

## THE INDIA HOUSE INSCRIPTION OF NEBUCHADREZZAR THE GREAT

TRANSLATED BY THE REV. C. J. BALL

WHETHER we suppose that this famous relic of the past embodies the *ipsissima verba* of the great king, in whose name and by whose orders, at all events, it was written and graven in imperishable stone; or that it is the set panegyric composition of some one of the literary men of his brilliant court; will make little difference to the deep interest which such a monument must always inspire in the minds of thoughtful readers of the prophecies of Jeremiah and the picturesque traditions of the book of Daniel. Here we have an unquestionable relic of the age of the fall of the Jewish monarchy and the brilliant sunset of Hebrew prophecy: an authentic record, preserved almost intact in its original shape, of the very sovereign whom Jeremiah declared to be Jehovah's chosen servant, and whom, consequently, it was Judah's duty as well as highest political wisdom to obey. And not only this. The inscription paints for us in unfading colours a portrait of the man Nebuchadrezzar; it exhibits in the vivid light of

actuality his pride of place and power and greatness, his strong conviction of his own divine call to universal empire, his passionate devotion to his gods, his untiring labours for their glory and the aggrandisement of that peerless capital which was their chosen dwelling-place.

The style of the inscription is elevated almost to the level of poetry; and the phraseology often recalls familiar expressions of the Old Testament. If I have not noted all such coincidences as they occurred, it was because I felt that they were too obvious and striking for even a cursory reader to miss.

In correcting my former version (*Proc. Soc. Bibl. Arch.*, Dec. 1887) I have, of course, made use of the other inscriptions of the king. The beautifully written cylinder, numbered 85-4-30. 1, Brit. Mus., has supplied several important corrections of the text. (See *Proc. Soc. Bibl. Arch.*, March 1889.)

Some of the Accadian ideograms and words I have succeeded in explaining and illustrating by means of their Chinese representatives, as will be seen from the notes (cp. my papers in *Proc. Soc. Bibl. Arch.*, entitled *The New Accadian*).

## THE INDIA HOUSE INSCRIPTION OF NEBUCHADREZZAR

### COLUMN I

1. Nebuchadrezzar
2. king of BABYLON,
3. the prince exalted,
4. the favourite of MERODACH,
5. the pontiff supreme,
6. the beloved of NEBO,
7. the serene, the possessor of wisdom,
8. who the way of their godhead
9. regardeth,
10. who feareth their lordship ;
11. the servant<sup>1</sup> unwearied,
12. who for the maintenance<sup>2</sup>
13. of ESAGILLA and EZIDA<sup>3</sup>
14. daily bethought him, and
15. the weal of BABYLON
16. and BORSIPPA

<sup>1</sup> Or minister, *i.e.* of the gods. The Accadian ideogram is *foot + man*; somewhat like the Chinese *foot + firm*, pronounced *kán* (=kín), "a servant." But Chinese actually possesses an identical ideogram in the term *fu* (=bu or ba), "to sit in state," "to make a low obeisance," "to sit cross-legged in worship"; a character compounded of *foot + man*. David "sat before the Lord" in prayer (2 Sam. vii. 18). This, at least, favours the opinion that *sagganakku* or *sakkanakku* meant a priestly rather than a secular personage; and that when Sargon called himself *sagganak Bábili*, he meant not "Machthaber," but "high-priest of Babylon."

<sup>2</sup> Literally "fillings," "filler" (*zanánu* is a synonym of *malú*, *Rich Cyl.* i. 17, 18).

<sup>3</sup> The chief temples of Babylon and Borsippa. E-sagilla, the temple of Bel-Merodach, also contained a shrine dedicated to Nebo, called "E-zida of E-sagilla" (*Cyl. A.H.*, 82-7-14. 1042, col. i. 31).

17. regardeth ever ;
18. the wise, the prayerful,
19. the maintainer<sup>1</sup> of ESAGILLA and EZIDA,
20. the chiefest son
21. of Nabopalassar,
22. king of BABYLON, am I.
23. After that the lord my god had created me,
24. that MERODACH had framed
25. the creature in the mother ;
26. when I was born,
27. when I was created, even I,
28. the holy places of the god I regarded,
29. the way of the god I walked in.
30. Of MERODACH, the great lord, the god my creator,
31. his cunning works
32. highly do I extol.
33. Of NEBO, his true son,
34. the beloved of my majesty,
35. the way of his supreme godhead
36. steadfastly do I exalt ;
37. with all my true heart
38. I love the fear of their godhead,
39. I worship their lordship.
40. When MERODACH, the great lord,
41. lifted up the head of my majesty and
42. with lordship over the multitude of peoples invested  
me ; and
43. NEBO, the overseer of the multitude of heaven and  
earth,
44. for the governing of the peoples
45. a righteous sceptre
46. placed in my hands :
47. for me, of them I am heedful,
48. I have regard unto their godhead ;
49. for the mention of their glorious name,
50. I worship the god and ISHTAR.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Literally "fillings," "filler" (*zanânu* is a synonym of *malû*, *Rich Cyl.* i. 17, 18).

<sup>2</sup> The cylinder 85-4-30. 1, establishes this reading of the ideogram.

51. To MERODACH my lord I made supplication,  
 52. prayers to him I undertook, and  
 53. the word which my heart looked for,  
 54. to him I spake :  
 55. "Of old, O prince, lord of all that is !  
 56. for the king whom thou lovest, and  
 57. whose name thou callest,  
 58. that to thee is pleasing ;  
 59. thou ledest him aright,<sup>1</sup>  
 60. a straight path thou appointest him.  
 61. I am a prince obedient unto thee,  
 62. a creature of thy hands ;  
 63. thou it was that madest me, and  
 64. with sovereignty over the multitude of the peoples  
 65. didst invest me ;  
 66. according to thy goodness, O Lord,  
 67. wherewith thou crownest  
 68. all of them.  
 69. Thy lordship supreme do thou make loving,<sup>2</sup> and  
 70. the fear of thy godhead  
 71. cause thou to be in my heart !  
 72. Yea, grant that to thee is pleasing,

## COLUMN II

1. for my life truly thou makest."  
 2. Himself, the leader glorious,  
 3. the open-eyed of the gods, the prince MERODACH,  
 4. my supplications heard and  
 5. received my prayers.  
 6. Yea, he made gracious his supreme lordship,  
 7. the fear of his godhead  
 8. he implanted in my heart ;  
 9. to draw his car (?)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Literally "thou directest his name."

<sup>2</sup> Cp. ii. 6. The meaning is, "Show thyself kind or gracious."

<sup>3</sup> Cp. the words of Assurbanipal : "The yoke, the wood (= implement) of drawing, I made them (the conquered kings) put on ; to the temple they drew beneath me" (*i.e.* drew me in my chariot) ; 5 R, 10, 29, 30a. See also *Phillipp's Cyl.*, i. 11, 12. "Unto Merodach . . . I reverently submitted ; to draw his car I bowed the neck : " and I, 61, below.

10. he made me submit the heart ;  
 11. I worshipped his lordship.  
 12. In his high trust,<sup>1</sup>  
 13. to far-off lands,  
 14. distant hills,  
 15. from the Upper Sea  
 16. to the Lower Sea,<sup>2</sup>  
 17. immense journeys,  
 18. blocked ways,  
 19. a place where the path is broken,  
 20. feet are not ;  
 21. a road of hardships,  
 22. a journey of straits,  
 23. I pursued, and  
 24. the unyielding I reduced,  
 25. I fettered the rebels.  
 26. The land I ordered aright, and  
 27. the people I made to thrive ;  
 28. bad and good  
 29. among the people I removed.<sup>3</sup>  
 30. Silver, gold, glitter of precious stones,  
 31. copper, *mismakanna*-wood, cedar  
 32. what thing soever is precious,  
 33. a large abundance ;  
 34. the produce of mountains,  
 35. the fulness of seas,  
 36. a rich present,  
 37. a splendid gift,  
 38. to my city of BABYLON  
 39. into his presence I brought.  
 40. In ESAGILLA,  
 41. the palace of his lordship,  
 42. I wrought repairs.<sup>4</sup>  
 43. EKUA, the cell

<sup>1</sup> Or, lofty confidence. The word *tukultu* coincides in form and meaning with the Ethiopic *tukelt*, "trust," "confidence," "hope"; and "his trust" is equivalent to "trust in him" (obj. genit.)

<sup>2</sup> [Lake Van and the Persian Gulf.—L.D.]

<sup>3</sup> Or, deported, carried away, cp. 2 Kings xvii. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Literally "fillings," as at i. 12.

44. of the lord of the gods, MERODACH,
45. I made to glisten like suns
46. the walls thereof ;
47. with large gold,
48. like rubble (?) stone,<sup>1</sup>
49. with *uknú*<sup>2</sup> and alabaster,
50. the habitation of the house I overlaid.
51. The gate KHILISU, even the Beautiful Gate,
52. and the gate of EZIDA (and) ESAGILLA,
53. I had them made brilliant as the sun.
54. The bright seat, the place of them that determine destinies,
55. which is the Quarter of Assembly, the chapel of the Fates,
56. wherein, at ZAGMUKU,<sup>3</sup> the opening of the year,
57. on the 8th day (and) the 11th day,
58. the divine king, the god of heaven (and) earth, the lord of heaven,
59. taketh up his abode ;
60. the gods of heaven (and) earth
61. with awe submit unto him ;
62. they bow, they take their stand before him ;
63. a destiny of enduring days,
64. as the destiny of my life,
65. they predestine in the midst (thereof) :—

## COLUMN III

1. that chapel, a chapel of majesty,
2. the chapel of the lordship

<sup>1</sup> I only guess the meaning of *imtd* from the context. Solomon "made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones," 1 Kings x. 27. Is *imtd* a noun of the form *ikribu*, from the root *matd*, "to strike," "break" (=LAL)?? Some common material must be meant ; but unfortunately the reading "stone" is not certain. (See Amiaud and Méchineau, *Tabl. Comp.*, No. 145 note.)

<sup>2</sup> The Accadian ZAGIN is a compound term, denoting simply "bright," "pure," "white," and as such might be applied to various valuable stones, such as jade, jasper, onyx, and other veined and coloured quartzose stones, of which *uknú* may have been a specific kind.

<sup>3</sup> From the Accadian ZAG, "head," *i.e.* beginning, and MU, "year."

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