

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

THE BOOK OF DANIEL IN THE LIGHT OF
RECENT RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY.

SINCE the publication of the second edition of the *Speaker's Commentary* (O. T., Vol. vi.), containing the Book Daniel, research and discovery have thrown much light on one historical passage, and interested Biblical students largely in a second.

(I.) Dan. iii. 1.—In the Scripture record Nebuchadnezzar orders to be made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and the breadth six cubits, and this he set up in the plain of Dura. The erection of a costly image “of magnified royalty” is no longer a matter of difficulty. I allow myself to refer the reader to my notes on that passage in proof of the position that the act was one quite intelligible to the Assyrians and Babylonians. But the question of size has often been a matter of difficulty to some, and proof positive of mistake to others.

The English excavations at San (Tanis-Zoan) have, however, disinterred from the Egyptian Pompeii that which illustrates the act of Nebuchadnezzar, if it did not suggest it. Mr. Petrie¹ has discovered there the cut up colossus of Rameses II. It proves to have been the most stupendous colossus hitherto known. There are other giant-statues, such as those of the colossi of Abu-Simbel, the colossi of the Plain, and the torso of the Ramesseum. These are seated figures, and of comparatively soft material. But the colossal Rameses II. was an erect figure, sculptured out of the hard red granite of Assouan; and it weighed 1,200 tons. Rameses stood up, a crowned figure, the back supported by a pilaster, 100 feet high from top to toe, or 115 feet high, including his pedestal. The statue towered some 65 feet above the surrounding obelisks and temple, and must have been visible for miles across the plain.

¹ See *The Times* of May 30, 1884.

It would be impossible to affirm that this statue was still *in situ* when Nebuchadnezzar undertook his wars against Egypt. Egypt had suffered terribly at the hands of Piankhi, Esarhaddon, and Assurbanipal, since the reputed Pharaoh "who knew not Joseph" (Exod. i. 8) rendered himself and his empire famous by his personal exploits, the magnificence of his monuments, and the duration of his reign. The precedent, followed by Rameses himself, of effacing from obelisks the inscriptions of the 11th and 12th Dynasties, and decorating these "palimpsests of stone" with his own titles and cartouches, would only be too certainly repeated by the Sheshonk of three hundred years later. To decapitate statues, to hew obelisks in pieces, to cut up colossi, would have been no sacrilegious act to Ethiopian and Assyrian conquerors. It may, however, be assumed that the erection of the image by Nebuchadnezzar took place after a successful campaign or series of campaigns. In this he but followed the precedent of a Shalmaneser and a Sargon. Can such a campaign be at all fixed? A Babylonian inscribed fragment of his reign lately translated and published by Mr. Pinches,¹ draws attention to the fact that Nebuchadnezzar either personally or by his generals twice attacked Egypt. The first invasion was conducted by the king himself against his last unsubdued and deadly foe. In the year 572 B.C.—the thirty-third of his reign—Nebuchadnezzar completely overran the country, plundering and destroying on every side. Hophra, the king of Egypt, was defeated and deposed (cf. Jer. xlv. 30). His place was taken by a general (probably a relative) named Ahmes or Amasis. Four years elapsed, and Amasis revolted; and Nebuchadnezzar, in the thirty-seventh year of his reign, sent a force to Egypt to put down the revolt.²

¹ *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archaeology (T.S.B.A.)*, vii. 210, etc.

² A slightly different interpretation of this inscription will be found in Sayce, *Fresh Light from the Ancient Monuments*, p. 139; cf. Meyer (E.), *Geschichte des Alterthums*, i. p. 596.

Zoan would certainly lie in the path of any Babylonian invading army, and it would be visited and held by Nebuchadnezzar's troops in the war of B.C. 572. Is the conjecture inadmissible, that the record of the colossus of Rameses II., if not the inspection of the fragments themselves, gave birth to, or finally fixed, the resolution that the plain of Dura should see a golden colossus of the Rameses of Babylon? Such a date seems preferable to the somewhat mythical campaign against Egypt recorded by Megasthenes in Josephus,¹ and by Abydenus in Eusebius,² having taken place in the twenty-fifth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, and preferable also to the date of the not-personally conducted expedition against Amasis.

I venture, therefore, to conjecture that it was in commemoration of his Egyptian victories, and especially of those of B.C. 572, that Nebuchadnezzar reared his image. It was a colossus of about 100 feet high³—of the same height as that of Rameses without the pedestal—and from thirty to forty feet higher than the obelisk on the Thames Embankment. Before it bowed “princes, governors, captains, judges, treasurers, counsellors, sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces.”

Centuries elapsed before the Egyptian colossus was discovered. May a similar fortune reward sooner the successful explorer, Mr. Rassam, in his researches in “the plain of Dura.”

(II.) Dan. v.—Belshazzar, Cyrus, Darius. The interest created by the discovery and decipherment of the three inscriptions connected with this chapter has been universal.⁴

¹ *Antiq.*, X. xi. 1.

² *Chron. Armn.*, i. 59.

³ In Dan. iii. 1 the height is sixty cubits. Taking the mean between the 19 or 21 inches assigned to the Hebrew cubit by Messrs. Madden and Hole, 60 cubits = 60 × 20 inches or 100 feet.

⁴ Cf. the special chapters or sections in Sayce, *The Ancient Empires of the East*, and *Fresh Light from the Ancient Monuments*; Budge, *Babylonian Life and History*; Rawlinson, *Egypt and Babylon*. The criticisms and opinions of foreign savants—e.g. Delattre, Delitzsch, Evers, Halévy, and of American con-

The earliest of them gives an account of the first part of the reign of Nabonidus, the father of Belshazzar. Nabonidus acquired the throne of Babylonia by the assassination of Labasi-marduk, the last scion of Nebuchadnezzar's house (c. B.C. 556), and the inscription describes the policy of a king careful to propitiate the powerful priest-caste of Babylon as well as its "too superstitious" population. An enemy called the Sabmanda (Budge; "barbarians," Sayce) had gone to Haran and had destroyed the temple of Sin (the moon-god). "In the beginning of my long reign," says Nabonidus, "Merodach (Marduk) the great lord, and Sin, the illuminator of heaven and earth, the strengthener of all, showed me a dream. Merodach spake with me, Nabonidus, King of Babylon . . . rear up the walls of E-hulhul (the Temple of Rejoicing, Sayce), and fix the dwelling place of Sin the great lord within it." Nabonidus replies that the Sabmanda which had destroyed it were strong and their forces terrible; but Merodach promises that "they shall not exist, neither they nor their country, nor the kings their allies." The promise was fulfilled in the third year of his reign, but not by the arms of the Babylonians. Merodach "made Cyrus the king of Anzan (southern and western Elam, according to Sayce; or, Susiana generally, Meyer), his young servant to go. He overthrew the wide-spreading Sabmanda, he captured Astyages King of Sabmanda, and took his treasures to his own land." This left Nabonidus free to execute the wish of the gods. He began the restoration of the temple of Haran, and employed for the purpose his army summoned from Gaza. He followed up this act by similar acts of renovation or restoration of the

tributors to the subject will be found in the papers enumerated in the *Bibliographie* of Bezold and Hommel's *Zeitschrift für Keilschrift-forschung*, Vol. I. 83 etc. 725 etc. 364 etc. or of Kuhn's *Literatur-Blatt für Orientalische Philologie*, Vol. I. 89 etc. 312 etc. Consult also Schrader, *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*, p. 433 etc. (2nd edition); Meyer, *Gesch. d. Alterthums*, i. p. 601, etc.

temples of the sun-god (Samas) and of Anunit at Sippara (Abu-Habba)¹; and with this period is probably to be connected a very beautiful prayer composed by him after the erection of the temple to Sin at Mugheir or Ur.² It is a prayer invoking the protection of the deity over his country, himself, and his son; and is especially interesting as containing the name of Belshazzar:—"O Sin, lord of the gods, king of the gods of heaven and earth, . . . set the fear of thy great divinity in the hearts of his (*i.e.* Nabonidus') men that they err not. For thy great divinity may their foundations remain firm like the heavens. As for me, Nabonidus, the King of Babylon, preserve me from sinning against thy great divinity, and grant me the gift of life of long days; and plant in the heart of Bilu-sarra-utsur (Belshazzar), my eldest son, the offspring of my heart, reverence for the great divinity, and never may he incline to sin; with fulness of life may he be satisfied."

Two points should be noticed here. (1) The statement in the former of these inscriptions that not Nabonidus, but Cyrus, should (like another Jael rather than a Barak) be the god-chosen one to destroy the enemies of the gods, veils but thinly the inertness which gradually possessed Nabonidus, and as a historical fact is confirmed by the second of the inscriptions, the annalistic tablet of Cyrus. It was in the sixth year of Nabonidus that "Astyages gathered his army and marched against Cyrus, King of Elam; but the soldiers of Astyages revolted from him, and seized him, and delivered him up to Cyrus. Cyrus proceeded to the land of Ecbatana, the royal city. The silver, the gold, the furniture, and the spoil of the land of Ecbatana he car-

¹ See the *Proceedings of S. B. A.* for Nov. 7th, 1882. For the identification of Sippara—the Sepharvaim of the Bible—with Abu-habba, see the papers by Mr. Pinches and Mr. Rassam in the *T. S. B. A.* viii. 164-197.

² The prayer is found on a cylinder, one of four, each containing the same text, and buried at the four corners of the temple at Ur. The translation in the text is from Sayce, *Fresh Light etc.*, Appendix iii.

ried away, and brought the furniture and the spoil which he had taken to the land of Elam."

(2) The "piety" which marked the beginning of the reign of Nabonidus was great. That it was sincere, that it produced any example for good on his son Belshazzar, Holy Scripture and the subsequent events detailed by the Inscriptions unite in questioning.

Nabonidus dwelt in the city Tema (a suburb of Babylon), and to his son Belshazzar was entrusted the care of the army in Accad (Northern Babylonia). It may be assumed that the "son of the king" shared in some degree the government with his father, as Nebuchadnezzar had shared it with Nabopolassar, and that the title of "King" (by courtesy) given to Belshazzar by Daniel is correct. Inactivity both at home and abroad marked both Nabonidus and his son; and the religious festivals were neglected.¹ From the seventh to the eleventh years of his reign this combination of inactivity and irreligion was gradually doing its work of deteriorating the army, of irritating those who considered him an usurper, and of alienating the priesthood. Nabonidus was slowly but surely preparing the way for the conqueror Cyrus. When the break in the annalistic tablet ceases, the record opens in the seventeenth year of Nabonidus, the tribes of the Lower Sea² were in revolt, and Nabonidus had turned to his neglected gods. Their images were now brought from their various shrines to Babylon in the hope that they might avert the capture of the city: but priests and people were against one whose neglect of Merodach—the patron-god—had been so marked. Cyrus, the conqueror of Media in B.C. 549, marched against Nabonidus in B.C. 539: "In the month Tammuz (June)

¹ Cf. *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, xii. p. 70; Pinches "On a Cuneiform Tablet Relating to the Capture of Babylon by Cyrus, and the events which preceded and led to it," *T.S.B.A.* vii. 139, etc.

² The Mediterranean, according to Pinches; the Persian Gulf, according to Sayce.

Cyrus made battle in Rutum . . . the men of Accad revolted." If Rutum (or Rutuv) was (as appears probable) some distance south of Babylon, this detail shows the extent of the line of military operations. It was literally from north to south. Gradually Cyrus narrowed his circle till his troops were ready to close in upon the devoted city. The revolt in Accad unquestionably favoured him; and the conjecture is not inadmissible that it was made easier through the absence of Belshazzar. The effects of that revolt were felt at Sippara, in which Nabonidus was at this time to be found. Sippara was taken "on the fourteenth day without fighting," and Nabonidus fled into Babylon. Babylon was supposed impregnable. The river was paved with brick and lined with great walls; and on all sides rose works of defence attributed by Herodotus to Queen Nitocris. Yet in two days after the taking of Sippara the converging troops had captured "Babylon the great." "On the sixteenth day Gobryas, the governor of Gutium (Kurdistan, Sir H. Rawlinson) and the army of Cyrus came to Babylon without any opposition. Afterwards, having bound Nabonidus, he took him to Babylon." A fruitless and defenceless resistance on the part of some rebels closed against Gobryas for a time the temple of Saggil, but "neither in that temple nor in any of the temples of the country were found any weapons"; and when Cyrus himself "descended to Babylon" four months later, "he made peace to the city, to the whole of Babylon." He "appointed Gobryas to be governor in Babylon, together with others." In a year's time Nabonidus died. . . . "All the people were free from their chief" (cf. Job iii. 19).

The account given by Cyrus himself—in the third of the inscriptions alluded to—of the capture of Babylon corresponds virtually with this record, while it represents him as the champion of the outraged deities. His acts are

invested with all the sacredness of deeds wrought at the instigation of the gods, his campaign is raised to the dignity of a religious war. The cylinder of Cyrus states in so many words that Nabonidus had neglected the worship of the gods, and that they were angry with him.¹ "The gods . . . left their shrines in anger when (Nabonidus) brought them to Babylon. Merodach went about to all men, wherever their seats were" (*i.e.* Merodach did not appear at the sacred feasts which were celebrated within Kal-anna; he had taken himself away to other peoples, Budge). "He appointed a king to guide aright in the heart what his hand upholds. Cyrus, King of Elam, he proclaimed by name for the sovereignty. . . . The men of Kurdistan and all the barbarians (the dark races) he made bow down to his feet, the men of the black-headed race . . . he governed in justice and righteousness. Merodach, the great lord, the restorer of his people, beheld with joy the deeds of his vicegerent, who was righteous in hand and heart. To his city of Babylon he (Merodach) summoned his (Cyrus') march, and he bade him take the road to Babylon; like a friend and a comrade he went at his side. The weapons of his vast army, whose numbers, like the waters of a river, could not be known, he marshalled at his side. Without fighting or battle he caused him to enter into Babylon; his city of Babylon feared; in a place difficult of access, Nabonidus the king, who worshipped him not, he gave into his hand. The men of Babylon, all of them, (and) the whole of Sumer and Accad, the nobles and priests who had revolted, kissed his feet, they rejoiced in his sovereignty." And then the conqueror bursts forth in proud exultation:—"I am Cyrus, the king of legions, the king of Sumer and Accad, . . .

¹ Cf. Sayce, *Fresh Light* etc., p. 146; Budge, p. 79. The translations given by these gentlemen do not always agree in individual words and expressions; but the facts presented by them are substantially the same.

of the ancient seed-royal, whose rule has been beloved by Bel and Nebo, whose sovereignty they cherished according to the goodness of their hearts. At that time I entered Babylon in peace. With joy and gladness I enlarged the seat of my dominion in the palace of the kings. Merodach, the great lord, (cheered) the heart of his servant, whom the sons of Babylon (obeyed each) year and day. . . . My vast armies he marshalled peacefully in the midst of Babylon. Throughout Sumer and Accad I had no revilers. The sanctuaries of Babylon and all its fortresses I established in peace." After enumerating his work of restoration of the shrine of Merodach, and the submission of the kings "of all regions from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea," he records how "he settled in peace in their sanctuaries, by the command of Merodach, the great lord, the gods of Sumer and Accad whom Nabonidus, to the anger of the lord of gods, had brought into Babylon," and he closes with the following prayer:—"In the goodness of their hearts may all the gods whom I have brought into their strong places daily intercede before Bel and Nebo that they should grant me length of days. May they bless my projects with prosperity, and may they say to Merodach my lord, that Cyrus the king, thy worshipper, and Kambyses his son (deserve his favour)."

There is a great deal in these profoundly interesting voices from the tomb of ages which to some is revolutionary of all hitherto-accepted historical conclusions and Biblical statements. Is this really the case?

J. M. FULLER.

King's College, London.

(To be continued.)
