

ASSYRIAN
ASTRONOMICAL TABLETS.

SELECTED AND TRANSLATED BY

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THE following are specimens of the numerous astronomical and astrological reports with which the Libraries of Assyria and Babylonia abounded. The tablets from which the translations are made come from the Library of Assurbanipal: but the larger part of them are merely later editions of works composed for Babylonian kings before the 16th century B.C. This is the date of the great astrological work, consisting of 72 tablets or volumes, a small portion of which is translated below. The inscription numbered VII. has already been translated by

Dr. Oppert. The originals will be found in the *Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*, Vol. III, plates 51, 54, 58, 59, 60, 61. It is much to be regretted that many of the records are in a very fragmentary condition, the first and final lines of the tablets being lost.



TRANSLATION OF THE TABLETS.

TABLET I.

- 1 (On) the 6th day of Nisan (March)
- 2 the day and the night
- 3 were balanced (*i.e.* were equal).
- 4 (There were) 6 hours of day
- 5 and 6 hours of night.
- 6 May NEBO (and) MERODACH
- 7 to the King my Lord
- 8 be propitious.

TABLET II.

- 1 (On) the 15th day of Nisan
- 2 the day and the night
- 3 were balanced.
- 4 (There were) 6 hours of day
- 5 and 6 hours of night.
- 6 May NEBO (and) MERODACH
- 7 to the King my Lord
- 8 be propitious.

TABLET III.

- 1 A watch we kept.
- 2 (On) the 29th day the moon
- 3 we saw.
- 4 May NEBO (and) MERODACH
- 5 to the King my Lord
- 6 be propitious.
- 7 (The report) of NABU
- 8 of the city of ASSUR¹

¹ Kileh-Shergat.

TABLET IV.

- 1 To the King my Lord
- 2 thy servant ISTAR-IDDINA
- 3 Chief (Astronomer),
- 4 of the city of Arbela.
- 5 May there be peace
- 6 to the King my Lord.
- 7 May NEBO (and) MERODACH
- 8 (and) ISTAR of Arbela
- 9 to the King my Lord
- 10 be propitious.
- 11 On the 29th day
- 12 a watch
- 13 we kept. The moon we did not see.
- 14 In the month Tammuz,¹ the 2nd day,
- 15 during the eponymy of BEL-SUNU
- 16 Prefect of the city of Khindana.

TABLET V.

- 1 (If) the moon the 1st day is seen,
- 2 the face is stedfast,
- 3 the heart of the country is good.
- 4 (If) the moon at its appearance has a halo,
- 5 the King to supremacy
- 6 goes
- 7 (Report of) NERGAL-EDIR.

TABLET VI.

- 1 To the King, my Lord,
- 2 thy servant ISTAR-IDDINA
- 3 the Chief
- 4 of the Astronomers,
- 5 of the city of Arbela.

¹ June.

- 6 May there be peace
 7 to the King my Lord.
 8 May NEBO, MERODACH
 9 (and) ISTAR of Arbela
 10 to the King my Lord
 11 be propitious.
 12 On the 29th day
 13 a watch
 14 we kept.
 15 (In) the observatory¹
 16 (There was) mist.
 17 The moon we did not see.
 18 (Dated) the month Sebat,² the 1st day
 19 during the eponymy of BEL-KHARRAN-SADUA.³

TABLET VII.

- 1 To the King my Lord, thy servant
 2 ABIL-ISTAR. Peace
 3 to the King my Lord. May NEBO (and) MERODACH
 4 to the King my Lord be propitious.
 5 Long days, soundness of flesh
 6 and joy of heart may the great gods
 7 to the King my Lord grant. (On) the 27th day
 8 the moon is fixed. (On) the 28th day,
 9 the 29th day (and) the 30th day a watch
 10 for an eclipse of the Sun we kept.
 11 The sun behind the shadow (of the eclipse) did not
 pass.
 12 (On) the 1st day the moon was seen in the day
 time,

¹ Lit. "House of Observation."

² Our January.

³ The report accordingly was sent in to Assurbanipal, as Bel-kharran-sadua was eponym during his reign. The year according to Mr. Smith would be 649 B.C.

- 13 during the month Tammuz¹ current,
 14 above the planet Mercury ;
 15 of which I have already
 16 to the King my Lord sent this²
 17 account. During the period of 5 days when the moon
 is called Anu³
 18 in the circle of the star Shepherd of the Heavenly
 Flock
 19 it was seen declining.⁴
 20 By reason of rain the horns were not visible
 21 *very clearly*. Thus
 22 during this 5 days' period when the month is Anu
 23 in regard to its conjunction to the King my Lord
 24 I have sent. Thus
 25 it extended itself (and) was visible
 26 below the star of the Chariot.
 27 During the 5 days' period when the moon's course is
 called Bel⁵ it is fixed ;
 28 round the star of the Chariot it turned its course.
 29 Its conjunction was prevented ; but
 30 nevertheless its conjunction with Mercury
 31 which (took place) during the 5 days' period when the
 moon is Anu
 32 of which I have already to the King my Lord
 33 sent a special (report)
 34 was not prevented.
 35 May the King my Lord have peace.

¹ June.² *I.e.*, a special.³ *I.e.*, from the 1st to the 5th day.⁴ Lit. "in the lower part (of the sky)."⁵ The orbit of the moon was called Bel from the 10th to the 15th day, though the heavenly body itself was called Hea, the name it bore also from the 6th to the 10th day. It was termed Anu from the 1st to the 5th day.

TABLET VIII.

- 1 The 15th day the Moon and the Sun
- 2 with one another are seen.
- 3 The face is stedfast. The heart of land is good.
- 4 Joy possesses the heart of the inhabitants.
- 5 The gods of Accad
- 6 to prosperity consign (it).
- 7 The Moon and the Sun are clear ;
- 8 the King of the land his ears enlarges.
- 9 (The report) of ABLUA.

TABLET IX.

- 1 The 15th day, the moon and the sun with (one
another)
- 2 are seen. A strong enemy
- 3 his arrows against the land lifts up.
- 4 The great gate of the city the enemy undermines.
- 5 The stars in the centre of heaven are obscured by
rain ;
- 6 the enemy the streams of water makes bitter.

TABLET X.

- 1 The moon has a dark setting.
- 2 The month rain continuously and fog
- 3 will mark.

TABLET XI.

- 1 The moon sank to rest. The planet Mars
- 2 in the place of its (setting) was fixed. Destruction of
cattle.
- 3 The land of Phœnicia is made small.

TABLET XII.¹

(*Portion of an Astronomical Calendar.*)

15 In the month Sivan² (on) the 14th day an eclipse happens; and in the east it begins and in the west it ends.

16 In the night-watch it begins, and in the morning-watch³ it ends. Eastward at the time of appearance and cessation

17 its shadow is seen; and to the King of Dilmun⁴ the crown is given. The King of Dilmun on the throne grows old.

18 (On) the 15th day an eclipse takes place. The King of Dilmun on the throne is slain; and a nobody seizes on the (throne).

19 (On) the 16th day an eclipse happens. The King is slain by his eunuchs, and a plebian seizes on the (throne).

20 (On) the 20th day an eclipse takes place. Rains in heaven, floods in the channels flow.

21 (On) the 21st day an eclipse takes place. Devastation or rapine

22 in the country comes about. Corpses in the country are. (5)

23 In the month Tammuz⁶ (on) the 14th day an eclipse happens; and in the west it begins and in the south and north it ends.

¹ The commencement of this Tablet is lost; the characters left become intelligible at line 15. ² May.

³ The night was divided into three watches, the evening-watch, the night-watch, and the morning-watch. These occupied the 6 *kaspu* or periods of 2 hours assigned to the night. See the Observatory reports numbered I. and II.

⁴ Dilmun was a country on the shores of the Persian Gulf.

⁵ These lines are in the original, they divide the tablet into months.

⁶ June.

24 In the evening-watch it begins and in the night-watch it ends. Westward at the time of appearance (and) disappearance

25 its shadow is seen; and to the King of Gutium a crown is given.

26 The forces of Gutium are in service; submission of (foreign) troops.

27 (On) the 15th day an eclipse takes place. Rains in heaven, floods on the land descend. Famine is in the land.

28 (On) the 16th day an eclipse takes place. Women their offspring do not perfect.

29 (On) the 20th day an eclipse happens. In the month Ab¹ the Air-god his mouth sets: and the god eats.

30 For a year the Air-god the cattle inundates.

31 (On) the 21st day an eclipse takes place. From the King twice his lands revolt, and to the hand of his foes deliver him.

32 In the month Ab, the 14th day, an eclipse happens; and in the south it begins, and in the west it ends.

33 In the evening-watch and in the morning-watch it begins; and at sun-rise it ends.

34 Southward at the time of appearance (and) disappearance its shadow is seen; and to the King of Mullias a crown is given.

35 The life of the soldier . . . and the soldiers for a year in a campaign serve, and men by arrows are slain.

36 (On) the 15th day an eclipse takes place. The King dies; and rains in heaven, floods in the channels are.

37 (On) the 16th day an eclipse takes place. The King of Accad dies. The war-god on the land feeds.

38 (On) the 20th day an eclipse takes place. The King of the Hittites lives and on the throne seizes.

¹ July.

39 (On) the 21st day an eclipse takes place. The god *plagues* the King and the flames devour land and King.

40 In the month of Elul¹ the 14th day, an eclipse takes place; and in the north it begins and in the south

41 and the east it ends. In the evening-watch it begins, and in the night-watch it ends.

42 Northward at the time of appearance (and) disappearance its shadow is seen; and to the King of Mullias a crown is given.

43 To the King the crown is an omen; and over the King the eclipse passes. Rains in heaven,

44 floods in the channels flow. A famine is in the country. Men their sons for silver sell.

45 (On) the 15th day an eclipse takes place. The son of the King murders his father, and on the throne seizes; and the enemy plunders and devours the land.

46 (On) the 16th day an eclipse happens. The King of a foreign country² plunders and on the throne seizes.

47 Rain in heaven, a flood in the channels descends.

48 (On) the 20th day an eclipse takes place. Rains in heaven, floods in the channels descend. Country with country keeps festival and makes peace.

49 (On) the 21st day an eclipse takes place. The throne of the foe lasts not. A King self-appointed in the land shall be.

50 After a year the Air-god inundates. Ditto (*i.e.* after a year) the King does not remain. His country is made small.

51 In the month Tisri,³ the 14th day, an eclipse happens; and in the south it begins and in the west it ends.

52 In the evening-watch it begins, and in the night-

¹ August.

² Or the king of the Hittites.

³ September.

watch it ends. Southward at the time of appearance (and) disappearance

53 its shadow is seen; and to the King of Elam a crown is given. The forces of Elam

54 in service are. *No return* of peace to his men.

55 (On) the 15th day an eclipse takes place. The foe plunders and the corn of the land devours and seizes and over the country tyrannises.

56 (On) the 20th day an eclipse takes place. The flame the land consumes. Pregnant women their offspring do not perfect.

58 (On) the 21st day an eclipse takes place. A flight of many birds to a country or to countries happens.

TABLET XIII.¹

(*Portion of another Calendar.*)

11 Contrary to their calculated time the Moon and the Sun with one another are seen. A strong enemy the country spoils.

12 The King of Accad under his enemy is placed. The 12th day with the Sun (the Moon) is seen; and

13 the 12th day the Moon and the Sun with one another are seen. Then terribly the heads of men the executioner cuts off.

14 The 13th day, the same (*i.e.* the Moon and the Sun are seen together). The face (is) not stedfast. The King of the land (is) not prosperous. Under the enemy he is. The enemy in the land campaigns.

15 The 14th day, the same. The face (is) stedfast; the heart of the land is good. The gods consign Accad to prosperity.

¹ The commencement of this Tablet is lost.

16 Joy in the heart of men results. The cattle of Accad in safety in the desert lie down.

17 The 15th day, the same. A powerful enemy his servants to the country sends; and the great gate of the city the enemy undermines.

18 The 16th day, the same. King to King hostility sends. The King in his palace for the period of a month (remains).

19 The hostile foot against his land is set. The enemy through his country tyrannically marches.

20 The 17th day, the same. The haughty foot (goes) against the land. A foreign tongue over the land is Lord.

21 The 20th day, the same. The hostile soldier marches and the land rules. The altars of the great gods are taken away.

22 BEL to Elam goes. At last after 30 years the smitten are restored. The great gods with them return.

1 _____

23 (In) the months of Chisleu,² Tebet,³ (and) Sebat⁴ the horn of the moon is double, and in (holy) places (there is) rest from sacrifices.

24 For these three months (on) the 15th day, the sky is not seen; on the 30th day no mists.

25 The Moon its path directs and the Sun¹ during the day goes. The same (*i.e.*, the moon directs its path). It is changed from the 15th day of the month Marchesvan⁵ to the 15th day of the month Chisleu.²

26 The night according to its reckoning is long. The night wind blows. The days of the King of Accad (are) long, the heart of the people (is) good.

27 The same. The night according to its reckoning is long. The north wind blows. The King of Accad, his days (are) long, his life is extended.

¹ See note 4 page 20.

² November.

³ December.

⁴ January.

⁵ October.

28 The moon its path directs and the sun during the day goes. The same. It is changed. From the 15th day of the month Tebet to the 15th day of the month Sebat

29 the night according to its stated time is long. The west wind blows. The King of Phœnicia (enjoys) long days. The heart of the people (is) good.

30 The same. The night according to its stated hours (is) long. The west wind blows. The days of the King of Phœnicia (are) long. His life is extended.

31 A bright light at the rising of the Sun arises, and in the assembly of the people diffuses itself

32 The days of the Prince (are long).

33 The Sun is ascendant, and a Star after it appears. Peace to (men).

34 (*Attack*) of pestilence violently and the men (*die*)

35 The Sun is in the ascendant and clouds are present

. . . .
36 (In the month Chisleu, the 20th day (the moon) makes its appearance, and in brilliance the moon (shines).

NOTE :—It may interest our readers to know that the bulk of these Tablets are in the British Museum and are readily accessible to students.

END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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