

THE ORACLE OF ISTAR OF ARBELA.

TRANSLATED BY
THEOPHILUS GOLDRIDGE PINCHES.

AT the commencement of Esarhaddon's reign, he warred, as shown by his annals, in a district called Khani-rabbe, on the Upper Euphrates. It is not known against whom he fought, but is generally supposed that it was against his two brothers, Adrammelech and Sharezer, who, after having slain their father, had escaped into Armenia, and now came with an army to dispossess their younger brother of the throne of Assyria, on which, during their absence, the people had seated him. At this time, evidently to encourage the young king in the difficult campaign in which he was engaged, the following addresses, purporting to come from his

favourite goddess, the goddess of war, Istar of Arbela, were sent to him.

Of all the goddesses of Assyria, none were in greater repute than the two Istars : the one, goddess of love, the "divine queen," or "divine lady," of Kidmuri, her temple at Nineveh ; and the other, goddess of war, at Arbela. Originally there was but one goddess, personifying both love and war, but two such opposite attributes could not long remain the characteristics of one goddess, so, gradually becoming distinct in the popular mind, they became the attributes of two distinct goddesses of the same name, but of different parentage, Sin being father of the goddess of love, and Anu father of the goddess of war.

In the following translation will be found some of the finest specimens of Assyrian poetry that have come down to us.

The text is printed in the *Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*, Vol. IV., pl. 68.

THE ORACLE OF ISTAR OF ARBELA.

COLUMN I.

[The beginning of this Column is broken off.]

- 1¹ strong
 2¹ vast
 3¹ of one half
 4¹
 5¹ by the King of countries
 6¹ fear [not].²
 7 (When) sweeps the wind from my hand, weeping,
 8 I will tell him (what) I have not revealed.
 9 Thine enemy
 10 like the gathering-together³ of the month Sivan
 11 before thy feet descends to do battle.
 12 The great Lady am I.
 13 I (am) ISTAR of Arbela,
 14 who with thine enemy
 15 before thy feet will do battle.
 16 Let not pass away my word
 17 which I speak to thee
 18 concerning what thou hast not fixed for me.
 19 I (am) ISTAR of Arbela,
 20 thine enemy I cut off,
 21 (and) I give to thee. I (am)

¹ Lacunæ.

² The words supplied to make the sense clear are enclosed in *parentheses*, those supplied where the tablet is broken are enclosed in *brackets*.

³ "Harvest;" Sivan being the harvest month.

22 ISTAR of Arbela.
 23 In thy presence,
 24 by thy side,
 25 I go. Fear not.
 26 (When) thou in (thy) heart (art) agitated
 27 I in (thy) heart rest
 28 lovingly do set.

29 From the mouth of ISTARU-LA-TASIYADH,¹
 30 a daughter of the city of Arbela.

31 O King of Assyria, fear not,
 32 the enemy of the King of Assyria
 33 for a sacrifice I give.
 34² thine offspring
 35² thy god
 36² thy . . .²
 37 [The great Lady am] I
 38 [I am ISTAR of] Arbela
 39² his heart
 40² his . . .²

¹ "The goddess Istar chastises not."

² Lacunæ.

COLUMN II.

[Beginning lost.]

- 1 I heard thee not¹
 2 In the watch-tower¹
 3 with tribute¹
 4 to war afterwards¹
 5 I know [thy] sighing,
 6 thine overwheeler I cause to come not.
-
- 7 From the mouth of 'SINQI-SA-AMUR,²
 8 a daughter of the city of Arbela.
-
- 9 The head I fix, O ESARHADDON,
 10 my King, head of the city of Arbela.
-
- 11 From the mouth of RIMUTE-ALLATE³
 12 of the city of Darakhaya
 13 across the mountains.
-
- 14 Fear not, O ESARHADDON,
 15 I (am) BEL⁴ thy strength,
 16 I will ease
 17 the beams⁵ of thy heart.
 18 Respect as for thy mother
 19 thou hast caused to be shown to me.
 20 (Each) of the 60 great gods, my strong ones,
 21 with his life will guide thee—

¹ Lacunæ.² "See thou her captivity;" or, "Her captivity I saw."³ "A wife's love."⁴ Istar of Arbela likens herself to the various deities mentioned in the text.⁵ Or, "supports."

- 22 the Moon-god in thy right hand, the Sun-god thy left.
 23 The 60 great gods as rulers thy lords
 24 fix. In the midst strongly thou hast reigned.
 25 Upon mankind trust not (but)
 26 bend thine eyes
 27 upon me, trust to me.
 28 I (am) ISTAR of Arbela.
 29 ASSUR, thy strong one does speak ;
 30 thy littleness I take away from thee.
 31 Fear not. Glorify me.
 32 Let not gather together the enemy
 33 who speaks against thee.
 34 (Though) I may make an end,
 35 verdure I raise, as in former times.
 36 I (am) NEBO, the lord of the making of tablets,
 37 glorify me.
-

- 38 From the mouth of BAYÂ,¹ a daughter of the city of Arbela.
-

¹ "Praying."

COLUMN III.

[The beginning of this Column also is lost].

1 I¹

2 he turns¹

3 I (am) [ISTAR of Arbela].

4 From the mouth of 'SA . . .¹

5 of the city of Assur.

6 I (am) ISTAR of [Arbela].

7 O ESARHADDON, King of the country of Assyria,

8 in the city of Assur, the city of Nineveh,

9 the city of Calah, the city of Arbela,

10 long days,

11 extended years,

12 to ESARHADDON, my King,

13 I give.

14 (Of) the bounty of thy plentiful gift

15 the lover (am) I,

16 thy nurse (and)

17 thy guardian² (am) I.

18 For after days,

19 lasting years,

20 thy throne in heaven (and) earth

21 greatly I have fixed.

22 In a veil of gold

23 in the midst of heaven, in honour.

24 The light which clings to it

25 before ESARHADDON, King of Assyria,

26 I will cause to shine

¹ Lacunæ.

² Or, "soldier."

- 27 as the crowns of my head,
28 (and) behind him.
29 Fear not, O King,
30 I speak to thee.
31 I have not despised thee.

COLUMN IV.

- 1 [Thine] overwelmer
 2 shall not exist.
 3 The river¹ with fertility
 4 I cause to bless.
 5 O ESARHADDON, the son
 6 eldest, the son of BELTIS,
 7 the *beautiful*, the *warlike*, the safe,
 8 in my hands
 9 thine enemies
 10 I handle.
 11 O ESARHADDON, King of the country of Assyria,
 12 cutting off (him) who (is) full of shame,
 13 striking down (him) who (is) full of pride.
 14 O ESARHADDON, in the city of Assur,
 15 long days,
 16 extended years,
 17 I give to thee.
 18 O ESARHADDON, in the midst of Arbela,
 19 thy servant (and) guardian² (am) I.
 20 O ESARHADDON, the eldest son,
 21 the son of BELTIS,
 22 the intelligent,
 23 with *intelligence*
 24 I exalt thee [and]
 25 *strengthen* [thee].
 26 Because of thy renown
 27 from heaven vast
 28 I descend to thee.
 29 To thy right hand,

¹ The Tigris.² Or, "soldier."
6*

- 30 thy people return.
31 In thy left hand,
32 tribute I will cause [thee to take].
33 [Thy] kingdom above¹
34 to endure¹
35 above¹

[The rest of this Column is lost.]

¹ Lacunæ.

COLUMN V.

1 From his presence
 2 I receive not.
 3 Legions
 4 enormous
 5 which devise against me
 6 before thy feet
 7 I cut them in pieces.
 8 Thou, even thou,
 9 art King of the Kings.

10 From the mouth of ISTARU-BELA-DA'INI,¹
 11 a petitioner of the King.

12 I (am) the Lady of Arbela.
 13 To the mother of the King,
 14 because she has angered me :
 15 that from (thy) right hand
 16 (and) from thy left hand
 17 in chains she shall dwell,
 18 that it may not be,
 19 O offspring of my heart,
 20 (that in) the desert she may rest.
 21 Thus, O King, fear not,
 22 thy kingdom shall be safe,
 23 thy power shall be safe also.

24 From the mouth of NIN-ABI-SA,²
 25 a daughter of the city of Arbela.

¹ "Istar, judge thou (my) lord."

² "Nobody (is) her father."

- 26 Peace to ESARHADDON, King of Assyria.
27 ISTAR of Arbela
28 to a supreme (place) thou hast moved.
29 Peace to the little ones whom
30 throughout the city thou sendest
31 to send forth¹
32 which¹
33 the man¹

[The rest of this Column is lost.]

¹ Lacunæ.

COLUMN VI.

- 1¹ *Arbela*
 2¹ good
 3¹ of the city of Arbela,
 4 its hand²
 5 thou wilt fill.
 6 The word of former (time)
 7 which I tell thee
 8 concerning (what) thou hast not fixed.
 9 Thus
 10 more than thou raisedst
 11 thou fixest also.
 12 Glorify me.
 13 As the day
 14 has shone *forth*
 15 purity
 16 let them complete.
 17 In my presence glorify me.
 18 The perverse person
 19 from the midst of my Palace
 20 I send forth.
 21 O upright noble, thou judgest,
 22 waters of uprightness
 23 thou drinkest,
 24 in the midst of thy Palace
 25 thou actest uprightly.
 26 Thy son, thy son's son,
 27 the kingdom
 28 with the blessing of NERGAL

¹ Lacunæ.² Or, "fist."

29 rules.

30 From the mouth of LA-DAGIL-ILI,¹

31 a son of the city of Arbela.

¹ " (He who) trusts not in God." Almost every proper name, in Assyrian, as in Hebrew, tells of some event or circumstance connected either with the birth or with the life of the person bearing it. Thus, "Sinqi-sa-amur" tells of a slave redeemed from captivity; "Nin-abi-sa" of early orphanage; "La-dagil-ili" of a son's impiety at some period of his life. An examination of the other names in this text will give the same interesting result.

*



END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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