

## THE EGIBI TABLETS.

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TRANSLATED BY

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THE Egibi Tablets are documents of the class called Contract Tablets, and are the records of the transactions of a firm of bankers calling themselves sons of Egibi, who lived and carried on their business in Babylonia, from an unknown period to about the fourth century before Christ.

The time of the existence of Egibi, the founder of this family, is totally unknown, but it was probably a thousand years before Christ at least, for other records in the British Museum tell us of his name, and "the family of the house of Egibi" is spoken of as of citizens well known, and of influence, about the time of Assuru-bani-abla (Assurbanipal).

These tablets are written in the Babylonian character, and, though showing a language varying but

slightly from that of Assyria, Babylonia's deadly foe in times past, they differ from the tablets of the same class of the older Babylonia and Assyria in a matter of the greatest import to chronologists, and that is, the way in which they are dated. The system of dating in older Babylonia was very imperfect, the year when a transaction took place being recalled to memory by any memorable event that might have happened during that year. The system in Assyria was much more precise, transactions being dated during the term of office of the eponym for the year in which they took place.

In the tablets of the later Babylonian empire the system of dating in the regnal years of the king was used, and this system prevailed as long as the cuneiform writing continued in use, the only exception being the double dating of the Arsaka, or Arsacidæ.

Now it is manifest, when we have a number of tablets belonging to the same firm, in which this system of dating is used, that by following the names of the heads of the firm from father to son, we must get the exact succession of the kings of the period

when these documents were written, and a most valuable check on the chronology.

The most valuable tablets being the first and the last date of each reign, I give here a list of them :

Nebuchadnezzar III. (the Great.)

FIRST.

LAST.

Accession year, 7th Marchesvan		43rd year, 11th Nisan.
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Evil-Merodach.

Accession year, 21st Tisri		2nd year, 5th Sebat.
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Neriglissar.

Accession year, 27th Marchesvan		4th year, 12th Adar.
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Nabonidus.

Accession year, 12th Tammuz		17th year, 5th Elul.
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Cyrus.

Accession year, 16th Kislev		9th year, 22nd Ab.
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Cambyses.

Accession year, 16th Elul		8th year, 11th Tebet. <sup>1</sup>
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<sup>1</sup> Last date before the revolt of Bardes.

## Bardes.

1st year, 20th Elul | 1st year, 11th Tisri.

Nebuchadnezzar IV. (Pretender.)

Accession year, 20th Kislev | 2nd year.<sup>1</sup>

Last date of Cambyses, 11th year, 7th day.<sup>2</sup>

## Darius.

1st year, month Nisan | 36th year, 5th Ab.

Other dates are :

A tablet dated month Iyyar, day 14th, accession year of Lakhabbasi-Kudur, king of Babylon.

A tablet dated month Kislev, day 23rd, 3rd year of Marduku-'sarra-yutsur, king of Babylon.<sup>3</sup>

A fragment dated month Sivan, 5th day, 17th year of Artak[kur'su],<sup>4</sup> king of Countries.

The Egibi Tablets thus cover a period of about 164 years.

The chronology of the period between B.C. 605 and 517, is, according to the tablets, as follows :

<sup>1</sup> Month and day lost.

<sup>2</sup> Month lost.

<sup>3</sup> This tablet, unfortunately, I cannot find, though I have sought for it most carefully. It is probable that it got crushed in transit by some heavy objects, the antiquities having been badly packed.

<sup>4</sup> Artaxerxes.

Nebuchadnezzar III.	-	B.C.	604
Evil-Merodach	-	„	561
Neriglissar	-	„	558
Nabonidus	-	„	554
Cyrus	-	„	537
Cambyses <sup>1</sup>	-	„	528 <sup>2</sup>
Bardes	-	„	520
Nebuchadnezzar IV.	-	„	519
Cambyses restored	-	„	518
Darius	-	„	517

Future researches and discoveries will doubtless make alterations in the chronology of this period, which the above lists will give some idea of the importance of these documents in determining.

The tablets vary in size from three-quarters of an inch by half an inch to nine inches by twelve. They are usually covered with writing on both sides, and sometimes, on the edges as well. Many contain no date, and these, on examination, prove to be either rough memoranda, lists of objects or produce,

<sup>1</sup> Cyrus, after having reigned nine years as King of Babylon and Countries, abdicated the throne of Babylon in favour of his son Cambyses, and continued reigning some years as king of Countries only.

<sup>2</sup> The dates of Maruduku-sarra-yutsur and Lakhabbasi-Kudur are between B.C. 572 and 528. The latter was evidently an usurper.

or letters. The more important transactions were re-copied on larger tablets with great care and elaboration of details. These larger tablets usually contain impressions from cylinder seals, and nail-marks, which were considered to be a man's natural seal.



## THE EGIBI TABLETS.

I.<sup>1</sup>

- 1 MARDUKU-SUMA-BANU,  
 2 son of TABNE-ABLA,  
 3 the son of NABU-KARIR, the Librarian,  
 4 of the family of the house of GAKHAL.  
 5 (The house of his father is in front of (the Palace of) my  
 Lord.)  
 6 ITTI-MARDUKI-BALADHU,  
 7 son of SA-SIKKUL,  
 8 the son of BALA'SU,  
 9 of the family of the house of SUMA-LUBSI',  
 10 the Chamberlain.  
 11 (The house of his father is before the Temple of the  
 King of the Abyss).  
 12 ILLATU,  
 13 son of MARDUK,  
 14 the son of BA'U-LASIN,  
 15 of the family of the house of BELU-EDIRA.  
 16 (The house of his father is before the gate of the  
 descent  
 17 (to the Temple) of GULA.)  
 18 SA-PI-BELI, son of AYA,

<sup>1</sup> K 6. About the time of Assuru-bani-abla (Assur-bani-pal).

- 19 the son of SIPUR-NAPISTI,  
 20 of the family of the house of the Boatmen.  
 21 (Their house is on the farther side  
 22 the granary (and) cornfield.)  
 23 BELU-AKHA-IDDIN, son of NABU-KA'SIR,  
 24 the son of NABU-MUDU  
 25 of the family of the house of EGIBI.  
 26 (The house of his father is in the district of  
 27 (the Temple of) ISKHARA.)  
 28 In all 5 men,  
 29 whom NABU-BELI-SUNU,  
 30 to preserve his life  
 31 to BEL  
 32 has dedicated.

## II.

- 1 Day 5th of the month Kislev, 'SARRU-KINU,<sup>1</sup> son of  
 AMMANU,  
 2 his witness<sup>2</sup> in the city Piqudu<sup>3</sup> is smitten and  
 3 to IDIKHI-ILA, son of DINA they impute<sup>4</sup> (it).  
 4 From IDIKHI-ILA to 'SARRU-KINU one sent  
 5 thus: "To determine concerning thy servant who was  
 killed  
 6 with me conferrest thou not? I

<sup>1</sup> Evidently so named after 'Sarru-kinu (Sargon) or Agane, the celebrated early Babylonian king.

<sup>2</sup> Observe this legal phraseology. This "witness" was 'Sarru-kinu's servant.

<sup>3</sup> Pekod, a town lying to the south of Babylon.

<sup>4</sup> Literally, "they cause to fix."



- 7 the life of thy servant will make up to thee."  
 8 As they determined it, 1 mana of silver, the price of  
 9 his servant, IDIKHI-ILANA<sup>1</sup> to  
 10 'SARRU-KINU gives,  
 11 because they did not fix it [upon him for certain].  
 12 Witnesses: NAZIYA, the Officer of the King ;  
 13 IL-SADI-RABI-IDDIN, son of TALMUD-ILI ;  
 14 SEGURA, son of TALAH, Governor of Rütuv ;<sup>2</sup>  
 15 and the Scribe NABU-AKHI-IDDIN, son of  
 16 SULA the son of EGIBI. Rütuv,  
 17 Month Samna,<sup>3</sup> 7th day, 40th year,  
 18 NABU-KUDURRA-YUTSUR,<sup>4</sup> King of Babylon.

## III.

- 1 A double field of corn-land, planted, 5 adults and  
*children,*  
 2 which NABU-AKHI-IDDIN, son of SULA, son of EGIBI,  
 3 with KIBIHTUV-KI'INAT, his daughter, for DUMMUQU,  
 4 son of BELU-AKHI-IDDIN, the son of EGIBI had bespoken.  
 5 Afterwards, in the month Airu,<sup>5</sup> day 1st, year 14th,  
 NABU-NAHID,<sup>6</sup> King of Babylon,  
 6 ITTI-MARDUKI-BALADHU, son of NABU-AKHI-IDDIN, the  
 son of EGIBI,

<sup>1</sup> The same as Idikhi-ila, *ilana* being the plural form. The name signifies, "He goes before God," or "the gods."

<sup>2</sup> An unknown city.

<sup>3</sup> Marchesvan.

<sup>4</sup> Nebuchadrezzar, or Nebuchadnezzar.

<sup>5</sup> Iyyar.

<sup>6</sup> Nabonidus.

- 7 the double field of corn-land, planted, by the road of  
 the hill, from beyond the King's road  
 8 which is beside the river Banituv, to beyond the  
 boundaries of their corn-land  
 9 which is against (the enclosure of) BANUNU-ABLA, as  
 the hill-road mounts to the approach, ITTI-MARDUKI-  
 BALADHU and DUMMUQA,  
 10 with the others, take. SALLATYA,  
 11 BUTA, NABNITUV-KHULATUV, SU'INNI,  
 12 and LATU-BARANU, who into the hands of the *spice-*  
 13 *merchant*, in all 5 adults and *children*,  
 14 ITTI-MARDUKI-BALADHU, son of NABU-AKHI-IDDIN, the  
 son of EGIBI  
 15 has given. The adults, whom QUDASU for DUMMUQU  
 16 had bespoken, DUMMUQU asks QUDASU for.  
 17 Witnesses: BANIYA, son of TABNE-ABLA, the son of the  
 Commander;  
 18 NABU-NATSIR, son of INA-E-SAGGIL-IDDIN, the son of  
 the Messenger of BEL;  
 19 MASQUL, son of NABU-SUMA-IDDIN the son of NADIN-  
 SE'IV;  
 20 BEL-BASA, son of NABU-RAKHIB, the son of NUR-'SINI;  
 21 and the Messenger MARDUKU-AKALA-IDDIN, son of  
 KUNA, the son of the Commander.  
 22 Babylon, month Airu, 1st day, year 14th, NABU-NAHID,  
 23 King of Babylon.  
 24 . . . . . -SADARI they have taken . . . . .<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In plainer language, the transaction is as follows: Nabu-akhi-iddin and Kibihtuv-ki'inat had bespoken a double corn field and five female slaves for Dummuqu, and afterwards, on the date named, Dummuqu, Itti-Marduki-baladhu, and others, took possession of the property. Itti-Marduki-baladhu took the slaves for himself, and delivered them into the hands of one of his employés, but Dummuqu demands of Qudasu, Itti-Marduki-baladhu's aunt, the adults which she had promised to him.

## IV.

1 MANNUA-KI-BELI and ITTI-MARDUKI-BALADHU,<sup>1</sup>  
 2 his son, slaves of MUDINNU  
 3 whom NABU-IDDIN, son of DAN-RAMMANI for silver,  
 4 to ITTI-MARDUKI-BALADHU, son of NABU-AKHI-IDDIN,  
 5 son of EGIBI, for silver<sup>2</sup> gave and afterwards confirmed.  
 6 But UKKUS his<sup>3</sup> elder brother who to (be)  
 7 a witness was come, the *number* (and) *description*  
 8 of the slaves, dwelling with ITTI-MARDUKI-BALADHU,  
 9 gave,<sup>4</sup> and ITTI-MARDUKI-BALADHU,  
 10 in the kindness of his heart, a half mana of silver  
 11 in payment *as a recompense* to MUDINNU  
 12 gave. The silver, a half mana, MUDINNU  
 13 from the hands of ITTI-MARDUKI-BALADHU received.  
 14 Witnesses: IDDINA-MARDUKU, son of  
 15 BELU-BALIDH, the son of DAN-RAMMANI; BELU-IDDIN,  
 16 son of ZIR-YA, the son of ARAD-MARDUKI-ELLI; NABU-  
 MATA-YUNAMMIR,  
 17 son of TALMUD, the son of EPES-ILI; and the Mes-  
 senger, NABU-SUMA-IDDIN, son  
 18 of MARDUKU-SUMA-IKHKHUR, the son of the Com-  
 mander. Babylon, month Ululu,<sup>5</sup> day 10th,  
 19 year 7th, KURRAS,<sup>6</sup> King of Babylon (and) King of  
 Countries.

<sup>1</sup> Not to be confused with the descendant of Egibi of the same name, who is also mentioned in this text.

<sup>2</sup> The repetition of these words seems to indicate that the document was written from dictation.

<sup>3</sup> Mudinnu's.      <sup>4</sup> This was to prove Mudinnu's right to the slaves.

<sup>5</sup> Elul.

<sup>6</sup> Cyrus.

## V.

- 1 DA'INU-SUMA-IDDIN, son of NERGAL-ZIRA-BANI,  
 2 in the joy of his heart, UMMU-ANA-ALI,  
 3 GUDADITI, and RIHINDU,  
 4 in all three, his slaves, for three manas  
 5 of silver, for the complete sum, to  
 6 IDDIN-MARDUKU, son of BASA, the son of NUR-SINI  
 7 has given. (But) for the amount of 4 manas, 5  
 shekels,<sup>1</sup>  
 8 *full weight*, 4 sheep, (and) 4 oxen, which (are) more  
 than  
 9 DA'INU-SUMA-IDDIN to DA'INU-BA(SA),  
 10 the Collector of BEL for E-saggil  
 11 gave,  
 12 the agreement they settle, which concerning  
 13 UMMU-ANA-ALI, GUDADITI,  
 14 and RIHINDU, the freed-woman of DA'INU-SUMA-IDDIN  
 15 was raised.<sup>2</sup>  
 16 Witnesses: LABASI, son of DA'INU-MARDUKU, the son  
 of AVIL-NABI;  
 17 ITTI-NABI-BALADHU, son of BELU-AKHI-IDDIN, the son  
 of KILUBU;  
 18 ARAD-BA'U, son of BELI-SUNU, the son of RABU-BANI;  
 19 ARDI-YA, son of LABASI, the son of SALGUA;

<sup>1</sup> Here the scribe has erased some words which, from the few marks left, probably read "Da'inu-suma-iddin to Da'inu-basa."

<sup>2</sup> This line was completed to its full length, and afterwards erased by the scribe.

- 20 and the Messenger BELU-RABI-ABLA son of AKHI-SUNU.  
 Babylon,  
 21 month Sabadhu, day 13th, year 7th, NABU-NAHID,  
 22 King of Babylon.

VI.<sup>1</sup>

- 1 3 half royal shekels, 95 royal shekels,  
 2 tribute. Month 'Sivanu,  
 3 day 24th,  
 4 year 2nd,  
 5 KURRAS,  
 6 King of Babylon,  
 7 King of Countries.

VII.<sup>2</sup>

- 1 1 shekel of silver, which for  
 2 wine was given.  
 3 1 shekel of silver, which to  
 4 the Messenger, TAMNAZIKU,  
 5 was given.  
 6 A loan of silver,  
 7 which to the Messenger

<sup>1</sup> Tribute tablet, the smallest dated tablet of the collection.

<sup>2</sup> Undated tablet, containing rough memoranda.

8 of the RATENU,<sup>1</sup>  
9 was given.

<sup>1</sup> Name of a people resembling the Ruten or Rutenu, supposed  
Syrians, conquered by the Egyptians. S.B.



# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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