

INSCRIPTION OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

 TRANSLATED BY

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BABYLONIAN Inscriptions are by no means so replete with interest as the Assyrian. The latter embrace the various expeditions in which the Assyrian monarchs were engaged, and bring us into contact with the names and locality of rivers, cities and mountain-ranges, with cotemporary princes in Judæa and elsewhere, and abound in details as to domestic habits, civil usages, and the implements and modes of warfare. But the Babylonian Inscriptions refer mainly to the construction of temples, palaces, and other public buildings, and at the same time present especial difficulties in their numerous architectural terms which it is often impossible to translate with any certainty. They are however interesting as records of the piety, and religious feelings of the sovereigns of Babylon, and as affording numerous topographical notices of that famous city; while the boastful language of the Inscription will often remind the reader of Nebuchadnezzar's words in Dan. iv. 30: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" Compare column vii. line 32.

The reign of Nebuchadnezzar extended from B.C. 604 to 561. In B.C. 598 he laid siege to Jerusalem

(2 Kings xxiv.) and made Jehoiachin prisoner, and in 588 again captured the city, and carried Zedekiah, who had rebelled against him, captive to Babylon (2 Kings xxv.). Josephus gives an account of his expeditions against Tyre and Egypt which are also mentioned with many details in Ezek. xxvii.-xxix.

The name Nebuchadnezzar, or more accurately Nebuchadrezzar (Jer. xxi. 2, 7, etc.) is derived from the Jewish Scriptures. But in the Inscriptions it reads Nebo-kudurri-ussur, *i.e.*, *may Nebo protect the crown*; a name analogous to that of his father Nebo(Nabu)-habal-ussur, (*Nebo protect the son*) and to that of Belshazzar, *i.e.*, *Bel protect the prince*. The phonetic writing of Nebuchadnezzar is *An-pa-sa-du-sis*, each of which syllables has been identified through the syllabaries. The word *kudurri* is probably the כּוּרִי of Esther vi. 8, and the *κιδαρρις* of the Greeks. The Inscription of which a translation follows, was found at Babylon by Sir Harford Jones Bridges, and now forms part of the India-House Collection. It is engraved on a short column of black basalt, and is divided into ten columns, containing 619 lines.

It may be worth while to remark that in the name given to the prophet Daniel, Belteshazzar, *i.e.*, *Balatsu-ussur*, *preserve thou his life*, and in Abednego (*servant of Nebo*), we have two of the component parts of the name of Nebuchadnezzar himself.

INSCRIPTION OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

COLUMN I.

- 1 NEBUCHADNEZZAR
 2 King of Babylon,
 3 glorious Prince,
 4 worshipper of MARDUK,
 5 adorer of the lofty one,
 6 glorifier of NABU,
 7 the exalted, the possessor of intelligence,
 8 who the processions of their divinities
 9 hath increased ;
 10 a worshipper of their Lordships,
 11 firm, not to be destroyed ;
 12 who for the embellishment
 13 of Bit-Saggatu and Bit-Zida¹
 14 appointed days hath set apart, and
 15 the shrines of Babylon
 16 and of Borsippa
 17 hath steadily increased ;
 18 exalted Chief, Lord of peace,
 19 embellisher of Bit-Saggatu and Bit-Zida,
 20 the valiant son
 21 of NABOPOLASSAR
 22 King of Babylon am I.
-
- 23 When he, the Lord god my maker made me,
 24 the god MERODACH, he deposited
 25 my germ in my mother's (womb) :
 26 then being conceived

¹ Two of the principal temples of Babylon. The former occurs below, Col. ii. 40, where it is followed by the epithet, "*Temple of his power.*" Dr. Oppert always renders it "*la Pyramide et la Tour.*"

- 27 I was made.
 28 Under the inspection of ASSUR my judge
 29 the processions of the god I enlarged,
 30 (namely) of MERODACH great Lord, the god my maker.
 31 His skilful works
 32 highly have I glorified ;
 33 and of NEBO his eldest son
 34 exalter of My Royalty
 35 the processions (in honour of)¹ his exalted deity
 36 I firmly established.
 37 With all my heart firmly
 38 (in) worship of their deities I uprose
 39 in reverence for NEBO their Lord.
 40 Whereas MERODACH, great Lord,
 41 the head of My ancient Royalty,
 42 hath empowered me over multitudes of men,
 43 and (whereas) NEBO bestower of thrones in heaven
 and earth,
 44 for the sustentation of men,
 45 a sceptre of righteousness
 46 hath caused my hand to hold ;
 47 now I, that sacred way
 48 for the resting-place of their divinities,
 49 for a memorial of all their names,
 50 as a worshipper of NEBO, YAV and ISTAR,
 51 for MERODACH my Lord I strengthened.
 52 Its threshold I firmly laid, and
 53 my devotion of heart he accepted, and
 54 him did I proclaim
 55 Lord of all beings, and²

¹ Literally, *the goings*. Compare Psalm lxxviii. 24. "They have seen thy goings, O God," *i.e.*, processions.

² Of this line Mr. Norris (*Dict.*, p. 166) states "that he cannot suggest any rendering."

56 as Prince of the lofty house, and
57 thou, (O NEBUCHADNEZZAR) hast proclaimed the
name of him
58 who has been beneficent unto thee.
59 His name, (O god,) thou wilt preserve,
60 the path of righteousness thou hast prescribed to him.
61 I, a Prince, and thy worshipper
62 am the work of thy hand ;
63 thou hast created me, and ¹
64 the empire over multitudes of men
65 thou hast assigned me,
66 according to thy favour, O Lord,
67 which thou hast accorded
68 to them all.²
69 May thy lofty Lordship be exalted !
70 in the worship of thy divinity
71 may it subsist ! in my heart
72 may it continue, and my life which to thee is devoted

(Continued on Column II.)

¹ It seems as if the hand were addressed.

² *I.e.*, in making me their ruler.

COLUMN II.

- 1 mayest thou bless !

- 2 He, the Chief, the honourable,
3 the Prince of the gods, the great MERODACH,
4 my gracious Lord, heard
5 and received my prayer ;
6 he favoured it, and by his exalted power,
7 reverence for his deity
8 placed he in my heart :
9 to bear his tabernacle
10 he hath made my heart firm,
11 with reverence for thy power,
12 for exalted service,
13 greatly and eternally.

- 14 The foundation of his temple it was
15 which from the upper waters
16 to the lower waters
17 in a remote way,
18 in a spot exposed to winds,
19 a place whose pavements had been broken,
20 low, dried up,
21 a rugged way,
22 a difficult path,
23 I extended.
24 The disobedient I stirred up,
25 and I collected the poor and
26 gave full directions (for the work) and
27 in numbers I supported them.
28 Wares and ornaments
29 for the women I brought forth,
30 silver, molten gold, precious stones,

- 31 metal, *umritgana* and cedar woods,
 32 (however their names be written)
 33 a splendid abundance,
 34 the produce of mountains,
 35 sea clay,¹
 36 beautiful things in abundance,
 37 riches and sources of joy,
 38 for my city Babylon,
 39 into his presence have I brought
 40 for Bit-Saggatu
 41 the temple of his power,
 42 ornaments for DAKAN ²
-
- 43 Bit-Kua, the shrine
 44 of MERODACH, Lord of the house of the gods,
 45 I have made conspicuous with fine linen ³
 46 and its seats
 47 with splendid gold,
 48 as for royalty and deity,
 49 with lapis lazuli and alabaster blocks ⁴
 50 I carefully covered them over ;
 51 a gate of passage, the gate Beautiful,⁵
 52 and the gate of Bit-Zida and Bit-Saggatu
 53 I caused to be made brilliant as the sun.
 54 A fulness of the treasures of countries I accumulated ;⁶
 55 around the city it was placed as an ornament,

¹ Mr. Norris conjectures "amber."

² Dagon.

³ *Sassanis*. The root is probably identical with the Hebrew *shesh* fine linen thus in Ex. xxvi. 1. "Thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen."

⁴ These are found still in the ruins of Babylon.

⁵ Compare the Beautiful Gate of the Jewish temple.

⁶ Mr. Norris in his *Dictionary* professes his inability to master the first words of this line, p. 580. The same remark applies to line 58. The above rendering is suggested to me by Mr. G. Smith.

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