

AN
ACCADIAN PENITENTIAL PSALM.

TRANSLATED BY

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THE following Psalm for remission of sins is remarkable alike for its deeply spiritual tone and for its antiquity. As it is written in Accadian, its composition must be referred to a date anterior to the 17th century B.C., when that language became extinct. An Assyrian interlinear translation is attached to most of the lines; some, however, are left untranslated. The tablet is unfortunately broken in the middle, causing a lacuna in the text. Similarities will be noticed between the language of the Psalm and that of the Psalms of the Old Testament, and one passage reminds us strongly of the words of Christ in St. Matthew xviii. 22. Seven, it must be remembered, was a sacred number among the Accadians. Accadian

poetry was characterised by a parallelism of ideas and clauses; and as this was imitated, both by the Assyrians and by the Jews, the striking resemblance between the form of Accadian and Hebrew poetry can be accounted for.

Some of the lines in the middle of the Psalm have been previously translated by Mr. Fox Talbot, in the *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, Vol. II., p. 60, and Prof. Schrader in his *Höllenfahrt der Istar*, pp. 90-95.

A copy of the text is given in the fourth volume of the *Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*, pl. 10.



AN ACCADIAN PENITENTIAL PSALM.

OBVERSE.

- 1 The heart of my Lord¹ was wroth : to his place may he return.
- 2 From the man that (sinned) unknowingly to his place may (my) god return.
- 3 From him that (sinned) unknowingly to her place may (the) goddess return.
- 4 May god who knoweth (that) he knew not to his place return.
- 5 May the goddess² who knoweth (that) he knew not to her place return.
- 6 May the heart of my god to his place return.
- 7 May the heart of my goddess to his place return.
- 8 May my god and my goddess (unto their place) return.
- 9 May god (unto his place) return.
- 10 May the goddess (unto her place return).
- 11 The transgression (that I committed my god) knew it.
- 12 The transgression (that I committed my goddess knew it).
- 13 The holy name (of my god I profaned?).
- 14 The holy name (of my goddess I profaned?).
[The next three lines are obliterated.]
- 18 The waters of the sea (the waters of my tears) do I drink.
- 19 That which was forbidden by my god with my mouth I ate.

¹ Literally "of my lord his heart."

² The Accadian throughout has the word "mother" before "goddess."

- 20 That which was forbidden by my goddess in my ignorance I trampled upon.
- 21 O my Lord, my transgression (is) great, many (are) my sins.
- 22 O my god, my transgression (is) great, my sins (are many).
- 23 O my goddess, my transgression (is) great, my sins (are many).
- 24 O my god that knowest (that) I knew not, my transgression (is) great, my sins (are many).
- 25 O my goddess, that knowest (that) I knew not, my transgression (is) great, my sins (are many).
- 26 The transgression (that) I committed I knew not.
- 27 The sin (that) I sinned I knew not.
- 28 The forbidden thing did I eat.
- 29 The forbidden thing did I trample upon.
- 30 My Lord in the wrath of his heart has punished me.
- 31 God in the strength of his heart has overpowered me.
- 32 The goddess upon me has laid affliction and in pain has set me.
- 33 God who knew, (though) I knew not, hath pierced me.
- 34 The goddess who knew (though) I knew not hath caused darkness.
- 35 I lay on the ground and no man seized me by the hand.¹
- 36 I wept,² and my palms none took.

REVERSE.

- 1 I cried aloud ; there was none that would hear me.
- 2 I am in darkness (and) trouble :³ I lifted not myself up.
- 3 To my god my (distress) I referred ; my prayer I addressed.

¹ Accadian "extended the hand."

² Accadian "in tears (water of the eye) I dissolved myself."

³ Or more literally "hiding." The verb that follows means "to lift oneself up so as to face another."

- 4 The feet of my goddess I embraced.
 5 To (my) god, who knew (though) I knew not, (my prayer)
 I addressed.
 6 To (my) goddess, who knew (though I knew not, my
 prayer) I addressed.

[The next four lines are lost.]

- 11 How long O my god (shall I suffer?).
 12 How long O my goddess (shall I suffer?).
 13 How long O my god, who knewest (though) I knew not,
 shall (thy) strength (oppress me?)
 14 How long O my goddess, who knewest (though) I knew
 not, shall thy heart (be wroth?)
 15 Of mankind thou writest the number and there is none
 that knoweth.
 16 Of mankind the name (that) is fully proclaimed how can I
 know?
 17 Whether it be afflicted or whether it be blessed there is
 none that knoweth.
 18 O Lord, thy servant thou dost not restore.¹
 19 In the waters of the raging flood seize his hand.
 20 The sin (that) he has sinned to blessedness bring back.
 21 The transgression he has committed let the wind carry
 away.
 22 My manifold affliction like a garment destroy.
 23 O my god, seven times seven (are my) transgressions, my
 transgressions are before (me).
 24 (To be repeated) 10 times.² O my goddess, seven times
 seven (are my) transgressions.
 25 O god who knowest (that) I knew not, seven times seven
 (are my) transgressions.
 26 O goddess who knowest (that) I knew not, seven times
 seven (are my) transgressions.

¹ In the Assyrian "quiet."

² A rubrical direction.

- 27 My transgressions are before (me): may thy judgment give (me) life.
- 28 May thy heart like the heart of the mother of the setting day to its place return.
- 29 (To be repeated) 5 times.¹ Like the mother of the setting day (and) the father of the setting day to its place (may it return).
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- 30 For the tearful supplication of my heart 65 times let the name be invoked of every god.¹
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- 31 Peace afterwards.
-
- 32 (*Colophon*) Like its old (copy) engraved and written.
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- 33 Country of ASSUR-BANI-PAL King of multitudes, King of Assyria.

¹ A rubrical direction.



END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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