

Concordia Theological Monthly

Continuing

LEHRE UND WEHRE
MAGAZIN FUER EV.-LUTH. HOMILETIK
THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY-THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY

Vol. VII

June, 1936

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Es ist kein Ding, das die Leute mehr bei der Kirche behaelt denn die gute Predigt. — *Apologie, Art. 24.*

If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?
1 Cor. 14, 8.

Published for the
Ev. Luth. Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States
CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE, St. Louis, Mo.

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Title: Political Contacts of the Hebrews with Assyria and Babylonia

Date of first publication: 1936

Author: Alexander Heidel

Date first posted: Dec. 1, 2017

Date last updated: Dec. 1, 2017

Faded Page eBook #20171203

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Political Contacts of the Hebrews with Assyria and Babylonia.

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Ancient Palestine served as a bridge over which passed traders and armies from Egypt on the one hand and from Babylonia and Assyria on the other; and thus the Hebrews repeatedly came in contact with the peoples of the Nile and of the Tigris-Euphrates. These contacts were chiefly of a political, commercial, social, and religious nature. In the present paper it is not our aim to offer a comprehensive treatment of all of them; we shall rather turn aside from all the other phases and focus our attention on the political relations of God's chosen race with the

people of Assyria and Babylonia.

But before doing so, we shall give a 419
very brief summary of some of the
outstanding political developments preceding
these contacts to gain a more adequate picture
of the situation.

At the dawn of recorded extra-Biblical history, Babylonia, particularly the southern half of it, was inhabited by a non-Semitic race called the Sumerians. Approximately 2600 before the Christian era they were subjugated by the Semites of the northern half of Babylonia, headed by Sargon of Agáde (Sargon I); he united the north and the south and is the first Semitic ruler of the Tigo-Euphrates Valley, who asserts that he carried on warfare as far west as the Mediterranean Sea. The waning power of Sargon's successors was followed by a period of anarchy, after which the Sumerians once more gained the upper hand for a span of but twenty-six years. Their weak rule was displaced by that of the hordes of Gutium, to the northeast of the Tigris. For a century and

a quarter Babylonia lay at their mercy, during which the country reached the depths of degradation. Finally the Gutti were expelled by the Sumerian Utuhegal. But soon Babylonia came under the control of the great Amorite lawgiver Hammurabi (ca. 2000). The empire built up by the mighty Hammurabi rapidly disintegrated in the hands of his successors, and the Kassites, from the mountains east of the Tigris, swept into the rich country and held it for five hundred and seventy-six years.

In the mean time Assyria appeared on the scene and, with short intervals of weakness and almost disaster, became the dominating power of the ancient Near East. Babylonia, the former power, was conquered and annexed by Tukulti Ninurta I, ca. 1250, and henceforth was, for the most time, the vassal of Assyria; only for short intervals was she able to throw off the yoke of Assyria and even to impose her will upon her oppressor.

In the long list of Assyria's kings we find the names of several monarchs who came in

touch with the kings of Judah and Israel and who in their inscriptions record their relations with the Hebrews.

The first of these political contacts is recorded in the annals of Shalmaneser III (860-825), who followed his father's policy of extension northward and westward and of annexation of lands adjoining Assyria and whose reign represents the great period of incorporation. Thanks to the efforts of his father the foreign situation was rather encouraging, offering alluring opportunities for war. Assyria was at peace with Babylonia; the Aramean invasion of Mesopotamia had been checked; the Median tribes just appearing on the eastern horizon presented no real danger as yet; Syria promised much booty at little cost; the ephemeral glories of the Hebrews under David and Solomon had disappeared with the disruption of the kingdom; and Egypt was a mere broken reed.

The only country causing him serious concern was Urartu (occupying the greater part of Armenia), whence the

Hebrews derived the form Ararat. The kings of Urartu were pursuing a rather active policy of lopping off some of Assyria's possessions. Shalmaneser's father had made Assyrian influence supreme in Western Mesopotamia, but the rapid growth and expansion of Urartu had seriously weakened Assyrian prestige, and once again the Euphrates bend had to be won by the sword. Shalmaneser went on an expedition against Urartu. But it was a failure. Shalmaneser realized that it would indeed be a difficult task to develop successes on this frontier and that the material returns might not meet the expense of equipping an army. Hence he decided to subdue all those regions where the influence of Urartu was strong before attacking Urartu proper. He therefore proceeded against Adini, east of Aleppo, and against wealthy Northern Syria, where not only the influence of Urartu was strong, but which was also known for its cedar and cypress; its gold, silver, iron, lead, and copper; its sheep, wool, and ivory. Northern Syria was ravaged, and a yearly tribute was laid upon it. And now Shalmaneser again marched against Urartu

and this time met with more success than on his first campaign.

His successful warfare in Syria had paved his way for further advance to the South. At the end of this road lay the greatest prize yet to be won: Egypt, a country with a mighty past, a present wealth, and a future which at its best was most dubious. In spite of all her manifest weakness, Egypt still claimed a vague supremacy over the whole of Syria and Palestine, in memory of the days of Thutmose III and Ramses II, and did all in her power to postpone the day when Assyria should stand on the north side of the desert and look with desire to the Nile Valley. And we cannot blame her for that. Rather Syria and Palestine are to be blamed, who had been so blinded by the glorious past of Egypt as not to recognize the ever-lessening promise of the future and who were constantly looking to Egypt for help.

In 854 Shalmaneser was ready to take the next step southward. But a coalition had been brought together at Qarqar (Karkar),

somewhat to the northwest of Hamath, to block his advance. Behind this confederacy stood Egypt. The Assyrians, however, knew that Egypt was but a broken reed, and list it far to the end of the record. She contributed a mere thousand men. In the annals of Shalmaneser the headship is assigned to the king of Damascus. His troops consisted of twelve hundred chariots, the same number of cavalry, and twenty thousand infantry. The king of Hamath comes next, with seven hundred chariots, seven hundred cavalry, and ten thousand foot-soldiers. The third place is taken by Ahab of Israel. This marks Israel's first political contact with Assyria, an incident not mentioned in Holy Writ. According to the Assyrian statistics he contributed two thousand chariots and ten thousand soldiers. Even if these figures be exaggerated, they prove the relative position of Israel. Ahab ranked high in the coalition which gathered at Qarqar in 854. He is assigned the largest number of chariots. To these were added details from Cilicia, Phenicia, and Ammon. Judah, Edom, and Moab do not appear on Shalmaneser's

Monolith Inscription which records the events of this campaign. They were Ahab's vassals, and their troops may have been included in his contingent, *if* they did at all participate in the battle.

On his Monolith Inscription, Shalmaneser naturally claims a complete victory. He says of the allies: "From Qarqar, as far as the city of Gilzau, I routed them. Fourteen hundred [?] of their warriors I slew with the sword. Like Adad [the storm god] I rained destruction upon them. I scattered their corpses far and wide; I covered the face of the desolate plain with their wide-spreading armies. With [my] weapons I made their blood to flow down the valleys of the land. The plain was too small to throw down their bodies; the wide countryside alone sufficed for their burial. Their bodies blocked the Orontes like a dam. In that battle I took from them their chariots, their cavalry, their horses, broken to the yoke."^[1] The number of the slain naturally grew as time advanced and as the editions of the inscription increased. It

grew from fourteen thousand to twenty thousand five hundred, then to twenty-five thousand, and finally to twenty-nine thousand.

Succeeding events seem to prove that the battle at Qarqar was a draw, if not an Assyrian defeat. What, then, shall we think of Shalmaneser's boast of a sweeping victory? A. T. Olmstead, one of the greatest living authorities on Assyrian history, says: "The Assyrian has been a very successful liar indeed, for his statements have been regularly accepted at face value. There is no excuse for the display of so touching, but childlike a faith on the part of the Orientalist; for the official Assyrian records demand as drastic a higher criticism as has ever been inflicted upon any part of the Old Testament. We may compare one record with another, one edition with an earlier, an Assyrian statement with that of a Hebrew, the pictorial with the written, and at every stage we shall have plentiful examples of untruth."^[2]

In 849 Shalmaneser again visited the West. He captured certain cities belonging to Carchemish and reduced Hamath to subjection. The year 846 once more found the Assyrian waging war in Central Syria, the two greatest powers of which were Hamath and Damascus. Shalmaneser crossed 422 the Euphrates with a force of one hundred and twenty thousand men, an indication of the gravity of the situation. However, he did not succeed in crushing his enemies, and it was impossible to keep so large an army in the field. This was a serious check to Assyrian arms, and for a time the West was left in peace.

By 842 conditions had become more favorable for Shalmaneser. The alliance which had offered such determined resistance at Qarqar had broken up. Hazael did not occupy the surpassing position of his predecessors and was therefore unable to hold 3 the alliance of the Syrian princes together. Hamath had borne the brunt of previous campaigns and seems to have been

exhausted. Ahab of Israel was dead; the king of Damascus had been smothered while ill, and Hazael had usurped the throne, 2 Kings 8, 7 ff. Then the war with Israel entered a more active phase with Jehoram's attempt to win back Ramoth-Gilead, and the Assyrian monarch on his advance west met with no opposition until he entered the territories of Damascus. There, under Mount Hermon, Hazael, without an ally, opposed him; but his fortified camp was stormed, the orchards filling the fertile plain were felled, and the Assyrians appeared before Damascus. But the walls were too strong for assault, and Shalmaneser did not have the patience for a formal siege. Hence he had to be satisfied with a plundering raid into the Hauran Mountains to the east and the south, whose rich volcanic soil made it the granary of the Syrian area.

Shalmaneser next turned to the coast, through the plain of Esdraelon. On a projecting cliff, which he calls "Baal's Head," at the mouth of the modern Nahr el-Kelb at Beirut, he affixed a stela. It was at this time that he received

tribute from Tyre and Sidon. The Tyrians and Sidonians evidently sent their gifts in order that their commerce might not be impeded by war. And he also received tribute from “Iaua mar Humri,” that is, from Jehu, the son of Omri. On Shalmaneser’s Black Obelisk, which represents both in words and in pictures several peoples who paid him tribute, we read the following: “Tribute of Jehu, the son of Omri. Silver, gold, a bowl of gold, a beaker of gold, goblets of gold, pitchers of gold, lead, a staff for the hand of the king, javelins, I received from him.”^[4] The dynasty which Omri founded had gained such renown that the Assyrians called Israel by the name of “Bit Humri” (the house of Omri), even long after the line was ended.

“There is no Biblical or known Assyrian record of any defeat of Jehu by Shalmaneser, nor is there any evidence that he was merely paying the tribute of his predecessors on the throne. The dangerous approach of Shalmaneser and the invincible character of his army forewarned Jehu that his

surest method of deliverance would be to dispatch his envoys, even if he himself did not go, and pay the price of submission.”^[5]

So far no statement has appeared in the inscriptions of Shalmaneser that he had left the military highway and had actually invaded any territory of Israel. Jehu paid him tribute as a matter of precaution, but he probably never met the Assyrian army in battle.

Damascus was still unconquered. In 838 Shalmaneser made a last effort to reduce it to subjection, but failed.

After a few more campaigns in the West, against the men of Qu'e (or Ku'e, the later Cilician Plain), for having taken part in the battle at Qarqar, Tubal (Tabal), Tarsus (Tarzi) in Cilicia (known for its silver), and other places of little importance, Shalmaneser had to grapple with a serious revolt spread throughout his dominion. This revolt shook the empire to its foundations. All the country west of the Euphrates: Syria, Palestine, and

Asia Minor, all the lands so often raided beyond the Armenian Mountains, a great deal of the territory along the eastern frontier of Assyria, slipped away, and the greater part of it was not restored until the time of Tiglath-
[6]
Pileser III.

Because of these internal troubles and the weakness of the next king the Westland remained undisturbed by Assyria for approximately forty years, from the middle of the reign of Shalmaneser III to that of his grandson, Adadnirari III (812-782). This king again pushed westward, and by the middle of his reign the land of the Hittites, the entire Amurru land, Tyre, Sidon, Israel, Edom, and Philistia recognized the Assyrians as their masters. The subjection of Tyre, Sidon, Israel, Edom, and Philistia, which Adadnirari maintains to have accomplished, need only imply that representatives of those states paid him homage in Damascus as their new overlord. According to his own account, Adadnirari crushed Damascus, and Israel was thus released from the immediate presence of

that dangerous rival, 2 Kings 13, 5. ^[7] Since the days of Shalmaneser's appearance in Syria in 854 Damascus, by its very location and strength, had been defiant and unconquered. But its allies were cut off one by one, its resources were crippled by successive invasions, and now the Assyrian army was in a position to reduce so powerful a stronghold to subjection. This disposed of the most formidable obstruction to Assyria's free course toward the southwest with all its small peoples and particularly to an open roadway to wealthy Egypt. The submission of Damascus meant not only relief for the Israelites, but freedom in the immediate future to extend their power 424 and to increase their revenues. ^[8]

Assyria's next three kings (Shalmaneser IV, Ashurdan III, and Ashurnirari V) spent their mediocre strength and their time chiefly in the vicinity of their capitals. The weakness of Assyria was such that her monarchs could barely hold their own in their capitals. Yet they continued to send expeditions against

Syria; but Palestine and Urartu were left to their own devices and were thus given an opportunity to expand. This opportunity was utilized at once. Argishtish, king of Urartu, made his kingdom the first power in the Near East and imposed on the tribes beyond the Araxes River.

Jeroboam II, king of Israel, recovered the Israelitish territory which had fallen into the hands of Syria, and engaged in campaigns directly against her. His military success carried his arms almost to the banks of the Euphrates and to Hamath, in Central Syria. He conquered the Moabites and extended the bounds of his kingdom to the lower end of the Dead Sea. This gave Israel her largest realm and made possible for her the natural development of her resources. With territorial expansion came increased revenues, a larger influence over her neighbors, and a more abundant measure of leisure and luxury, so that Samaria could vie with Tyre and Damascus in the splendor of her buildings. The commercial and social conditions and their dreadful results are set forth in the books

of Amos and Hosea.

Uzziah, king of Judah, likewise took advantage of Syria's decline and Assyria's absence. He conquered the Philistines and the peoples to the south and the southeast until he reached virtually the boundaries of the old Solomonic realm. He thoroughly organized this territory, established a large and well-trained standing army to meet all emergencies that might endanger his kingdom, and strengthened the fortifications of Jerusalem. This period marks the culminating point of political and commercial prosperity of the dual kingdom, Israel and Judah, under Jeroboam II and Uzziah, respectively. Their combined territory was now almost coterminous with the Davidic and Solomonic realm. Their success, however, was due to the crippling of Syria by Assyria and to Assyria's absence from Palestine. And this prosperity, based upon the misfortune of neighboring peoples and not upon moral integrity, valor, or economic industry, contributed in no small measure to the decay of Judah and Israel.

With the accession of the great Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727), the dry bones of Assyria took on new flesh, new life and blood, and Assyria arose stronger than ever. The first two years of his reign were occupied in settling palace affairs, quelling rebellions, establishing his authority in Mesopotamia, even down to the south of Babylon, reorganizing the army, and making it the most perfect fighting instrument in the world of those days. From 743 to 740 he was engaged about Arpad, the key to Northern Syria, to annex Syria and to gain command of the highroad of commerce to the sea. When the Assyrians entered Syria, Menahem, king of Israel, hastened to gain the good will of Tiglath-Pileser to retain his throne, offering him a thousand talents of silver. "So the king of Assyria turned back and stayed not there in the land," 2 Kings 15, 19 f. In this passage Tiglath-Pileser is called Pul. By the name of Pulu he was known among the Babylonians.

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With a vast amount of booty and guaranties of submission on the part of the western

provinces of Phenicia, Syria, and Israel, Tiglath-Pileser returned to his capital on the Tigris. From there he carried campaigns over into Media (737) and added large portions of it to his domain. ^[9]

In the days of the Judean king Ahaz, Israel and Syria, under Pekah and Rezin, respectively, made common cause against Judah, which had cast off the Israelite yoke and had expanded, thanks to the incapable rulers in the Northern Kingdom. In his distress Ahaz offered up his oldest son, the crown prince, in the fire unto Jehovah. On the failure of this sacrifice he stripped the gold and silver from palace and Temple and sent them to Tiglath-Pileser, saying: "I am thy servant and thy son; come up and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria and out of the hand of Israel, which rise against me," 2 Kings 16, 7.

The appeal of Ahaz fitted exactly into the schemes of Tiglath-Pileser: the reconquest and organization of the whole Westland and

next the conquest of Egypt. Tiglath-Pileser came. In 732 Damascus was taken, Rezin killed, and the line of kings extinguished. The inhabitants were deported to Kir, and Central Syria became a definite dependency of Assyria.

The system of deportation was not original with Tiglath-Pileser III. Previous Assyrian monarchs had made use of it, but Tiglath-Pileser employed it on a larger scale. Especially people of prominence, influence, and leadership were violently removed from their homes to distant parts of the empire, and their place was occupied by people taken from other Assyrian dependencies. It was an administrative measure, designed to prevent further rebellions. Persons who had been influential at home among their own people would be powerless to foment trouble in the midst of strange surroundings and neighbors of an unfriendly race. Nationalism was thus blotted out, and with it went the chief support of a local culture. Old customs and the language might survive among the silent masses; but the intelligent classes were

welded into one international society. The deportation of captives resulted in an assimilation not so different from that of the American “melting-pot.” A. T. Olmstead says: “We can form some conception of the immense amount of discomfort, if not of actual suffering, which resulted, the settlement of mountaineers in the hot plains, and *vice versa*, the deaths from the unwholesome surroundings or from the brutality of the military escort, the complete breakdown of the economic system when highly skilled bankers and artisans were placed in countries which afforded a bare existence and rude nomads took their place in the old culture lands.”^[10]

The anger of Tiglath-Pileser was next poured out on the Arabs in the desert land east and south of Damascus for having constantly harassed his troops during the siege of Damascus^[11] Thereupon he turned against Pekah of Israel. The entire land north and east was detached from Israel and formed into three provinces: Hamath in the Lebanon

district, Hauran, and Gilead. He then crossed the Jordan and took Galilee and made it a province ruled from Megiddo, which stood as an Assyrian guard post against an Israel confined to a few square miles about

Samaria, 2 Kings 15, 29. ^[12] Pekah was not even permitted to retain this terribly decreased Israel. Hoshea conspired against him, killed him, and reigned in his stead, 2 Kings 15, 30. In a somewhat fragmentary inscription, Tiglath-Pileser says: “The land of Israel . . . all of its people, together with their goods, I carried off to Assyria. Pekah (Pakaha), their king, they deposed, and I placed Hoshea (Ausi’) over them as king. Ten talents of gold, ten talents of silver, as their tribute I received from them, and to Assyria I carried them.” ^[13] As a matter of fact, Hoshea presented the Assyrian monarch with this money from his tiny kingdom to gain ^[14] recognition from him.

Tiglath-Pileser had indeed heard the cry of Ahaz, but in the ultimate analysis the king of

Judah derived little benefit from it. We read in 2 Chron. 28, 20 f.: “Tilgath-Pilneser, king of Assyria, came unto him and distressed him, but strengthened him not. For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of the Lord and out of the house of the king and of the princes and gave it unto the king of Assyria; but he helped him not.” In addition to this he probably had to help support Tiglath-Pileser’s army. Ahaz paid dearly for whatever help the Assyrian afforded him.

Disturbances in Babylonia necessitated 427
Tiglath-Pileser’s return (731), while his generals were busy on the western frontier, where the king of Tubal (Tabal) was deposed. The commander-in-chief then went on to Tyre, which won absolution for a temporary lukewarmness by the enormous sum of a hundred and fifty talents of gold (728). The following year the last embers of revolt were stamped out in Damascus. Syria and Palestine were now under the control of Assyria, and Egypt lay exposed to invasion. [\[15\]](#)

Tiglath-Pileser III was succeeded by his son Shalmaneser V (728-722), who previously had been governor of the province of Simirra and had been given general oversight of all of North and Central Syria. In the Old Testament two distinct references to him and the role he played in the overthrow of Samaria are found. The king of Israel now was Hoshea. Shalmaneser's relation with him is thus summed up in 2 Kings 17, 3-6: "Against him came up Shalmaneser, king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant and gave him presents. And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea; for he had sent messengers to So, king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year; therefore the king of Assyria shut him up and bound him in prison. Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land and went up to Samaria and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away into Assyria and put them in Halah and in Habor, by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes." The next Biblical account is found in 2 Kings 18, 9-11,

in connection with Hezekiah's reign, and is virtually the same as the preceding record.

As soon as Tiglath-Pileser III had died and his son Shalmaneser had left the Phoenician coast to receive the crown of Assyria, Sibu, or So, perhaps one of Egypt's Delta kings, began a series of intrigues in which Hoshea became involved and which resulted in the disaffection of Tyre, Sidon, Acco, and Samaria. The mere appearance of Shalmaneser was sufficient to induce Sidon and Acco to surrender. Tyre and Samaria, however, offered serious resistance. Shalmaneser's five-year siege of the former ended in failure. The latter resisted bravely for three years, thanks to its impregnable hill, but finally it was forced to render submission, in December of 722 or 723. About this time Shalmaneser died, perhaps at the hands of his successor.

We have now arrived at the much-debated question, Who took Samaria? 2 Kings 17, 3-6 and 18, 9-11 seem to state that the king who laid siege to Samaria also took it. But that

credit is claimed by Sargon, the successor of Shalmaneser V. In one of his inscriptions he says: “I besieged and captured Samaria, carrying off twenty-seven thousand two hundred and ninety of the people who dwelt therein. Fifty chariots I gathered from among them; I caused others to take their [the deported inhabitants’] portion; I set my officers over them and imposed upon them the tribute of the former king.”^[16] If his claim is justified, then the expression “the king of Assyria” of 2 Kings 17, 5 must be taken in the generic sense of the term, like in 2 Kings 18, 11.

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But we are not ready to accept Sargon’s claim at face value. One of the greatest authorities, A. T. Olmstead, raises the following objections: “Sargon claims the conquest of Samaria for himself. But according to his own admission this capture took place in the ‘*resh sharruti*,’ or part of his reign before his first New Year. This New Year began probably April 2, while he ascended the throne December 28. We have thus four

months, in the worst part of the year, the rainy season. The Assyrians, as it would appear, rarely took the field in the winter, and a regular expedition at this time would be very difficult. While in Syria we saw something of the mud which can be found at the end of March. Taking into consideration the somewhat untrustworthy character of the annals and their allied documents as well as the fact that we have no reference to any capture of Samaria in Kouyunjik 1349 of year II or in the Nimrud inscription of year VI or thereabouts, the earlier documents, we may well doubt the accuracy of Sargon's statement. But to negative we may add positive evidence. 2 Kings 17, 1-6 is a good source, going back to practically contemporaneous records. There can be no doubt that the 'king of Assyria' of vv. 4-6 was intended by the author for the Shalmaneser of v. 3. There is here no reason why the Hebrew writer should not tell the truth; for it mattered nothing to him or to the fame of his people if Shalmaneser rather than Sargon took Samaria. Then either he made a mistake, which is hardly likely, or he told the

[17] truth. Further confirmation is found in the Babylonian Chronicle, I, 28, where the only event of Shalmaneser's reign is the capture of a certain Shamra'in (which Olmstead and others identify with Samaria; cp. the Hebrew שְׁמֶרֶן and the Aramaic שְׁמֶרֶן). . . . For the capture of Samaria by Sargon we have only his own claim, made in a late series of documents which have often been proved incorrect. Against it we have the silence of his own earlier accounts with the direct description of the capture to Shalmaneser by two authorities, widely separated and unprejudiced, while a third, a native Assyrian, gives data which fit well into the scheme. It will therefore not be difficult to assume that Samaria was taken by Shalmaneser in 723.” [18]

As we stated above, Shalmaneser V was followed by Sargon. He is known as Sargon II, Sargon of Assyria, and Sargon the Younger. Hitherto it was held that he was a usurper and that with him a new dynasty came to the Assyrian throne. But thanks to a

recent discovery by Unger of the University of Berlin we know that he was the son of Tiglath-Pileser III and a legitimate brother of Shalmaneser V. On a peg (*sikkatu*) we read the following brief inscription: “Palace of Sargon, the great king, the mighty king, king of the world (*kishshatu*), king of Assyria, the son of Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria.”^[19]

The change in the occupants of the throne at Nineveh apparently brought about but slight disturbances in the realm. The armies of occupation and siege remained faithful at their posts, and the stability of the government was not endangered.

Soon after the fall of Samaria, Assyria withdrew its iron fist from the Westland for a while, and anon the nations of the West took heart again, and by 720 the whole country was once more in revolt, the centers being Gaza, under Hanno, and Hamath, under Iaubi'di (or Ilubi'di). But apparently it did not take Sargon long to become master of the situation. In a somewhat fragmentary

inscription of his we read: “In my second year of reign, Ilubi’di of Hamath . . . mustered his numerous troops at Qarqar and . . . the cities of Arpad, Simirra, Damascus, and Samaria revolted against me. . . . Sib’u [of Egypt] ordered his prime minister to go to his [Hanno’s] aid, and he came forth against me, offering battle and fight. At the command of Ashur, my lord, I defeated them, and Sib’u ran off alone like a shepherd whose sheep have been carried off, and he died. Hanno I seized with my own hand and took him to my city Ashur in chains.” Again he says: “I plundered Samaria and the whole land of

Israel (Bit Humria).” ^[20] The coalition was defeated, and the rebel leader, the king of Hamath, was flayed alive. The cities which had not been implicated directly in the uprising were permitted to retain their autonomy under their local kings. Those, however, which had been, such as Damascus, Samaria, and others, were placed under Assyrian governors. It was at this time also that the gaps which had been caused in Samaria’s population by the deportation of

the twenty-seven thousand two hundred and ninety of the leading citizens were filled by deported captives from other Assyrian provinces, such as Babylon, Cutha, and Hamath.

Not long thereafter the Assyrian king was informed: “The nations which you deported and placed in the cities of Samaria do not know the law of the God of the land; therefore Jehovah has sent lions among them, and behold they are slaying them because they know not the law of the God of the land.” Sargon then issued the command: “Carry there one of the priests whom I brought from there and let him go and dwell there and let him teach them the law of the God of the land.” The priest was settled in Bethel, and there he taught the new colonists the cult carried on in Samaria before it was captured. But Jehovah was not the only and supreme God. Each nation made gods of its own and established them in the houses of the high places built by the Samaritans. “They feared Jehovah, but made priests for the high places from their own people to

sacrifice for them on the high places; they did indeed fear Jehovah, but they also served their own gods after the manner of the nations from whose midst they had been carried away,” 2 Kings 17, 24-33.

Those who had been deported from Samaria were but a fraction of the population; the others remained there and intermarried with the settlers whom Sargon brought in and so became the ancestors of the Samaritans. The unfortunate deported Israelites were distributed throughout the Assyrian domain and were assimilated with their neighbors. Price says: “Their captivities extended over many years of time, and their amalgamation with their nearest neighbors was rapid and probably complete. The literary fiction of the discovery of the ‘lost ten tribes’ has assumed great prominence in some circles. But any one who has acquainted himself with Assyria’s methods of government, with the wide distribution and assimilation of the Israelitish captives, and the impossibility of preserving intact the identity of those tribes as a whole, will recognize the futility of any

attempt to find them. That members of certain tribes, and many of them, took advantage of Cyrus's decree is certain. But there is no people or nation or tongue to-day who can be identified as 'the lost ten tribes.'”^[21]

At the instigation of Egypt the Westland once again rose in rebellion. About 714 Ashdod withheld her tribute, and her example was followed by her neighbors. The revolt spread to Judah, Moab, and Ammon. How dangerous Sargon considered this outbreak is shown by the haste with which he acted. Suddenly the Assyrians appeared and soon were in possession of the cities of the Philistine plain and in control of the main routes. The captured towns were rebuilt and settled with loyal colonists. Sargon's sudden mastery of the situation and particularly the punishment inflicted on Ashdod made such an impression on the Syrians that they remained quiet and contributed nothing to political history for the next twelve years.^[22]

Judah, Moab, and Ammon were left alone.

In 705 Sargon fell on the field of battle and was followed by his son Sennacherib (705-681). Bruno Meissner, the great German Assyriologist, characterizes Sennacherib in the following terms: 431

“Sanherib ist in jeder Beziehung eine ungewoehnliche Natur. Er war ein aeusserst begabter Mann, der fuer Sport, Kunst und Wissenschaft, besonders die Technik, begeistert war; aber alle diese Vorzuege wurden aufgehoben durch seine eigenwillige, jaehzornige Gemuetsart, die, unbekuemmert um die Moeglichkeit der Ausfuehrung eines Vorsatzes, auf ein bestimmtes Ziel lossteuerte. Darum ist er gerade das Gegenteil eines guten Staatsmannes gewesen.” ^[23]

The news that an Assyrian king had fallen on the field of battle filled the subject states with new hope and soon brought about another uprising. In reliance upon Egypt, which constantly fomented discontent and revolt among the Syro-Palestinians in order, if possible, to create a fringe of buffer states

between her and the Assyrians, Hezekiah openly defied Assyria in spite of the threats of Isaiah, levied an army, introduced mercenary Arabs into Jerusalem, and renewed the alliance with Tyre, whose king was now the dominant personality in Southern Phoenicia. Under the leadership of Tyre, Phoenicia forgot commercial expediency and revolted in spite of the fact that throughout their entire history the Phoenicians willingly accepted a nominal foreign rule, provided it was not too expensive and provided it opened to them wider fields of trade. The Cappadocian province, so laboriously formed by Sargon, slipped away almost unnoticed. The defeat of the king of Urartu had laid open the northern and eastern frontiers to the invasion of the Cimmerians. Elam and Babylonia began negotiations to wage war on Assyria; and much of Assyria proper was infested by Aramean tribes.

Of all of these countries, Babylonia presented the most pressing danger. In 703 the Babylonians set up as their king a certain Mardukzakirshum. However, he had hardly

occupied the throne when the forceful Merodach-Baladan reappeared on the scene. Upon the death of Shalmaneser V, Merodach-Baladan had been able to secure for himself the throne of Babylon; but after having enjoyed royal authority and dignity for twelve years, he had been ousted by Sargon in 709. Then, when Sargon left the land of the living and his place was taken by Sennacherib, he sent an embassy to the Elamites, east of the Tigris, who gave him full-hearted support, furnishing eighty thousand bowmen alone. With the aid of the Elamites he now reappeared, expelled Mardukzakirshum, and regained the throne from which he had been driven by Sargon. He knew quite well that he would not be permitted to remain in possession of Babylon without a serious struggle, and he at once began his preparations for the inevitable conflict with the Assyrian king. Elam was already on his side; and he now entered upon negotiations with powers yet farther afield. He succeeded in gaining the support of the Arabian queen Yati'e. An embassy was sent to Hezekiah, king of Judah, to congratulate

him on his recovery from a severe illness. Plainly enough the real motive was to stir up disaffection against Assyria and to lay the foundations for a rebellion in the Westland. The ambassadors were received most hospitably, Hezekiah “*hearkened*” to the Babylonian envoys, and showed them all the resources of his kingdom. Does that not mean that Hezekiah, too, promised to join the ranks of the rebels? Other nations probably were approached as well, and it may be that the rebellion which subsequently broke out in the Westland against Assyria was originally intended to synchronize with Merodach-Baladan’s revolt in Babylonia. [\[24\]](#)

Isaiah severely reproached Hezekiah, telling him that Jehovah was the all-sufficient Strength for Judah and that alliance with foreign nations would merely tempt Him to wrath. “Hear the words of Jehovah: Behold, the days will come when all that is in thy house and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day shall be carried to Babylon, and thy sons that shall issue from

thee, whom thou shalt beget, shall they take away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.” (Cp. 2 Kings 20 and Is. 39.)

Some scholars have placed the embassy of Merodach-Baladan in Sargon’s reign. But the great objection to that is the fact that the current chronology does not permit Hezekiah to be placed back so far. Nor does it seem to be in harmony with 2 Kings 20.

For six months Merodach-Baladan was permitted to reign in peace. But then Sennacherib crushed the Babylonian army and made Bel-ibni Viceroy of Babylonia. In 702 Sennacherib undertook a raid among the Kassites and into Ellipi and pacified the entire eastern section of his empire. And now he was prepared to meet the situation in the Westland.

The Lebanon region was the first part of the West to bow in submission, in 701. Then followed Sidon the Great, Little Sidon, Zarephath, Acco, and Ushu, under Mount

Carmel. At Ushu there appeared the kings of Ammon, Moab, and Edom to kiss the royal feet of Sennacherib and to secure his grace and favor. The march was resumed, and the Assyrian army passed around Carmel and down the Plain of Sharon, and one city after the other was attacked and taken.

Judah and Jerusalem were the next objective. When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come to fight against Jerusalem, he took counsel with his advisers and decided to stop the waters of the fountains outside of the city and the brook that flowed through the midst of the land, for they said: “Why should 433 the king of Assyria come and find much water?” The city wall was repaired and strengthened. Shields and weapons were prepared in abundance. Perhaps it was at this time that Hezekiah made the pool and constructed the underground aqueduct which brought water into the city, 2 Chron. 32, 1-8; 2 Kings 20, 20.

Sennacherib advanced and laid siege to Lachish. It was a strong city and offered

serious resistance; but it was all of no avail. Assyrian sculptures show the inhabitants standing on the battlements and towers and shooting down the men who attempt to raise scaling-ladders or hurling stones and lighted torches against the wicker shields and wooden sheds of the Assyrian soldiers, who try to extinguish the fire by pouring water on the sheds with long-handled ladles. There we see Jewish prisoners impaled alive or flung naked upon the ground to be flayed alive or have their heads struck off by the sword; and there we behold his majesty the Assyrian monarch receiving the spoil, the captive soldiers, and ox-drawn carts with captive [\[25\]](#) women and children.

When Lachish was besieged and Hezekiah realized the seriousness of the situation, he took steps to avert the approaching disaster and sent an embassy to the Assyrian king at Lachish, saying: "I have offended; return from me. That which thou puttest on me I will bear," 2 Kings 18, 14. The penalty was specified, and Hezekiah emptied the

treasuries of the Temple and of the king's house and cut off the gold plate of the doorposts of the Temple and sent thirty talents of gold and three hundred talents of silver to Sennacherib. Instead of being satisfied with this enormous sum of money, Sennacherib aspired to take possession of a city which could pour out on demand such a mass of gold and silver and sent a detachment of troops from Lachish to demand full surrender of Jerusalem.

He sent his tartan (turtanu), rabsaris, and rabshakeh (three Assyrian officials whose functions have not yet been clearly defined) to Jerusalem, who took up their position by the aqueduct of the upper pool on the highway passing the fuller's field; and there they negotiated with the Judean ambassadors. In effect, the rabshakeh told the Jews: "Say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria: In what dost thou trust? Is not thy strength for war but useless talk? In whom, then, dost thou trust that thou hast rebelled against me? Behold, thou trustest in Egypt, this staff of a shattered reed, which

hath pierced the hand of him who leaned upon it. But if thou sayest, 'It is Jehovah, our God, in whom we trust,' is not that He whose high places and altars Hezekiah hath taken away and hath said to Judah and Jerusalem, 'Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem'! Now, therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to my lord, the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses if thou canst place riders upon them. How, then, wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants and put thy trust in Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? In truth, it was by order of Jehovah Himself that I have come up against this land to destroy it."

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Horried at the claim of Jehovah's approval, the Jewish representatives told the rab-shakeh to continue in Aramaic, the diplomatic language, lest the men crowded on the wall might understand it. But he at once improved the opportunity and said, "Was it to your master and to you that my lord sent me? No, it was to these very men on the wall." Then, in a loud voice, he shouted to the men

hanging over the battlements: “Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria: Let not Hezekiah deceive you; for he cannot deliver you, neither let him tell you that the Lord will deliver you, so that this city will not fall into the hands of the king. Make a treaty with me, and every man shall eat of his own vine and fig-tree and drink the water of his own cistern until I come and take you away to a land like your own, a land of grain and wine, of bread and vineyards, a land of oil and honey, that ye may live and not die. Let not Hezekiah deceive you by saying that the Lord will deliver you. Hath any of the gods of the other nations delivered his land from the hands of the Assyrian king? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hands? Which god of all these nations hath delivered his land out of my hand that your God should deliver Jerusalem out of my hands?”

The people held their peace and answered the rab-shakeh not a word, in conformity with Hezekiah’s injunctions. But there may have

been many among them to whom a peace treaty made a strong appeal. With rent garments the Jewish representatives went to the king, who, in turn, rent his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and entered the Temple in supplication. Eliakim, Shebna, and the priestly elders were sent to Isaiah, who told Hezekiah not to be afraid.

The rab-shakeh departed and found Sennacherib at Libnah, somewhat to the northeast of Lachish. About this time the army of the Egyptians and Ethiopians under Tirhaka arrived to aid the Jews and took up their position at Eltekeh. The situation grew more serious for the Assyrians, and Sennacherib, probably fearing that Jerusalem, if left alone, might swoop down on him while in the thick of the battle with Tirhaka, at once wrote a letter to Hezekiah and sent his rab-shakeh back to Jerusalem. Then the armies of Tirhaka and of Sennacherib joined battle at Eltekeh. The commander of the Egyptian chariotry, the sons of the Egyptian kings, the generals in charge of the Ethiopian chariots, all were taken alive, and the cities

Eltekeh and Timnah fell into the hands of the Assyrians. Ekron, one of the five Philistine cities, was destroyed.

Hezekiah took the blasphemous letter of Sennacherib and spread it before the Lord and prayed. Thereupon Isaiah sent to the king of Judah with a wonderful promise of deliverance. (Cp. Is. 36 f.; 2 Kings 18, 17-37; 19; 2 Chron. 32, 9-20.)

This deliverance came through the angel of the Lord, who went forth and smote in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand men. And when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. Sennacherib's own record naturally makes no mention of a disaster to his own troops in the Southwest. But the Biblical account is supported in a number of ways. In the first place, we have the testimony of Herodotus. Centuries after the destruction of Sennacherib's army the Egyptians told Herodotus a rather curious story about the disaster the Assyrian army had met with. Herodotus writes: "The next

king, I was told, was a priest of Vulcan, called Sethos. This monarch despised and neglected the warrior class of the Egyptians, as though he did not need their services. Among other indignities which he offered them, he took from them the lands which they had possessed under all the previous kings, consisting of twelve acres of choice land for each warrior. Afterwards, therefore, when Sanacharib, king of the Arabians and Assyrians, marched his vast army into Egypt, the warriors one and all refused to come to his aid. On this the monarch, greatly distressed, entered into the inner sanctuary and, before the image of the god, bewailed the fate which impended over him. As he wept, he fell asleep and dreamed that the god came and stood at his side, bidding him be of good cheer and go boldly forth to meet the Arabian host, which would do him no hurt, as he himself would send those who would help him. Sethos then, relying on the dream, collected such of the Egyptians as were willing to follow him, who were none of them warriors, but traders, artisans, and market people, and with these marched to

Pelusium, which commands the entrance into Egypt, and there pitched his camp. As the two armies lay here opposite one another, there came in the night a multitude of field-mice, which devoured all the quivers and bowstrings of the enemy and ate the thongs by which they managed their shields. Next morning they commenced their flight, and great multitudes fell, as they had no arms with which to defend themselves. There stands to this day in the temple of Vulcan a stone statue of Sethos, with a mouse in his hand, and an inscription to this effect: “Look on me and learn to reverence the gods.”^[26]

The story of the mice seems to point to a common and well-known pestilence in the Near East, the bubonic plague, which under the name of Black Death once swept over Europe and killed a quarter of the population. Barton says: “In modern times this plague first attacks rats and mice, which in their suffering swarm the dwellings of men and spread the disease.”^[27] It may well be that the angel of the Lord availed himself of

this horrible pestilence to destroy the Assyrian army.

In the second place, Sennacherib subdued the entire coast-line of the Mediterranean Sea and maintains to have carried off an enormous amount of booty and levied tribute on the conquered peoples; yet there is no hint in his records that he ever again visited this region, although he still reigned for twenty more years. Nor does the Babylonian Chronicle of this period mention a second expedition of Sennacherib against the Westland. Some specter seems to have haunted the memory of the Assyrian monarch and chilled his ambition to conquer Egypt, which was constantly stirring up revolt among the peoples of Palestine and Syria. The cuneiform records seem to imply that there was something rotten in Denmark.

As we pointed out above, Sennacherib does not make mention of any disaster to his army. On the contrary, he boasts that he shut Hezekiah up in Jerusalem like a caged bird (which is most likely true); that he threw up

earthworks against him; that to his former tribute he added a special gift, thirty talents of gold, eight hundred of silver, precious stones, stibium, lapis lazuli, couches and seats of ivory, elephant hide and raw ivory, ebony and boxwood, cloths and chitons of various colors, implements of various metals, all of which was brought by Hezekiah's ambassadors to Nineveh after the return of the Assyrian; and that Hezekiah's male and female musicians also were taken to Nineveh and his women were incorporated in the [\[28\]](#) Assyrian harem.

(To be 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 Sennacharib 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 worshiping 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 connect 482 Nisroch with the Assyrian Nusku. The Hebrew נִסְרוֹךְ would then be a scribal error for נִסְרוֹךְ. The ו 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. ^[29] The Babylonian Chronicle speaks of only one as the assassin, without mentioning him by name. ^[30] 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.” ^[31]

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 to Babylon, where

[\[32\]](#)
Esarhaddon loved to dwell.

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). ^[33] 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 [\[34\]](#) provide for them.

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-shum-ukin 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 [\[35\]](#) identify with Ashurbanipal.

Ashurbanipal was succeeded by Ashur-etil-ilani (626-621), who, in turn, was followed by Sin-shar-ishkun (the Sarakos of the Greeks), the last king of Assyria proper, who occupied the throne [\[36\]](#) from 620 to 612.

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 some 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-ishkum, 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 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.

[\[37\]](#)

“The enemy had done his work thoroughly,” says R. C. Thompson, “and the terraced mounds, fair palaces, imposing temples, lay ruined and despoiled of their treasures. 486 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.” ^[38] 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 ^[39] 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. 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.

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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 Ashur-uballit 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 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. 488

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 Josephus ^[42] we know that the Egyptian king went up to fight against the Medes and the Babylonians. It is obvious that the Hebrew יַעַר in this connection is equivalent to יַעַר. (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. [\[43\]](#)

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, Nebuchadrezzar, 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

Phenicia 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 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.” [\[44\]](#)

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.”^[45]

Nebuchadrezzar’s plan served a twofold purpose: 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.

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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 491 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 46 remnant.

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 נְחַרְכַּבָּר, 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

[47] later times.” 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 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. [\[48\]](#)

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 Pedaiiah: 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 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.

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[49] Herodotus calls him Λαβύνητος, which is clearly a corruption of the Babylonian Nabuna'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

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Nitocris. 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 Phenicia 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 אָרְיָ תִּמָּא 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, and

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[51] beautified the place in general. 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

[52] eldest son, Belshazzar. 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 ^[53] for the tax-masters.” 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). [54]

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 potentates in the empire, one who maintained his seat of power in distant Arabia and one who directed affairs in Babylonia. 495

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.”^[55] 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*.^[56] 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 Ashurnadin-shum upon the throne of Babylon, and Esarhaddon not only made his son Shamashshum-ukin king of Babylon, but crowned his

first-born, Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria. [\[57\]](#)

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.” [\[58\]](#)

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. ^[59] The next objective of Cyrus was Babylon. But thanks to Nebuchadrezzar's vast projects the entire region round about the capital 496 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 ^[60] isolated.

“On the sixteenth day (of October, 539) Gobryas (Ugbaru), the governor of Gutium, and the troops of Cyrus entered Babylon

without a battle.”^[60] 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

[\[61\]](#) conducting the attack. 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

[\[62\]](#) Valley not long before Babylon was taken, but *when* he returned and where he was at that critical time, we have no 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,*

[63] was taken prisoner.” 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 [64] latter plays in Daniel.

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.

Footnotes

- [1] D. D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, Vol. I, p. 223.
- [2] A. T. Olmstead, *History of Assyria*, p. 648.
- [3] Bruno Meissner, *Koenige Babylonien und Assyriens*, p. 141.
- [4] D. D. Luckenbill, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 243.
- [5] Ira M. Price, *The Monuments and the Old Testament*, p. 275 f.
- [6] A. T. Olmstead, *op. cit.*, pp. 110-157.

- [7] D. D. Luckenbill, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 262 f.
- [8] Ira M. Price, *op. cit.*, p. 284.
- [9] Ira M. Price, *op. cit.*, pp. 268-291.
- [10] A. T. Olmstead, *op. cit.*, pp. 509. 188.
- [11] Bruno Meissner, *op. cit.*, p. 165.
- [12] A. T. Olmstead, *History of Palestine and Syria*, p. 453.
- [13] D. D. Luckenbill, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 293.
- [14] Bruno Meissner, *op. cit.*, p. 166.
- [15] A. T. Olmstead, *History of Assyria*, pp.

175-205.

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D. D. Luckenbill, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 26.

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That he made a mistake is excluded by the fact of inspiration.

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Ira M. Price, *op. cit.*, p. 302.

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A. T. Olmstead, *History of Assyria*, pp. 206-220.

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

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

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

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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.

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

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[42] Josephus, *Antiquities*, X, 5, 1.

[43] Compare Vol. II, 38-45, of this journal.

[44] Ira M. Price, *op. cit.*, pp. 351-354.

[45] R. W. Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 361.

[46] A. T. Olmstead, *History of Palestine and Syria*, pp. 505-540.

[47] H. V. Hilprecht, *Excavations in Assyria and Babylonia*, p. 413.

[48] 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
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Sidney Smith, *Babylonian Historical
Texts*, pp. 44-53 and 77.

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(Published in Sidney Smith, *op. cit.*)

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Cyropaedia, VII, 5, 1-36.

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Nabonidus Chronicle col. III, 14-16.

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

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[The end of *Political Contacts of the Hebrews with Assyria and Babylonia* by Alexander Heidel]