ashurbanipal.³⁴⁾

Ashurbanipal was succeeded by Ashur-etil-ilani (626—621), who,

31) Ira M. Price places this incident in the reign of Ashurbanipal, p. 340.

32) J. H. Breasted, *A History of Egypt*, p. 557; Bruno Meissner, *op. cit.*, pp. 231 f.; 245 f.; D. D. Luckenbill, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 338.

33) D. D. Luckenbill, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 340.

34) A. T. Olmstead, *History of Assyria*, pp. 485—488.

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in turn, was followed by Sin-shar-ishkun (the Sarakos of the Greeks), the last king of Assyria proper, who occupied the throne from 620 to 612.³⁵)

We must now direct our attention to Babylon. On the death of Ashurbanipal the vast Assyrian empire fell to pieces, and Nabopolassar, whom Sin-shar-ishkun had sent as his general to defend Babylonia against an invasion of the People of the Sealand (around the Persian Gulf), revolted against his royal master and established himself as king of Babylon. By 616 all of Babylonia was under his control. His next objective was Mesopotamia. He at once invaded it; but after a number of successful battles we suddenly find him on a hasty retreat to his capital, in September of that same year, 616.

There was a reason for that unexpected retreat. Early in his reign, Psammetichus I, king of Egypt from 664 to 610, had been a vassal of Ashurbanipal; then he had revolted and liberated Egypt; next he had aided Shamash-shum-ukin of Babylon in his unfortunate revolt; and now, full of years and in control of an Egypt prosperous as never since the days of the eighteenth dynasty (1580—1350), he began to dream of following the example set by the Assyrians in a conquest of the fertile lands of Palestine and Syria. Nothing was to be feared from Assyria, as her power was no longer felt along the Mediterranean; but a renewed Babylonia was quite contrary to the calculations and wishes of Psammetichus. He desired to have a weak Assyria linger on as a convenient shock-absorber between Palestino-Syria and the rising power of Babylon and the northeastern barbarians. And so the empire which had called him vassal in his youth was supported in his old age as a buffer state against the rising power of another former Assyrian vassal, Babylonia. When the intelligence reached Psammetichus that Mesopotamia had been invaded by Nabopolassar, he forthwith set his troops in motion, and only the hasty departure of the Babylonians prevented them from being overtaken at Gablinu, in the vicinity of Nippur.

Nabopolassar then tried the line east of the Tigris and crossed the river to Ashur. The city was besieged, but the siege proved unsuccessful for the Babylonians. Nabopolassar had thus been checked both on the Euphrates and on the Tigris, by Psammetichus and Sin-shar-ishkun, respectively. Thus far conditions in Assyria were not inauspicious for the future.

But unfortunately for Assyria this was the moment chosen by another of her enemies to enter the struggle—the Medes. Headed by Cyaxares, they appeared before Nineveh in August of 614, but were unable to take the city. Cyaxares then passed down the Tigris

35) A. T. Olmstead, *op. cit.*, pp. 627—633; Bruno Meissner, *op. cit.*, p. 253 ff.

to Ashur. This, however, ran contrary to the wishes of Nabopolassar, who had no desire to see all his former efforts wasted and Ashur in the hands of a probable rival. And at once Nabopolassar hurried off his troops "to the aid of the Median"; but "the Median" had no desire whatsoever to see Ashur in the hands of Nabopolassar and did not care for his "aid." Therefore Cyaxares attacked the city immediately, and when Nabopolassar arrived with his army, he was faced by an accomplished fact. Now that he was in possession of the ancient Assyrian capital, Cyaxares was quite willing to come to terms with the master of so large a body of soldiers. And amid the ruins of Ashur friendship and alliance were established; and to seal the agreement, Nabopolassar's son Nebuchadnezzar was married to Amyitis, the daughter of Cyaxares's son Astyages.

By June of 612 all was ready for the final attack on Nineveh. Nabopolassar and Cyaxares mustered their forces and marched up the Tigris. Three battles were fought from June to August, and then the city was assaulted, captured, utterly destroyed, buried by the sand and dust and dirt of the storms, and her burial-place forgotten for centuries; yea, people actually plowed on the site of the former city, which for ages had been a proverb for riches and power throughout the Near East. The brief words of the Babylonian Chronicle, "A great havoc was made of the people and the nobles; . . . they [the enemy] carried off the booty of the city, a quantity beyond reckoning, and turned the city into heaps and ruins," are the counterpart of Nahum's prophecy concerning the fall of Nineveh: "Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold; for there is none end of the store and glory out of all the vessels of desire. She is empty and void and waste. There is a multitude of slain and a great number of carcasses; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses." The ash heaps and calcined sculptures still show how intense was the fire in which the palaces and the temples met their doom at the hands of the Medes and the Babylonians. The latter played only a subordinate part; the weight of the attack was borne by the Medes. The Babylonians were not particularly good soldiers, and it was up to Cyaxares to pull the chestnuts out of the fire. However, when it came to dividing the conquered empire, then Nabopolassar knew how to secure for himself the fattest portions. He annexed Elam, certain other districts east of the Tigris, and the Euphrates region along the road to Syria and Palestine, while Cyaxares received Assyria (in the narrower sense of the term), Mesopotamia, and a portion of Asia Minor.³⁶⁾

"The enemy had done his work thoroughly," says R. C. Thompson, "and the terraced mounds, fair palaces, imposing temples, lay

36) Bruno Meissner, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

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ruined and despoiled of their treasures. The great library of Ashurbanipal, stored with copies of thousands of clay tablets collected from so many sources and with such care, was broken up and the contents scattered broadcast over the ruins. The splendor of the temple of Ishtar, which lay close to the east of Sennacherib's palace, was brought to naught, and none was left to worship in the fane of the mother-goddess, whose statue, so proudly dedicated many hundreds of years before by Ashur-bel-kala, was cast out headless to lie humbled in the dust. Fallen, too, was the second great temple of Nineveh, dedicated to Nabu, which lay near the southern corner of Ashurbanipal's palace, solid of foundation and high of wall, wherein Ashurbanipal in his delight at his victories over the Elamites had commemorated his piety towards the god with stone slabs recording his prowess. The foe in his onslaught had broken them up, shattered the stone flooring, scattered the little library of which the priests were so proud, and left naught but the foundations. The parks with their almond blossoms, their fragrant lilies, their cotton-plants, the gardens where the lions roamed and the storks chattered, all the beauty of Nineveh now lay waste." ³⁷⁾ Zephaniah's prophecy, fulfilled in detail, sounds like a *vaticinium post eventum*: "And He [Jehovah] will stretch out His hand against the north and destroy Assyria and will make Nineveh a desolation and dry like a wilderness. And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations. Both the cormorant [pelican] and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; their voice shall sing in the windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds; for He shall uncover the cedar work. This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me. How is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! Every one that passeth by her shall hiss and wag his hand," Zeph. 2, 13 ff.

According to Diodorus and Xenophon ³⁸⁾ the capture of the city was made possible only by a great storm of rain and thunder, which caused the river to rise and sweep away the wall to a length of twenty stadia. This would be in conformity with Nah. 1, 8: "With an over-running flood he will make an utter end of the palace thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies"; and 2, 6: "The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved." All this agrees very well with the season as indicated in the Nabopolassar Chronicle discovered by C. J. Gadd and published in his little book *The Fall of Nineveh*. From this chronicle we know that the final siege of Nineveh lasted from the month of Sivan to the month of Ab, i. e., about from the beginning of June till some time in August.

37) In *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. III, p. 206.

38) Diodorus, II, 27, 1; Xenophon, *Anabasis*, III, 4, 7—12.

The heaviest rainfall in the Nineveh region normally occurs about March, together with the melting of the Armenian snows, with the result that the Tigris, where Nineveh was located, attains its greatest volume in April and May and begins to fall toward the end of the latter month. The Medes and Babylonians evidently took advantage of the devastation caused by an unusually high Tigris in the preceding spring to press home their assault on the only place in the wall which had been rendered vulnerable.³⁹⁾

The fall of Nineveh closed the history of Assyria proper. As we pause for a moment, we are reminded of the words of Nahum: "Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria; thy nobles shall dwell in the dust; thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them. There is no healing of thy bruise," Nah. 3, 18 f. Only a handful of Assyrians who were able to flee out of Nineveh struggled on. A certain Assyrian noble called Ashuruballit escaped the Babylonian troops and with Egyptian aid was able to assume the title of "king of Assyria" in a new capital, Harran in Mesopotamia. Harran lay on the road from Nineveh to the Mediterranean and from early times had formed a kind of western capital of the empire. It had, moreover, the advantage of being directly accessible to Egyptian armies, upon which the new king had to rely.

After the victory Cyaxares returned home, in September of 612. Nabopolassar occupied Nisibis and took tribute from the land of Rusapu, but apparently did not choose to winter amid the hills, especially since his ally had gone home; and he, too, returned home, to Babylonia; let the Assyrian wait in Harran. The following year saw a marked relaxation of activities after the great events at Nineveh. Nabopolassar marched against this new "land of Assyria," but was finally obliged to call in the Medes, and Ashur-uballit and his allies were driven out and fled across the Euphrates. Harran was thoroughly plundered and the great temple of the moon-god left in ruins.

But even that could not damp the spirit of the unconquered Ashur-uballit. The vigorous Egyptian king Necho II, who had replaced his father, Psammetichus I, the previous year, sent a great army to his aid, and with these men Ashur-uballit appeared in Mesopotamia in July, 609. He crossed the Euphrates, cut off a Babylonian garrison, and up to September assault upon assault was made on Harran. Now Nabopolassar came to the aid of his troops and defeated Ashur-uballit in battle. Of his fate we know nothing more.

In 608 Necho appeared personally in Syria. His aim was to join forces with the remnants of the Assyrians and to secure Palestine. Josiah, king of Judah, tried to block his advance, but was defeated

39) C. J. Gadd, *The Fall of Nineveh*.

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and killed in the battle of Megiddo, and Necho swept on to the Euphrates after having laid Judah under tribute, 2 Kings 23, 29 ff.; 2 Chron. 35, 20 ff.⁴⁰⁾

According to the King James Version of 2 Kings 23, 29, Necho went "against the king of Assyria." However, from the Nabopolassar Chronicle and from Josephus⁴¹⁾ we know that the Egyptian king went up to fight against the Medes and the Babylonians. It is obvious that the Hebrew $\text{לְיָ}^{\text{א}}$ in this connection is equivalent to $\text{לְיָ}^{\text{ב}}$. (Cp. Gesenius's dictionary.)

At this point let us cast at least a fleeting glance at the much-disputed question why Josiah opposed Necho on his march to the Euphrates. We need not go far afield to find the answer. Josiah realized that Assyria was lying on her death-bed and was in dire need of help; and trusting in the true God, whose worship he had restored, he tried to block the advance of the Egyptian and to keep him from restoring Assyria to her former health and strength; on the contrary, said he, let her die! He evidently hoped thus to free himself of Assyrian domination and to regain his independence.^{41a)}

The armies of Egypt and the remnant of Assyrian forces met the Babylonian troops near Carchemish, in 605, to decide the question of the supremacy of Southwestern Asia, of which Nabopolassar considered himself the legitimate heir, since it had been a dependency of Assyria, which the Babylonians had conquered, aided by the Medes. Because of illness, Nabopolassar could not himself lead his men to battle, and so his oldest son, Nebuchadnezzar, was placed in charge of the army. He came up on the right bank of the Euphrates, fell upon the Egyptians, and inflicted a sweeping defeat on his foe. Necho and his troops were forced to flee back through Palestine to the Nile, and all Syria fell to the Babylonians. Then Phœnicia and Philistia were taken. Judah, which had been a vassal of Egypt (2 Kings 23, 34), submitted next. In 2 Kings 24, 1 we read: "In his [Jehoiakim's] days Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years." At this time, in 605, took place what we read in Dan. 1, 1—7: "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, came Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into his hand. . . . And the king spake unto Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel and of the king's seed and of the princes," etc. Thus we have in 605 a beginning of the captivity of the Jews in Babylonia.

Nebuchadnezzar next advanced against Egypt. While he was at

40) A. T. Olmstead, *History of Assyria*, pp. 634—640.

41) Josephus, *Antiquities*, X, 5, 1.

41 a) Compare Vol. II, 38—45, of this journal.

the River of Egypt, he received the sad news that his father Nabopolassar had died in May or June of 604. He handed over his troops with the Syrian and Jewish captives to his friends and hurried to Babylon, where he was received as king without a sign of trouble and began a reign as brilliant as it was long and as powerful as it was brilliant. He was a vigorous and brilliant commander and physically as well as mentally a strong man; the greatest personality of his time in the Near East as a soldier, a statesman, and an architect. Of him Jeremiah said: "All nations shall serve him and his son and his son's son until the very time of his own land come," Jer. 27, 7.

To him Jehoiakim of Judah had paid tribute for three years, 2 Kings 24, 1. But driven by a popular party, he rebelled and refused to be considered a vassal of the Babylonians any longer, against the urgent advice of Jeremiah, 21, 9—11. Subsequently Nebuchadrezzar invaded Palestine and besieged Jerusalem ca. 597. Jehoiakim was bound in fetters to be led to Babylon, 2 Chron. 36, 6. But before he could be led away, he died. Jeremiah had prophesied: "He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem. His dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat and in the night to the frost," Jer. 22, 19; 36, 30. "It is not inconceivable that all the records are true," says Price, "that in the general capture of the city he was taken with other captives, that upon examination he still showed a rebellious spirit and was slain by order of the king and disgraced by being cast without the city and left unburied." 42)

Nebuchadrezzar chose Jehoiachin to be the successor of Jehoiakim. A period of but three months was sufficient to test the spirit of the young ruler. His defiance of Babylonian overlordship once more brought the Chaldean army upon Jerusalem. At the approach of Nebuchadrezzar, Jehoiachin surrendered. Accompanied by his mother and all his officials, the young king went out through the gate in hope of mercy. Mercy was granted to the degree that no one was slain, but Jehoiachin was carried off to Babylon with his mother, his whole court, seven thousand of his men of might, and a thousand craftsmen and smiths. This policy of deportation for crushing a rebellion was not quite the same as that inaugurated by the Assyrians, who "scattered their captives, so that they were rapidly assimilated by their neighbors and were deprived of all possibility of maintaining their own national life. These Jewish captives of Nebuchadrezzar were, on the other hand, enabled by their concentration to continue the offices of their religion and by that means maintain their exclusiveness." 43) Nebuchadrezzar's plan served a twofold purpose:

42) Ira M. Price, *op. cit.*, pp. 351—354.

43) R. W. Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 361.

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it guaranteed, for at least a period, the submission of this western section, and it furnished him skilful craftsmen to carry out his elaborate projects in the rehabilitation of Babylonia.

Mattaniah, the twenty-one-year-old uncle of the deposed king, was given the vacant throne, but his kingdom was strictly limited to the territory about the capital. He was forced to swear a solemn oath by Jehovah to be loyal to his new lord; and that he might ever be mindful of his oath, his name was changed to Zedekiah, 2 Kings 24, 10—12. 15—18; 2 Chron. 36, 9—13. For a while he was loyal to his Babylonian master, and he would probably have kept his oath had it not been for the seductions of Hophra (Apries), king of Egypt, who was anxious to win back Syria for himself. Hophra roused to rebellion the people of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon. These sent envoys to Zedekiah, urging him to revolt and to assist them; and soon Judah joined the ranks of the rebels.

In 588 Nebuchadrezzar appeared on the scene, and the effort to starve the city by siege began. Jeremiah advised capitulation and promised consequent mercy and life for the inhabitants; but his words went unheeded. True to their oath, the Egyptians came to the aid of Zedekiah, and the Babylonians were compelled to raise the siege, but only long enough to defeat the Egyptians and to drive them back to the Nile.

The Babylonians returned from their pursuit of the Egyptians, the siege of Jerusalem was renewed, and about July of 586 the walls were breached, and the Babylonians poured into the city. Zedekiah and his men of war fled that night by the gate between the two walls at the southeast corner near the king's garden and the Pool of Siloam. They hoped to reach the Arabah and so to pass to the east Jordan country, but were overtaken at Jericho. Zedekiah was carried to Nebuchadrezzar at Riblah, where his sons were slain before his eyes, and then he was blinded that his last sight might be the end of his hopes of posterity.

A month later, to forestall any future rebellion in this strong fortress, Jerusalem was thoroughly plundered, the Temple, the palace, and all other buildings of importance were burned and the walls of the city broken down. The few remaining nobles were deported to Babylonia, and only the poorest peasants were left behind, as vine-dressers and husbandmen, 2 Kings 25, 1—21. The whole line of prosperous Shephelah towns were utterly destroyed and never re-occupied during our period. Gedaliah was appointed governor of such Jews as remained, and he took up his residence at Mizpah, in a great tower and three thick-walled rooms built against the inner city wall.

Jeremiah was brought from the court of the guard and invited to go in honor to Babylon for having rendered such splendid services to Nebuchadrezzar in weakening the morale of the Judean rebels by

predicting Jerusalem's inevitable doom. However, Jeremiah declined and was then sent with gifts from Ramah, where the captives had been collected, to Gedaliah at Mizpah, Jerem. 39, 14; 40, 1—6.

The leaders of the bands wandering about in the open country came to Gedaliah, who urged them to settle in the abandoned towns they had occupied and to gather in the wine, the summer fruits, and the oil. Approximately three quarters of the population remained, made up of the poor people. Fugitives from Edom, Moab, and Ammon swelled the remnant.⁴⁴⁾

Judah's leaders and prominent citizens were in captivity. Many of them were prosperous in business, at Tell Abib and Ahava on the Nehar Kebar near Nippur. The Murashu documents discovered in 1893 shed a great deal of light on the Jews in Nippur. These contract tablets were the archives of the firm Murashu Sons, who were bankers and brokers at Nippur in the days of Artaxerxes I and Darius II and cover the years 464—404, almost the same period as the Assuan Papyri (471—411). In modern times Nippur is called Niffer or Nuffar. It is located about fifty miles southeast of Babylon. Nippur was divided in two almost equal parts by a large, important canal, whose bed is now dry. In one of the Murashu tablets the canal is called Nar Kabari (the large canal), which corresponds to the Hebrew נַהַרְכַּבְרָה, Ezek. 1, 1. According to Hilprecht it "was the greatest canal of Babylonia proper, 'the great canal' *par excellence*, which branched off from the Euphrates somewhere above Babylon and ran through almost the whole interior of the country from north to south. It was the great artery which brought life and fertility to the otherwise barren alluvial plain enclosed by the Euphrates and the Tigris and turned the whole interior into one luxuriant garden. The 'Nar Kabari' had the same significance for Nippur, the most ancient and renowned city of the country, as the Euphrates for Sippara and Babylon or the Nile for Egypt and therefore was most appropriately called 'the Euphrates of Nippur' by the Sumerians, 'the great canal' by the Semitic Babylonians, and the 'river Nile' by the Arabic population of later times."⁴⁵⁾ There, on the banks of the Great Canal, a part of the Israelites put up their tents, and there the prophet Ezekiel saw his visions. Many of the Jews lived here even after the Exile, as long as Nippur existed, to judge from the many inscribed Hebrew vases excavated in the upper strata of its ruins. They owned land and possessed capital and took a full share in the commercial activity of the community. Many of them were employed in the service of the Babylonians and the Persians, for whom they transacted business. Others were rent collectors; others, again, were royal officials. This

44) A. T. Olmstead, *History of Palestine and Syria*, pp. 505—540.

45) H. V. Hilprecht, *Excavations in Assyria and Babylonia*, p. 413.

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is borne out by the many Hebrew names that occur in the Murashu documents and by the functions these men performed. Among those names are such as Gedaliah, Haggai, Jonathan, Menahem, Berechiah, Mattaniah, Solomon, Zebediah, Nathanael, and Samson.⁴⁶⁾

Nebuchadrezzar's active reign of forty-three years closed with his death in 561. His had indeed been a very productive life. And in the eyes of the world his architectural and artistic efforts, fostered with all the zeal of an Oriental monarch, doubtless justified the pride with which he exclaimed: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty?" Dan. 4, 30. But such self-glorification did not meet with the approval of the Almighty. Nebuchadrezzar's own inscriptions naturally say nothing of his subsequent insanity, as recorded in Daniel. They speak only of a four-year-long suspension of interest in public affairs. In Daniel we have the cause for this suspension.

Amel-Marduk (or Awel-Marduk) fell heir to the splendid Babylonian government organized and administered by the political and military genius of his father Nebuchadrezzar. In 2 Kings 25, 27 he is called Evil-Merodach. One of his first acts was to free Jehoiachin from his thirty-seven-year-captivity and to place his throne above those of other subject kings. This policy was directly opposed to that of his father Nebuchadrezzar. Jehoiachin was permitted to marry. And in memory of the unexpected deeds of mercy he called the son that was born to him Pedaiah: Jehovah hath redeemed. Some one has made the assertion that thus Jeremiah's prediction that Jehoiachin would be childless was proved false. However, it is clear from the second part of Jer. 22, 30 that the prophet meant none of Jehoiachin's sons would ever sit on the royal throne of Judah; in that respect Jehoiachin would be "childless."

The priestly party soon became tired of Amel-Marduk and in about three years brought about his assassination and the accession of his brother-in-law Nergal-shar-usur (the Nergal-sharezer of Jer. 39, 3). He was a strong character, an old warrior and officer at the fall of Jerusalem, and endeavored to follow as far as possible in the footsteps of Nebuchadrezzar, his father-in-law.

Before the expiration of but four years (559—555) of successful administration Nergal-shar-usur died and left the throne to his young son Nabashi-Marduk. He was assassinated after only nine months of a precarious tenure of the throne because he was said to be incapable

46) H. V. Hilprecht and A. T. Clay, *Business Documents of Murashu Sons of Nippur Dated in the Reign of Artaxerxes I*; A. T. Clay, *Business Documents of Murashu Sons of Nippur Dated in the Reign of Darius II*; Samuel Daiches, *The Jews in Babylonia in the Time of Ezra and Nehemiah according to Babylonian Inscriptions*.

of ruling and to have displayed evil traits of character. But this may simply have been an excuse to justify his violent removal as a plot of the priestly party. However, that may have been, Nabonidus was installed as the new king.

Herodotus calls him *Δαβύνητος*,⁴⁷⁾ which is clearly a corruption of the Babylonian Nabu-na'id. The father of Nabonidus belonged to the nobility in Harran. His mother seems to have been a high-priestess of the moon-god Sin at Harran. If she was, we must probably attribute to her influence his ardent interest in religious matters. Nabonidus may have been a member of the priestly party himself. Properly speaking, he was neither a Babylonian nor a Chaldean, but a Mesopotamian Aramean.

His wife, Nitocris, the mother of Belshazzar, seems to have been a daughter of Nebuchadrezzar and his Egyptian wife Nitocris.⁴⁸⁾ If such was the case, Nebuchadrezzar could rightfully be called the *אב* of Belshazzar (Dan. 5, 2. 11. 18), which would then mean "grandfather," a perfectly good usage, as can be seen from Gen. 28, 13, where Abraham is called the *אב* of Jacob; from 2 Sam. 9, 7, where Saul is referred to as the *אב* of Mephibosheth, who in reality was the grandson of Saul; and from the wide range of meaning of the Hebrew word *אב* in general. However that may be, the references in Dan. 5 to Nebuchadrezzar as the *אב* of Belshazzar cannot be considered a scientifically established error.

Soon after his accession, Nabonidus formed an alliance with Cyrus, by which it was agreed that Nabonidus should at once attack Syria (then controlled by the Medes), while Cyrus should revolt from Astyages, king of the Medes. The arrangement was a politic one on both sides. It meant that the Medes would have their hands full at both ends of their empire, that their forces would be divided, and that Cyrus and Nabonidus could gain their objects more easily. Throughout 554 Nabonidus was engaged in collecting forces for his operations in Syria. These troops were assembled not only from Babylonia itself, but also from Phœnicia and Palestine. The following year he set off for Syria. In 550 Cyrus revolted from Astyages and thus kept his share of the bargain which he had assumed. Nabonidus was successful, and in 542 he left Syria and went against the city of Tema, the Biblical *תֵּמָה* (Gen. 25, 15; Jer. 25, 23; Job 6, 19; Is. 21, 14) and the modern Teima, located in Arabia Felix and still one of the main trade centers. In one inscription we also find the term "the land of Tema," which refers to the city and its environs and corresponds to the *תֵּמָה אֶרֶץ* of Is. 21. Nabonidus captured it, put its king to death, and then settled down in the city, built a palace in the Babylonian style,

47) Herodotus, I, 74.

48) R. P. Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, pp. 60—63.

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and beautified the place in general.⁴⁹⁾ As far as available evidence is concerned, he appears to have spent nearly all of his reign at this place, for unknown reasons, at a great distance from the throne which he had ascended.

Before Nabonidus set out for Syria, he "entrusted the kingship" (*sharrutu*) to his eldest son, Belshazzar.⁵⁰⁾ The exact amount of regal responsibility and authority placed upon Belshazzar is of course not indicated by that statement. The nature of his position must be determined by other considerations.

It should be noted, in the first place, that no cuneiform text applies the term of "king" to Belshazzar. His title remains "the son of the king" or "the crown prince" (*mar sharri*). The term "king" is applied to his father Nabonidus only. In the second place, even during his absence from Babylonia, Nabonidus did not relinquish his position as the first ruler in the empire. All fully dated cuneiform documents written during his absence still refer to him as the king. And when Nabonidus and Belshazzar are mentioned together, precedence is regularly given to the former. In the third place, we have evidence that Belshazzar was subject to the commands of Nabonidus. This is clearly borne out by the following inscription: "The seed field of the god Bel, which in the month of Nisan of the seventh year of Nabonidus, the king of Babylon, Belshazzar, the son of the king, at the command of the king divided for the taxmasters."⁵¹⁾ This command was issued while Nabonidus was in Tema, and it was carried out, as the document plainly shows.

It is evident that Belshazzar was the coregent of his father, associated with him not on terms of equality, but as the second ruler in the empire. Dan. 5, 7. 16. 29 is in remarkable harmony with such a state of affairs. There we read that Daniel was rewarded by being made "the third ruler in the kingdom." Nabonidus was the first ruler, Belshazzar the second; hence Daniel was made the third ruler and not the second, as we should otherwise expect (cp. the case of Joseph).^{51a)}

Owing to Nabonidus's long absence in Arabia, however, Belshazzar's role as a temporary substitute on the throne vanished, and he assumed prominence as the only male representative of the dynasty at the capital of the empire. He was in reality the acting sovereign of Babylonia, while Nabonidus exercised a reduced influence on home affairs during his prolonged absence in Arabia. There were thus two

49) Sidney Smith, *Babylonian Historical Texts*, pp. 44—53 and 77.

50) *A Persian Verse Account*, col. II, 20. (Published in Sidney Smith, *op. cit.*)

51) R. P. Dougherty, *op. cit.*, pp. 136 f. and 96.

51 a) Cp. Vol. III, 215, of this journal.

potentates in the empire, one who maintained his seat of power in distant Arabia and one who directed affairs in Babylonia.

We need therefore not be surprised that three tablets from Erech (Uruk), dated in the twelfth year of Nabonidus, state that, when a contract was made, the parties concerned took their oath by the deities Bel, Nabu, the Lady of Erech, and Nana, and the decrees of "Nabonidus, the king of Babylon, and Belshazzar, the son of the king."⁵²⁾ This fact is worthy of note, since from the time of Hammurabi (ca. 2100) it was customary among the Babylonians to swear by the gods and the reigning king.⁵³⁾ But here we have a case where people in a business transaction take an oath in the name of the king and the name of "the son of the king," which plainly points to the high position occupied by Belshazzar. There is no other instance in available documents of an oath's being sworn in the name of the son of the king, *i. e.*, in the name of the crown prince.

There is nothing unusual about the fact that Nabonidus made Belshazzar his coregent. Long before that, we find cases where the future successor to the throne or another son of the king was made and called king during his father's lifetime. Jehoshaphat of Judah appointed his son Jehoram king of Judah seven years before his death (cp. 2 Kings 8, 16 with 1, 19). When Uzziah was smitten with leprosy, his son Jotham was made king of Judah, although Uzziah was still living and was still regarded as king in the final summing up of the years of his reign. Assyrian and Persian history furnish further striking precedents for this political procedure. Sennacherib placed his son Ashur-nadin-shum upon the throne of Babylon, and Esarhaddon not only made his son Shamash-shum-ukin king of Babylon, but crowned his first-born, Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria.⁵⁴⁾ And, finally, Herodotus reports that Darius Hystaspes appointed Xerxes to be king over the Persians, "as he was about to lead forth his levies against Egypt and Athens."⁵⁵⁾

While Nabonidus was in Tema and Belshazzar was the virtual ruler of Babylon, the storm-clouds were gathering. In 550 Cyrus of Anshan, in Elam, revolted from the Median king Astyages and brought the empire of the formerly overpowering Medes to an end. The Persians under Cyrus now fell heir to all that the Medes had won. The Lydian empire was taken, and before the end of 545 the entire peninsula of Asia Minor was a part of the new Persian empire.⁵⁶⁾ The next objective of Cyrus was Babylon. But thanks to

52) R. P. Dougherty, *op. cit.*, pp. 136 f. and 96.

53) *American Journal for Semitic Languages*, XXIX, 65—94; XXX, 196—211.

54) *Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. III, 66. 87. L. W. King, *History of Babylonia*, p. 271.

55) Herodotus, VII, 2. 3. 56) R. W. Rogers, *op. cit.*, pp. 375—378.

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Nebuchadrezzar's vast projects the entire region round about the capital was a huge fortified camp, which could not be starved, for within its outer walls were fields sufficient to feed the whole population. Hence Cyrus decided on a policy of encirclement, hoping that in the mean time the disaffected elements within Babylon itself might revolt. A Persian governor was sent to occupy Erech, the most important city south of Babylon, while an Elamite general of Cyrus entered North Babylonia. In 539 Cyrus defeated the Babylonian army at Opis, where the only real battle of the campaign was fought. Sippar, another city north of Babylon, was taken without a blow, and the capital lay isolated.⁵⁷⁾

"On the sixteenth day (of October, 539) Gobryas (Ugbaru), the governor of Gutium, and the troops of Cyrus entered Babylon without a battle."⁵⁸⁾ This terse note of the chronicler will bear elucidation. Gobryas was governor of Gutium (a district north of Babylon and east of the Tigris) and the chief general of Cyrus. According to Xenophon he was a man of years coming to Cyrus and offering his help in the capture of the Babylonian capital, the motive for his hostility toward it being that he had been maltreated at the hands of the Babylonian king. Herodotus and Xenophon relate that the Babylonians shut themselves in, relying upon a great store of provisions which had been gathered. A tedious siege followed the investment of their capital. Cyrus saw that he could not take the city by assault, and hence he had a large trench dug for the purpose of diverting part of the stream which flowed through Babylon. When all the necessary preparations had been made, he waited until the time of a festival which the Babylonians were accustomed to observe with drinking and revelry throughout the night (cp. Dan. 5, 1—4). Then he lowered the river by causing much of its water to flow aside, and when the stream was sufficiently shallow to allow his troops access to the city, the great metropolis was entered (cp. Is. 44, 27), Gobryas conducting the attack.⁵⁹⁾ Seventeen days after the military occupation of the city had been achieved by Gobryas, Cyrus entered it in person and was received joyfully. There had been enough time for adjustment to the new situation, and all opposition to Cyrus could have been effectually broken by that time.

It will be of interest to consider where Nabonidus was at the time of the siege and capture of Babylon and who was in charge of the capital. Nabonidus appears to have returned from Tema to the Tigro-Euphrates Valley not long before Babylon was taken,⁶⁰⁾ but *when* he returned and where he was at that critical time, we have no

57) and 58) Nabonidus Chronicle, col. III, 12—15. (Published in Sid. Smith, *op. cit.*)

59) Herodotus, I, 190 f. Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, VII, 5, 1—36.

60) Sidney Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 102 f.

means of knowing. But we do know that he was not in Babylon; for we read in the Nabonidus Chronicle: "On the fourteenth [of October], Sippar was taken without a battle. Nabonidus fled. On the sixteenth, Gobryas, the governor of Gutium, and the troops of Cyrus entered Babylon without a battle. *Afterwards Nabonidus, when he returned to Babylon, was taken prisoner.*"⁶¹) Consequently it appears to be a fair conclusion that Belshazzar was in command of the city when it was taken by the Medes and the Persians in 539, aside from the fact that our conclusion is borne out by Dan. 5. None of the available documents affirm that Belshazzar was present at the fall of Babylon, and no positive evidence against it has been found. These considerations will at the same time answer the question why Nabonidus is not mentioned in the Book of Daniel. He had little or no share in the events which transpired in Babylon in those fateful days; the real figure was Belshazzar. Hence the prominent role the latter plays in Daniel.⁶²)

Cyrus was a wise and tolerant ruler. We know from his inscriptions that he set free the various tribes held in Babylonian captivity, returned their gods, restored the temples of their deities, and granted religious liberty to all his subjects in and outside of Babylon. The Jews were not the only ones permitted to retrace their steps to their beloved fatherland; on the contrary, by the almighty will and power of the Lord of Hosts, a whole world was set in motion, as later on in the days of Caesar Augustus, in order that God's people might return to the land which He had promised the patriarchs and their descendants and in order that His holy Child might be born in Bethlehem for our salvation.

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ALEX. HEIDEL.

Der Begriff „Gerechtigkeit“ im Alten Testament, besonders in den Psalmen.

(Eine Konferenzarbeit.)

Einer der Grundbegriffe der von Gott in seinem Wort geoffenbarten Religion ist Gerechtigkeit. Das rechte Verständnis dieses Begriffs ist eine notwendige Voraussetzung der rechten Erkenntnis der Zentrallehre des Christentums, nämlich der Lehre von der Rechtfertigung. Die göttliche Rechtfertigung ist ja nichts anderes als das göttliche Urteil über einen sündigen Menschen, daß er „gerecht“ sei, daß er die Gerechtigkeit habe, die vor Gott gilt. Und zu diesem Zweck hat der

61) Nabonidus Chronicle, col. III, 14—16.

62) Our section on Nabonidus and Belshazzar is based chiefly upon R. P. Dougherty's book of the same title.