

INSCRIPTION OF NABONIDUS,
KING OF BABYLON.

TRANSLATED BY

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FROM the terra cotta cylinders, four in number, found at the corners of the temple of the Moon at Mugheir,¹ and now in the British Museum. Published in *Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*, Vol. I., plate 68.

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Several writers have maintained that the Prince Bel-sar-ussur, who is named in this inscription as being the eldest son of Nabonidus, is identical with the Biblical Belshazzar. As I am however of a very different opinion I will state some of my reasons for doubting it. I willingly admit that Belshazzar is the same name as Bel-sar-ussur; but this proves nothing, because Bel-sar-ussur, meaning, *Bel protect the King*, is not an unfrequent name in the Cuneiform inscriptions. Nergal-sar-ussur, usually shortened into Neriglissar, is another name of the same kind, and probably there were many other names, borne by different individuals, in which the principal gods of Babylonia were invoked "to protect the King." Nothing therefore can be inferred from the mere name of Bel-sar-ussur.

Again, the book of Daniel presents to us Belshazzar as a reigning king, and gives not the least hint of his having a father still alive and on the throne. Yet this is maintained by some writers who say that Bel-sar-ussur was co-regent with Nabonidus his father.²

¹ The Ur of the Chaldees.

² "Admitted by his father to a share in the government." Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*. "Joint king with his father." *Ibid*.

But of this there is not the slightest evidence in the inscription or elsewhere. He may have been a mere child when it was written. His father merely asks the gods to bless him.

Again, Belshazzar was the son of Nebuchadnezzar, and not the son of Nabonidus. Dan. v. 2.

This has been explained away by saying that "father" in Hebrew may mean "grandfather," or even a more remote ancestor. But consider the words employed in this passage, which seem expressly designed to avoid all ambiguity: chap. v. 11: "There is a man in thy kingdom, *viz.*, *Daniel*, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods whom *the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father*, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers." And, chap. v. 13: "Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king said: Art thou that Daniel, whom *the king my father* brought out of Jewry?"

Daniel in reply said to the king, chap. v. 18: "The most high God gave *Nebuchadnezzar thy father* a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. . . . And *thou his son*, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this."

Now, how do these passages suit the person of Bel-sar-ussur the son of Nabonidus, who was merely a Babylonian nobleman, and not in any way related, as far as we know, to the family of Nebuchadnezzar? There are so many great and undoubted coincidences between the cuneiform inscriptions and the Scriptures, that it was not worth while to bring forward so unsubstantial a conjecture as the one which I have been here examining.

THE INSCRIPTION OF NABONIDUS.

COLUMN I.

- 1 NABO-IMDUK¹ King of Babylon
 2 restorer of Bit-Saggathu
 3 and Bit-Zida,²
 4 worshipper of the great gods, I am he.
 5 The building of King RAM-SIDI
 6 called the Tower of the temple of "the great tree"
 7 which is in the city of Ur,
 8 which URUKH, a King who lived long ago,
 9 had begun, but had not completed,
 10 but ILGI his son
 11 had completed the superstructure :
 12 in the inscriptions of URUKH
 13 and ILGI his son I read
 14 that this tower
 15 URUKH had begun to build
 16 but had not completed it
 17 and ILGI its superstructure
 18 completed.
 19 In my days that tower
 20 had disappeared entirely.
 21 Upon the old *timin*³
 22 which URUKH and ILGI

¹ The king has two names in this inscription. His subjects who spoke the Accadian language called him Nabo-imduk, which probably meant "Nabo the glorious."

² Two magnificent temples very frequently mentioned in the inscriptions.

³ Or platform.

- 23 his son had made,
24 of that tower
25 like unto the ancient one
26 in bitumen and brick
27 a restoration I made.
28 Unto the MOON, Chief of the gods of heaven and
earth
29 King of the stars upon stars¹
30 which dwell in heaven great, Lord of that temple of
"the great tree"
31 in the city of UR, my Lord,

(Continued on Column II.)

¹ "Stars:" in the original "gods:" but the stars were in those ancient times accounted divinities and the same symbol (a six-rayed star) denoted "a star" and "a god."

COLUMN II.

- 1 From its foundation
 2 I raised it anew.
 3 O MOON ! Chief of the gods
 4 King of the gods of heaven and earth,
 5 and of the stars upon stars
 6 which dwell in heaven great :
 7 into this temple
 8 when joyfully thou dost enter ¹
 9 the holy buildings of Bit-Saggathu
 10 and Bit-Zida, and the temple of "the great tree"
 11 which are the dwellings of thy great divinity,
 12 may thy lips proclaim their stability !
 13 The fear of thy great divinity
 14 in the hearts of their inhabitants
 15 fix thou firmly ! that they may not transgress
 16 against thy great divinity !
 17 Like heaven may their foundations
 18 stand fast !
 19 Myself NABO-NID King of Babylon
 20 in the fear of thy great divinity
 21 preserve me !
 22 My life unto distant days
 23 abundantly prolong !
 24 and of BEL-SAR-USSUR
 25 my eldest son
 26 the offspring of my body,

¹ When the image of a god was brought into his newly built temple great rejoicings always took place.

- 27 the awe of thy great divinity
28 fix thou firmly in his heart
29 that he may never fall
30 into sin
31 and that his glory may endure !



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