

## VOTIVE INSCRIPTIONS

TRANSLATED BY S. ARTHUR STRONG

### I

THE following inscription is on a stone lion found at the entrance of a temple at the foot of the pyramid at Nimrud, and now in the British Museum. It is an invocation to Beltis, the female counterpart or shadow of Bel, and forms an introduction to one of the frequent versions of the standard inscription of Assur-natsir-pal. In line 7 Ishtar, though she appears to be invoked as a separate goddess, is probably to be regarded as an equivalent or personification of Beltis. However, the process by which she assumed the titles, and eventually absorbed the personality of the latter, was a gradual one, and its final stage becomes visible only in inscriptions of the second Assyrian period, particularly in those of Assurbanipal.<sup>1</sup>

The inscription has been published in the second volume of "The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia," plate 66, No. 1. Lines 7 to 9 have been translated by Zimmern in *Babylonische Busspsalmen*,

<sup>1</sup> See Sayce, *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 273.

p. 22, and notes on two other isolated passages will be found on pp. 197 and 256 of Jensen's *Kosmologie der Babylonier*; but it seems that no complete translation has hitherto been published.

The lines as they are given in *W. A. I.*, ii. do not represent the arrangement of the original, but I follow them for convenience of reference.

### INVOCATION TO THE GODDESS BELTIS

1. To BELTIS, the great lady, chief of heaven and earth, queen of all the gods, the mighty one
2. of all lands, whose festival is honoured among the ISHTARS, who surpasses in power her offspring, a shining form,
3. who, like the sun her brother, the ends of heaven and earth together enlightens, the strong one of the ANUNNAKI,<sup>1</sup>
4. first-born of ANU, great one of the gods, queen over her enemies, who goes before, troubler of the seas,
5. who tramples the wooded mountains under foot,<sup>2</sup> the mighty one of the IGI, lady of fight and battle,<sup>3</sup> without whom in E-sarra the sceptre
6. they would not obey, who causes to receive strength,

<sup>1</sup> The spirits of the under world opposed to *Igigi*, the spirits of the upper air.

<sup>2</sup> In an inscription of Assur-natsir-pal on a small altar brought from Balawât by Mr. Rassam, and numbered 71 in the Nimrud Gallery of the British Museum, the same epithet is applied to Bel. *Ana Beli. . . . mu-na-ri-id khur-sâ-ni a-sib E-kid-mu-ri*, etc.—“To Bel . . . trampling the wooded mountains under foot, dwelling in *E-kid-mu-ri*,” etc.

<sup>3</sup> Or, as Mr. Pinches suggests, “without whom . . . the herd or tribe would not obey,” taking *sibdu* as a collective expressing literally “that which is driven together.” Cf. Ex. xxiv. 4. שְׁבֵטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל “the tribes of Israel,” Jensen translates: “ohne die . . . ein Strafgericht (?) nicht günstig ist.” (!) *E-sarra* is the temple of heaven, opposed to *E-kur*, the temple of the earth.

- who causes to find the fulness of the heart<sup>1</sup> of him who loves truth,
7. hearer of prayers, receiver of supplication, who accepts entreaty, ISHTAR, the perfect light,
  8. all-powerful, who enlightens heaven and earth, whose name is proclaimed in the regions of all countries,
  9. who bestows life, the merciful goddess, to whom it is good to pray, who dwells
10. in CALAH, my lady.

## II

In the following inscription Assur-bani-pal commemorates the revolt of Elam and its final suppression (after 648 B.C.), as well as certain repairs or alterations which he carried out in the temple of Ishtar of Nineveh, to whom are gratefully ascribed both the inspiration and the merit of his victorious campaigns.

The reference to the fate of Teumman's successors is not altogether clear, though Tiele (*Babylonisch-Assyrische Geschichte*, ii. 399) is probably right in explaining it as an allusion to the triumphal progress of Assur-bani-pal to the gate of the temple of Ishtar in a chariot drawn by the four conquered kings. See *W. A. I.*, v. 10, 29. But in that case the introduction of Ummanigas must be due to an error, for he was killed by his son, Tammaritu, long before the end of the Elamite war, which this barbaric triumph of Assur-bani-pal was intended to celebrate (Smith, *History of Assurbanipal*, p. 202).

<sup>1</sup> Or, "who causes to attain the heart's desire of him," etc.

And, as we learn from *W. A. I.*, v. 10, it was the Arabian King Vaiteh, who, together with the three Elamite princes mentioned in our inscription, was compelled to draw the car of Assur-bani-pal.

The inscription appears to have been frequently copied and widely circulated. Four versions are preserved in the British Museum (Nos. 62, 63, 64, 65), and a fifth was discovered at Tartûs (the ancient Antarados) in 1885, of which the text, with a translation, was communicated by Professor Sayce to the Society of Biblical Archæology, and published in their Proceedings (vii. 142). It has further been published and translated by George Smith (*History of Assurbp.*, p. 303), and S. A. Smith (*Keilschrifttexte Asurbanipals*, ii. 10), while a German version by Jensen will be found on p. 264 of the second volume of Schrader's *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek*.<sup>1</sup>

1. To BELTIS, lady of the lands, who dwells in E-BARBAR,<sup>2</sup>
2. Assur-bani-pal, King of Assyria, the great one, her worshipper,

<sup>1</sup> The text will be found in the second volume of *W. A. I.*, plate 66, No. 2; but the arrangement of the present translation is different, being that of No. 64, as edited by S. A. Smith.

<sup>2</sup> It is uncertain whether the name of this temple should be read E-barbar or E-masmas, and the meaning of the name is also obscure. However, in *W. A. I.*, ii. 48, 26, *barbar* (or *masmas*) is explained by the Assyrian phrase *kis-su sa mu'sa-ri-e*, which is interpreted to mean "library" (Sayce, *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 149), in which case E-barbar would be "the temple of the library." The original meaning of *mu'sarâ* seems to have been "furrow"; cp. *W. A. I.*, iv. 27, 1: *bi-i-nu sa ina mu'sa-ri-e me-e lâ is-tu-u* ("seed which in the furrows drinks not water"). Hence, through the idea of what is traced or indented, it comes to mean an inscribed character, an inscription. The temple in question is the temple of Ishtar at Nineveh, which was also restored by Assur-natsir-pal. See *W. A. I.*, iii. 3, 40.

3. the governor, the work of her hands, who by her great command
4. in the onset of battle had cut off
5. the head of Teumman, King of ELAM ;
6. and Ummanigas, Tammaritu, Pa'e,
7. Ummanaldas, who after Teumman had exercised
8. royalty over ELAM, with her great help
9. my hands took them, and to the chariot,<sup>1</sup>
10. the car of my kingship I fastened them,
11. and in her mighty name in all countries I went to and fro,
12. and rival had I none. In those days the pavement of the house of ISHTAR,
13. my lady, with squared stone well-hewn<sup>2</sup> its fabric
14. I made great for ever. BELTIS,
15. may this pavement be accepted before thee !
16. On me, Assur-bani-pal, the worshipper of thy great godhead,
17. a life of long days, wholeness of heart bestow,
18. and going to and fro in E-BARBAR may my feet grow old !

### III

The following is a translation of the inscription of Assur-natsir-pal referred to in II, note 2. It establishes the identification of Beltis with Ishtar of Nineveh, and also records the fact that "the temple of the library" (?) was originally built or founded by Samsi-Rimmon. Two inscriptions and two only of this ancient king appear to have been preserved ;

<sup>1</sup> The words translated "chariot" (*itsi sa sa-da-di*) mean literally "the wood of drawing," or "the draught-wood."

<sup>2</sup> *iski*, translated "well-hewn," I take as an adjective, and connect with the root שָׁכַח, of which "primaria potestas fortasse est *secundo*." The meaning "strong" has also been suggested ; in any case it is difficult to see how it can be made (as by S. A. Smith) into a preterite of the first person.

but in both he styles himself "builder of the house of Assur," which is perhaps the same temple as that which in later records, like the present, we find more particularly associated with Ishtar. The inscription is on a fragment of a votive dish of clay found at Kouyunjik, and now in the British Museum.

1. Assur-natsir-pal, vicar<sup>1</sup> of BEL, high-priest of ASSUR, son of Tukulti-Uras, vicar of BEL, high-priest of ASSUR, son of Rimmon-nirari, vicar of BEL, high-priest of ASSUR,
2. when E-BARBAR, the house of ISHTAR of NINEVEH, my lady, which Samsi-Rimmon, high-priest of ASSUR<sup>2</sup> the great one who went before me, had made,
3. fell into decay, from its foundations to its roof I restored (it), I completed (it), I strengthened (it) more than before, I repaired (it) . . .<sup>3</sup>
4. An inscription I wrote in the midst . . . May some later monarch that which has fallen of it renew; the name written to its place [may he restore !]<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I venture, on an obvious model, to introduce the phrase, "vicar of Bel," as more expressive than such terms as "vicery," of the combination of functions in a ruler who was not only a king but also a pope.

<sup>2</sup> The son of Isme-Dagon, cir. B.C. 1820.

<sup>3</sup> At the end of line 3 I restore *u-sa-tir*; cp. *Tiglath-Pileser*, viii. 49, *a-na as-ri-su-nu u-tir*.

<sup>4</sup> I restore *lu-tir*; cp. *W. A. I.*, iii. 3, 23, *ana as-ri-su lu-tir*.

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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