

BABYLONIAN LEGENDS

FOUND AT KHORSABAD.

 TRANSLATED BY

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THE following short legends were discovered by Victor Place during his excavations at Khorsabad. Of Babylonian origin, they were probably transported to Dur-Sarkin in B.C. 709, when Sargon had become king of Babylon, after the retreat of Merodach-Baladan, B.C. 721-709.

The short legends with female names, nearly a dozen in all, were discovered in one heap; they are little clay olives, with a hole in the uppermost part to bind them together. They are all dated from the month of Sebat, and descend to the twelfth year of Merodach-Baladan, February, B.C. 709 (9,292), that is, to the end of that king's reign.

These olives were, very probably, commemorative documents in connection with that Babylonian custom mentioned by Herodotus (I., 199), according to which every woman was obliged to deliver herself to a stranger, once in her life, in the sanctuary and for

the honour of Mylitta. The woman had not the right to refuse either the person or the money he gave her; and it is probable that these olives were presented to the temple by the men we spoke of.

The inscriptions are important for the chronology of the reign of Merodach-Baladan, and are quite consistent with the dates handed down to us by the *Almagest*, and the so-called Canon of Ptolemy. The epoch of the reign of Merodach-Baladan is February 20, Julian, February 12, Gregorian, B.C. 721 (9,280); the commencement of the reign of Arkeanus, or Sargon, is February 17 Julian, February 9 Gregorian, B.C. 712 (9,292).

The cone with the legend of the king Ben-habal-iddin, written in archaic characters, is curious, as it is the only trace we have of the monarch who constructed the inner wall of Nipur.

These inscriptions have been published in my *Dour-Sarkayan*, Paris, 1870.



BABYLONIAN LEGENDS.

I. Short inscriptions of the reign of Merodach-Baladan, king of Babylon (B.C. 720-709).

- 1 MANNUTAMMAT,¹ whom acquired BAHIT of Alsi, the . . day of the month Sebat, the 9th year of MERODACH-BALADAN, King of Babylon.
- 2 BINIT-EDU,² whom acquired HAMKAN, in the month of Sebat, the 10th year of MERODACH-BALADAN, King of Babylon.
- 3 HALALAT, whom, acquired MARNARIKH, in the month of Sebat, the 11th year of MERODACH-BALADAN, King of Babylon.
- 4 BEL-HAIL,³ whom, acquired MARNARIH, in the month of

¹ This name signifies, "Who is (the) pious (female)?" The day of the month is difficult to be fixed with certainty.

² The name of Binit-Edu or Binit-Ekin, is "Daughter of Edu." In my book, p. 27, there is a misprint in the Assyrian text, not in the Latin and French translations; the two angles are faulty, as there should be only one. The original is in my possession, and the inscription is only known from my work. Mistaking this inscription as being in the Louvre, Mr. Boscawen thought that he had discovered a date of the twentieth year of Merodach-Baladan, but the original olive being in my possession I am able to certify that the document only presents the date "ten," and therefore any chronological scheme based upon the assumed reading "twenty," must fall to the ground.

³ Halalat and Bel-hail are also names of females. Bel-hail is a female name, it signifies, "Bel is strong." A man, the father of Hammurabi, is called Ummu-banit, "Mater (dea) est generatrix;" and the Biblical name Abi-gail signifies, "My father is rejoicing."

Sebat, the 10th year of MERODACH-BALADAN, King of Babylon.

II. Clay cone. Khorsabad.

BENBALADAN (BENHABALIDDIN),¹ King of Babylon, has constructed Nivit-Marduk,² the interior wall, the wall of Nipur, in honour of BEL his lord.

¹ The name of Ben-habal-iddin signifies, "Ben, gave a son." In this instance it is entirely written with phonetic characters. It might not be superfluous to explain the god's name which has been read in very different ways during thirty years. The only sure indication we have about its pronunciation is the name of the Syrian king mentioned in the Bible, and whose name is Ben-Hadad or Ben-Hadar. The Assyrian texts name him AN-IM-idri. The god in question has been named Vul, Hu; finally, but erroneously, Dr. Delitzsch called him, following Professor Sayce, Raman. But as the god is also expressed by the simple angle, *u*, which signifies *beni*, Sumerian for *bel*, "master," we have thus an evidence which confirms the Biblical name Benhadar, and the pronunciation *Beni* proposed for that divinity.

² "Dwelling of Merodach."



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