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## THE BABYLONIAN OFFICIALS IN JEREMIAH 39 3, 13.

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**T**HE officials mentioned in Jeremiah 39 13 do not offer any difficulty. The names are known and correct and the offices are easily explained. But this verse, as well as the preceding two verses, is surely a later interpolation and is omitted in the LXX. These verses (11-13) contain an account of the rescue of Jeremiah from imprisonment, which is obviously connected with the story in chapter 40.<sup>1</sup> V. 3, on the contrary, is original and is quite difficult. Let us examine each name separately:

The first name is Nergal-sareser. The Massoretic text writes this compound name in two words נֶרְגַל סַרְסַר. S reproduces this name with  $\delta$ . D regards it as two names, Neregel, Sereser.  $\mathfrak{SBN}$  corrupted it to *Μαργασαρ*.<sup>2</sup> But in spite of the fact that this name appeared in all the versions, it could

<sup>1</sup> According to Jer. 40, Jeremiah was among the captives. Nebuzaradan released him and gave him the alternative either to go with him or stay in Palestine. However, the same command was given to him by Nebuchadrezzar in Jer. 39 11-12. Compare also the similarity of the words וְצִנְיָיִם שִׁים קָלִי (Jer. 39 12) and וְצִנְיָיִם אֶת־קָלִי (Jer. 40 4). The story of how he fulfilled the command of the king began in 39 13 and was continued in 40 2.

<sup>2</sup> The corruption of  $\mathfrak{SBN}$  can be explained in that M and N are similar in script, A and N are nearly alike in sound and script, while SAP dropped out. But compare Nerigliassor where the *σαρ* is omitted. All the other Greek codices have slight corruptions which can be easily explained. Thus Νηργελ Σασασαρ (A) is a mere repetition of SA instead of PA; Νηργελ Σασασαρ (Q) consists of an omission of the A and a repetition of the Σ.

not have appeared in the original book (Giesebrecht, see Gesenius-Buhl, [16th ed.], s. v.). The reasons for this statement are as follows:

- 1) The name Nergal-sarešer is mentioned only once in v. 13; the interpolator surely did not have it written twice in his copy.
- 2) The name Nergal-sarešer is mentioned below as a *rab-mâg*, and it is improbable that two officials shall bear the same name.
- 3) We surely expect at the head of the officials Nebuzaradan, as in v. 13, and not Nergal-sarešer. We have, therefore, to place the well known Nebuzaradan instead of Nergal-sarešer. The name is good Babylonian, *Nabû-zêr-idîn*, meaning "Nabû gave a seed." The reason why this name is now omitted is because the *rab-šabbâhim* is omitted in v. 3. Since this name was omitted the space was filled in with Nergal-sarešer, the later king.

The following name is **סַמְגַרְנָבּוּ**. The Massoretic text connects it by a maqqeph to the following **נָבוּ**,<sup>3</sup> S and V regard it also as one name, *Semgarnabu* in the V. The LXX regards **סַמְגַרְנָבּוּ** separately.<sup>4</sup> This cannot, however, be a personal name for the following reasons:

- 1) Such a name is unusual, in spite of **שְׁמַרְנָבּוּ**, in Judg. 3 31 and 5 6.<sup>5</sup>
- 2) No such name is mentioned in the interpolation in v. 13.
- 3) From v. 13, we see that every name of the official is

<sup>3</sup> There were Massoretic texts in which **סַמְגַרְנָבּוּ** was written in one word. Others wrote two words connected by a maqqeph, but there were texts in which **נָבוּ** was written with a šureq, so that this word is connected with the following ones. See Qimhi.

<sup>4</sup> The *ml* before the reproduction of **סַמְגַרְנָבּוּ** is found only in **Ⓞ<sup>B</sup>**, but is omitted in **Ⓜ**, **Q** and **Q<sup>ms</sup>**. **A**, however, seems to have had it, and this explains the strange writing **Εισσαμαγαθ**, namely, **K[A]I(Σ)ΣΑΜΑΓΑΘ**, the **A** being dropped out and the **Σ** repeated twice. According to those codes, where the *ml* is omitted, **סַמְגַרְנָבּוּ** would be a description of the preceding name. The name **סַמְגַרְנָבּוּ** is reproduced in the Greek in two erroneous ways. While in **Ⓞ<sup>B</sup>AⓂ** the final **וּ**, because of its nearness to **וּ** of **נָבוּ**, was read as **Γ**, **Σαμαγαθ**, **Ⓞ<sup>B</sup>Q** preserved a misreading to the **וּ** as **γ**, **Σαμαγαν**. Only the **Q<sup>ms</sup>** corrected it according to the Hebrew, **Σαμαγαν**. The pronunciation of **A** (*αθ*) and **Q** (*αδ*) is more correct than that of **B** and **Ⓜ** (*ωθ*). The *ml* before the next word is common to all codes.

<sup>5</sup> See Gesenius-Buhl [16th edit.], s. v. Compare also Macalister, *The Philistines*, p. 41.

followed by his office. We should expect the same here. **סָסְנָר** must, therefore, be an office and not a personal name. Giesebrecht and Ehrlich regard the word as a textual corruption from **רַב קָן**.

The appearance of the name at the end of the list, is due to a scribal error, it having been taken from the preceding line. Also Duhm<sup>6</sup> regards the name at the end as a correction of the first name. But **סָסְנָר** can hardly be corrupted from **רַב קָן**. Also **סָר קָן** is here improbable, since we should expect **סָר קָן**, as **סָר** in the same verse. Since the interpolator (vv. 11–13) mentions three names, we should expect here also three names, with Nebuzaradan at the head.

In the *Theologische Literaturzeitung* of October 17, 1925 (vol. 50, pp. 482–486), Eckhard Unger published the names of the officials of Nebuchadrezzar II, which are contained on a prism found by Koldewey in Babylon (now in Constantinople, No. 7834). In Col. 4 22, *Nergal-šar-ušur amēl Sin-magir*, appears as one of the "great ones of the land of Akkad" (*rabūti ša māt Akkadim*). Unger identifies him with the **רַב קָן** in Jer. 39 3 and the later king of Babylon. While he was a *rab mag* in 586 B. C., he was later appointed as a ruler of the city *Sin-magir*, but also, on another occasion he ruled *Akšak*, etc. (see Unger, *ibid.*). Professor J. A. Bever (*AJSL.*, vol. 42, p. 130) identifies this official with **נֶרְגַל שָׂרְאֻשֻׁר סָסְנָר**. The word **סָסְנָר** is a corruption from **סָסְנָר**, *Sin-magir*. The repetition of the name *Nergal-sarešer* is due to a parallel reading which intended to attach to him the title *rap mag*. However, Professor Bever's explanation does not remove the difficulty of the text: 1) We expect first Nebuzaradan, the main executor of the destruction, named at the head of the officials in Jer. 39 3, as in 39 13. Even though we admit that the future king of Babylon was of greater importance than Nebuzaradan, at least the latter's name should have been mentioned. 2) Surely only one *Nergal-šar-ušur* participated in the council, as we see from 39 13. In such case why should the text repeat this same name in

<sup>6</sup> In *Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament*, p. 310. For Ehrlich see **סָסְנָר כַּשְׂדִּי**, vol. II.

order to attach the office *rab mag* which was then also held by him. He would rather add the name of this office to סמנר which, according to Bewer, is the name of a city. 3) We see from 39 13 that there were three officials of greater importance who were individually mentioned by name, but according to Bewer only two officials would remain, since the third and the first are one person. 4) The writer of Jer. 39 was in Babylonia and had every opportunity to know that *Sinmagir* is the name of a city. How could he, in such case, omit the word שר before the word סמנר? 5) If *Nergal-sar-ušur* was, at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, a ruler of *Sin-magir*, his proper place would seem to be in his own dominion and not in Jerusalem. For the above reasons, it seems to me that the first official was not *Nergal-sar-ušur* but Nebuzaradan, whose name was omitted by a later copyist because of the omission of *rab ṭabbāhim* after his name, and especially because of his designation as a סמנר. The vacant place was filled in with the name of the king *Nergal-sar-ušur*. The writer, however, did not know that he was then a *rab mag*, and that he was mentioned at the end. He regarded them as two different persons.

I would suggest that סמנר is correct. סמנר is the priestly official *Šim. Gar* who appears in the Early Sumerian contracts. The ש has the reading *Semgar*, like the Sumerian *Šim. Gar*. The Akkadian *š* is reproduced in Hebrew by a ש. Compare *šēnu* — סנן, *šākin* — סכין, *muškenu* — מסכן, *ṭupšarru* — טפסר, etc. Thus *Šim. Gar* is reproduced סמנר.

The meaning of *Šim. Gar* is, according to Ungnad (Kohler & Ungnad, *Hammurabi's Gesetz*, N. N. 984 and 979) and Schorr (*Alt-babylonische Gerichtsurkunden*, N. 104 A : 2), "Küchen-meister". Compare *ibid.* N. 115 : 1 and p. 574. רב טפסרים, in the meaning "the chief of the cooks" is the Hebrew translation of the Sumerian סמנר. Nebuzaradan was not the "head of the cooks," but was of a priestly family who held this office in the temple in ancient time. Compare רב־שקה.

In the above mentioned list of Babylonian officials published by Unger, the name *Nabû-zêr-i-din-nam rab-nuhtimmu*, appears as the first of the *mašennum* officials. (col. 3 : 35.) Unger identifies him with the *rab ṭabbāhim* in Jeremiah. If

this identification be certain my suggestion that **סִקְנָר** was the office of Nebuzaradan would be impossible. However, the identification is not certain. The equivalent of *rab nuthimmu* is not **רַב מְבֹחִים** but **שָׂר הָאֲסִים**. The omission of the name of *Nabû-zêr-idinam Šim. gar* in the list cannot serve as evidence against my suggestion, since the name of the second official, *Nabû-šeziḇanni*, is also omitted there. Moreover, there is a Talmudic tradition that Nebuzaradan disappeared from the court of the Babylonian king soon after the capture of Jerusalem. According to the Talmudic phantasy, he, as well as Nero, became a proselyte. (Babli, *Gittin*, p. 57 b.)

The second official is **נְבוֹ שָׂר סִכִּים**. **ס** and **נ** regard **סִכִּים** **שָׂר** as a personal name. But against this can be said: 1) There is very little probability for such a name, either separately or compounded with *Nebo*. 2) In the interpolation we have a good Babylonian name **נְבוֹשֶׁצַבְדַּן** namely, *Nabû-šeziḇanni*, "Nabu saved me." 3) The LXX has *Ναβουσαχαρ*, **נְבוֹסֶכֶר**, which is surely a corruption from **נְבוֹסִכִּים**, through the loss of the left part of the **ם**<sup>7</sup>. The **שָׂר** in the Massoretic text must mean "prince," like the Aramaic **רַב**. Compare Hebrew **שָׂר מְבֹחִים** and the later **רַב מְבֹחִים** (See Gesenius-Buhl, *s. v.*). This was omitted in some texts; compare **סִקְנָר**, which is not preceded by **שָׂר**. This text was before the Greek translator. The introduction of **שָׂר** in the Massoretic text is due to the plural form of **סִכִּים**.

Giesebrecht, Ehrlich, etc., are surely correct in maintaining that in v. 3 also the name **נְבוֹשֶׁצַבְדַּן** appeared. The following **שָׂר סִכִּים** or **סִכִּים**, **סִכֶּר** is the office of this man. Winckler explains it as **שָׂר סִכִּים**, "Haupt der Negersklaven" (See Ges.-Buhl, [16th ed.] p. 794). I would suggest that this official is as well a priestly one, and is to be identified with *iskim* — *ittu*, "sign," "omen" (Meißner, *Seltene Assyrische Ideogramme*, N. 11228). **שָׂר סִכִּים** is the omina-priest who foresees the future of the war. **רַב קָרִים** in v. 13 is either a Hebrew explanation of **שָׂר סִכִּים**, or a corruption of **סִכִּים**. This word can easily be corrupted to **קָרִים**. The second **ך** lost its end and resembled

<sup>7</sup> The reading of code Q, *Ναβουσαρχ*, is based on the same text by an interchange of the places of the letters in the last syllable *χαρ* to *αρχ*. Qms here also has the Hebrew *Σαραχειμ*.

א ך, the final ך became a ך. Compare כִּבְנֵי and כִּבְנֵי (2 Sam. 21 18 and 23 27). Cf. *AJSL*, vol. 41, p. 138. The *rab sâris* from v. 13 was also added as a gloss to v. 3 and finally entered into the text. While S regards it correctly as an official, U regards it as a personal name Rabsares. The LXX corrupted the ך to ך and has thus *Ναβουσαρ(ε)ίς*.<sup>8</sup>

The last name is in both verses the same, גִּרְנֵל שְׂרָאִיִּר. The office is of a רַב מֶגֶן. The name is the Babylonian *Nergal-šar-ušur* "Nergal preserve the king." S reproduced the name correctly, regarding מֶגֶן רַב as an office. U regards it as three personal names, "Neregel, Sareser, et Rebmag." G has a far fetched corruption.<sup>9</sup> The office מֶגֶן רַב is either the Assyrian *rab-mugi* (Ges.-Buhl, p. 395) or it is Semitic rendering of an earlier Sumerian *En-mah*, "high priest;" the *mah* can, however, be the adjective "high" of any of the Babylonian priestly occupations, as *gala-mah*, *šutug alal mah*, etc. The interpolator did not preserve the main official but the adjective. He added the usual רַב before it, which was also accepted in v. 3.

<sup>8</sup> The reading *Ναβου* instead of *Ραβ* is explained partly by the ך which may look like ך, but also by the preceding *Ναβου*. The reading of Q, *Ναβουσαρ(ε)ίς*, is not better than that of B, *Ναβουσαρ(ε)ίς*. M\* supports also the writing *Ναβουσαρ(ε)ίς*, because *Ναβουσαρ(ε)ίς* is surely corrupted from *Ναβουσαρ(ε)ίς*, not *σαρ(ε)ίς*, namely, by omitting the *αφ* and repeating the *ε*. Compare note 4.

<sup>9</sup> The corruption of this name is common to all the codes. Even Qms has *Νηρεα Σαρσαρ* in which, however, it is easy to find *Νηρ[γ]ελ Σαρ[α]σαρ*, the A being a corruption from A. It is not easy to see how the corruption of G<sup>B</sup> *Ναγαργασαρερ* happened. But it should be noticed that *κα* is omitted where we expect it. Thus *KAI NAPIΓAΛΣAPAΣEP* became *NAΓ[N]APIΓA[A]Σ[A]XAΣEP*. The K became N, the I was completed to Γ, the N dropped out, the A was omitted because of its likeness to the preceding A. The corruption of P to N may have happened rather in Hebrew than in Greek. Compare *גִּבְוִכְרָמָיִר* for *גִּבְוִכְרָמָיִר*. See note 8. The A dropped out.

The name of the office is also corrupted in most of the codes. Only G<sup>Q</sup> has *Ραβμαγ*. *Ραβμακ* of A can be perhaps traced to the same original. But *Ραβμαδ* of B, *Ρα'ματ* of M\*, and *Βαματ* of M<sup>o, a(?)</sup> surely indicates a corruption of the ך to ך which some pronounced ך and some א. *Ρα'ματ* and *Βαματ* are conflated to *Ραβματ*. It is not probable that we have here *rab mât* "the head of the country." The ך rather originates in ך and the adjacent ך, thus ך became ך.

The original story was, according to the above discussion: "And it came to pass, when Jerusalem was taken, that all the princes of the king of Babylon came in and sat in the middle gate, even Nebuzaradan "the cook," Nebushazban the omina-priest, Nergal-sareser the high priest(?), with all the residue of the princes of the king of Babylon. And they sent and took Jeremiah out of the court of the guard and committed him unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan. And he dwelt among the people." (39 1-3, 14.) Verses 4-13 are an interpolation.