

THE INSCRIPTION
ON THE
SARCOPHAGUS OF KING ESMUNAZAR,
NOW IN THE LOUVRE AT PARIS.

TRANSLATED BY
PROF. DR. JULIUS OPPERT.

THIS splendid monument was discovered on the 20th of February, 1855, by M. Peretié, Chancellor of the French consulate at Beyrut, near the ruins of Sidon, the modern Saïda. The Duke de Luynes bought it, and a munificent Maecenas, he made a present of it to the Museum of the Louvre. The noble donor himself published also the first translation of the Phœnician inscription in a work, entitled, *Mémoire sur le Sarcophage et l'inscription funéraire d'Es-munazar roi de Sidon*, par H. d'Albert de Luynes, Paris, 1856. Since that time, perhaps some forty

different scholars have endeavoured to explain this important text, either in voluminous works, or in short articles in which some passages only were commented. Among the principal writers on this sarcophagus we must mention MM. Bargès, Munck, Schlottman, Schröder, and lately Kämpf, as those who have made considerable progress in the explanation of the text.

The author of this present translation has himself been the last to write upon and to explain some difficult passages in the original text, in an article in the *Journal Asiatique*, 1876, Vol. I.



SARCOPHAGUS OF KING ESMUNAZAR.

IN the month of BUL,¹ in the fourteenth year of the royalty of King ESMUNAZAR,² King of the two Sidons, son of King TABNIT, King of the two Sidons, King ESMUNAZAR, King of the two Sidons, said as follows :

I am carried away, the time of my non-existence has come,³ my spirit has disappeared, like the day, from whence I am silent, since which I became mute.

¹ The eighth month of the Phœnician year which was identical with the Judaic. Unfortunately we know only the co-relative names of the 1st, 2nd, 7th, and 8th months from the Biblical texts, and the names of two or three other months from the Phœnician texts alone; but the position of these months in this year is unknown.

² King Esmunazar must have lived in the fourth century B.C., this is generally admitted on account of the form of the sarcophagus, which was certainly Egyptian; there are even in the middle of it traces of hieroglyphs which have been erased.

The King *Tabnit* may be the *Tennes* of Greek authors.

³ This is the thirtieth or fortieth translation of this passage, each author having proposed a version differing from all his predecessors. I do not pretend to have said the last word about this question, but it seems to me that this difficult passage is by no means a speech merely personal to Esmunazar. On the contrary, it is a quotation of a hymn or of a funeral chaunt, otherwise it would not have been repeated. If it were a historical account referring to Esmunazar's life-time, it would have been sufficient to state the fact once. This is the capital point, the misunderstanding of which misled all the former translators. I divide the words thus:

נגולה ב ליעת. בן מס כים מאו דמיה מפ נאלמת.

With the Masoretic punctuation it would be :

nigzalti, bā lo-itti.

bīn mas kayyom mēax dammēti mībbō neelamti.

“Abreptus sum; venit non-tempus meum: intellectus evanuit sicut dies illa ex qua silui, inde a qua obmutui.”

And I am lying in this coffin, and in this tomb, in the place which I have built.

O thou (reader) remember this:¹ May no royal race and no man open my funeral couch, and may they not seek after treasures, for no one has hidden treasures here, nor move the coffin out of my funeral couch, nor molest me in this funeral bed, by putting another tomb over it.

Whatever a man may tell thee, do not listen to him :

For the punishment (of the violators) shall be: Every royal race and every man, who shall open the covering of this couch, or who shall carry away the coffin where I repose, or who shall molest me in this couch: they shall have no funeral couch with the Rephaim,² nor shall be buried in graves, nor shall there be any son or offspring to succeed to them, and the sacred gods shall inflict extirpation on them.

Thou whoever (thou art who wilt) be King³ (hereafter), inspire those over whom thou wilt reign, that they may exterminate the members of the royal race (like those men) who will open the covering of this couch, or who will take away

¹ I separate entirely from the remainder of the phrase, the letters *תא* 'א. The last word seems to be the personal of the second person, *atta*; if it were the preposition *et*, it ought to be repeated before *adam* "man," which is not the case. The *yā* is the usual Arabic and Aramean interjection, although it be not preserved in our Hebrew texts. The formula "O thou," is also to be found frequently in Greek epitaphs; and it refers to the second person, which appears in the following lines. The usual interpretation is: "My imprecation is against all royal races and all men;" but besides the awkward sense, it cannot stand on account of the aforesaid omission of the second *et*, which would be indispensable.

² The word *Rephaim* is to be found here, like in Psalm lxxxviii. 11, with the sense of "deceased," not "shadows of dead;" the passage seems to exclude the notion of immortality. The same thing may be put forth on account of the passage in the Psalms; here, as in the Phœnician passage, the word seems to be purely a synonymous one for "dead."

³ I believe my translation to be quite acceptable, also in this passage, I reject absolutely the interpretation of *et* as a preposition, and I explain it likewise as the second person, *atta mi molekh*, tu quivis regnas.

this coffin, and (exterminate) also the offspring of this royal race, or of these men of the crowd.

There shall be to them no root below, nor fruit above, nor living form under the sun.

For graced by the gods, I am carried away, the time of my non-existence¹ has come, my spirit has disappeared, like the day, from whence I am silent, since which I became mute.

FOR I, ESMUNAZAR, King of the two Sidons, son of King TABNIT, King of the two Sidons (who was), the grandson of King ESMUNAZAR, King of the two Sidons,

And my mother AMASTARTE, the Priestess of ASTARTE, our mistress, the Queen, the daughter of King ESMUNAZAR, King of the two Sidons :

It is we who have built the temple of the gods, and the temple of ASTAROTH, on the seaside Sidon,² and have placed there the image of the ASTAROTH, as we are sanctifiers (of the gods).

And it is we who have built the temple of ESMUN, and the sanctuary³ of the Purpleshells River on the mountain, and have placed there his image, as we are sanctifiers (of the gods).⁴

And it is we who have built the temples of the gods of the two Sidons, in the seaside Sidon, the temple of BAAL-SIDON

¹ The sentence of "non-existence," which intervenes here a second time with the same words, shows clearly that it is not personal to the buried king.

² The seaside Sidon, *Sidon eres yam*, seems to be one of the two Sidons; the other may have been the Sidon of the mountain. Sennacherib speaks also of the two Sidons, the *great* and the *little* one.

³ A careful inspection proves that the only one letter defaced is a waw. We read: יקיש ירלל בהר, "et penetrare fluminis muricis in monte." The translation, of course, is doubtful.

⁴ All former translations of this passage, inconsistent with the real text of the document, must, I think, be abandoned.

and the temple of ASTARTE who bears the name of this BAAL.¹

May in future the Lords of the Kings² give us Dora³ and Japhia, the fertile corn-lands, which are in the plain of Saron, and may they annex it to the boundary of the land, that it may belong to the two Sidons for ever.

O thou, remember this: May no royal race and no man open my covering, nor deface (the inscriptions of)⁴ my covering, nor molest me in this funeral bed, nor carry away the coffin, where I repose.

Otherwise, the sacred gods shall inflict extirpation on them and shall exterminate this royal race and this man of the crowd and their offspring for ever.

¹ There is no mystical *hypostasis* of the Baal whatever, as some authors suggested. All Phœnician gods were *Baal*, and all goddesses *Astarte* (Compare Jud. x. 6). As there existed a Baal of Sidon, there was also an Astarte of Sidon, bearing the same name. That seems to be the real and very simple meaning of the words *Astarte nominis Baalis*.

² The "lords of the kings" seem not to be the kings of Persia, but an epithet applicable to a divine king.

³ Dora and Japhia (Joppe) are both situated at the shore on the plain of Saron.

⁴ The word יר may be very probably understood as *erase*; we see herein a threat against anyone attempting to deface the inscription engraved on this sarcophagus.



END OF SAMPLE TEXT



The Complete Text can be found on our CD:
Primary Literary Sources For Ancient Literature
which can be purchased on our Website :
www.Brainfly.net

or

by sending **\$64.95** in check or money order to :
Brainfly Inc.
5100 Garfield Ave. #46
Sacramento CA 95841-3839

TEACHER'S DISCOUNT:

If you are a **TEACHER** you can take advantage of our teacher's discount. Click on **Teachers Discount** on our website (www.Brainfly.net) or **Send us \$55.95** and we will send you a full copy of *Primary Literary Sources For Ancient Literature* **AND** our *5000 Classics CD (a collection of over 5000 classic works of literature in electronic format (.txt))* plus our *Wholesale price list*.

If you have any suggestions such as books you would like to see added to the collection or if you would like our wholesale prices list please send us an email to:

webcomments@brainfly.net