

BABYLONIAN CONTRACT-TABLETS WITH HISTORICAL REFERENCES

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AS it is naturally rare to find contract-tablets with historical references, and as, when such are found, they possess contemporaneous authority on account of their referring to events acknowledged to have taken place, or conditions known to exist, either at or shortly before the date of the document recording them, it is manifest that such documents must be of special interest and unimpeachable trustworthiness. For this reason it has been thought well to collect here a few of the more noteworthy of these important texts—texts which have an additional value in that they do not refer to events touched upon in any known history, though it is possible that references to some of them may be found hereafter.

I.—RÊMUT LENDS MONEY TO HIS NEEDY NEIGHBOURS DURING A TIME OF DEARTH

This inscription, the writing of which is above the average, is divided into four sections. The first gives the text of the transaction ; the second the names of

the witnesses ; the third the name of the scribe, the place, and the date ; and the fourth the record of the famine. It is a remarkable text, and possesses a value beyond the mere record, for it shows how great the need of the people must have been. The tablet is numbered 8 I-I I-3, 7 I.

TRANSLATION

$\frac{5}{6}$ of a mana of silver from Rêmut, son of . . . , unto Musêzib-Marduk, and Kullâ, his wife, for necessities. In the day when the face of the land sprouts (again), the money, $\frac{5}{6}$ of a mana, in its full amount, Musêzib-Marduk and Kullâ shall repay to Rêmut.

Witnesses : Ablâ, son of Arad-bît-Nergal ; Sapik-zêri, son of Musêzib-Marduk ; Bêl-upakhhir, son of Tullubu ; Ugara, son of Sippê ; Nabû-sum-utsur, son of the potter ;

and the scribe, Marduk-êdhir. Babylon, month Tebet, day 9th, year 19th, Samas-sum-ukîn king of Babylon.

At this time, in the city of Lamîma, want and famine [are] in the land. The people are dying for want of food.¹

This interesting text is a good proof of the unsettled state of Babylonia at the time it was written.

¹ The following is a transcription of the text :—

Parap mana kaspi sa Rêmut mâr . . . ina êli Musêzib-Marduk, u Kul[lâ], assati-su, ana khubuttu. Ina ûme pan mâti itaptû, kaspâ, parap mana, ina qaqqadi-su, Musêzib-Marduk u Kullâ ana Rêmut inamdinnu.

Mukinnu : Ablâ, mâr Arad-bît-Nergal ; Sapik-zêri mâr Musêzib-Marduk ; Bêl-upakhhir mâr Tullubu ; Ugarâ mâr Sippê ; Nabû-sum-utsur mâr pakhari.

U rittu, Marduk-êdhir. Bâbili, arakh Dhebeti, umu tisû, sattu tisû-êsrît, Samas-sum-ukîn sar Bâbili.

Ina ume su ina al Lamîma (?) sunqu u dannatu ina mâti [ibassî]. Nêsi ina la makalê imuttu.

It was in the year 648 B.C. Samas-sum-ukîn or Saosduchinos had been on the throne of Babylonia, under the suzerainty of his brother, Assur-banî-apli, for 19 years, and the end of his rule, and his own tragic death, were nearing. The Assyrian army, sent by his brother, was probably at that time over-running the land, and destroying everything wherever they passed. Hence were the people overtaken by want and misery, such as often happened to them in those days. If we want to know how the Babylonians behaved towards each other during this trying time, the tablet here translated depicts it to us clearly, and it is a picture worthy of consideration. Rêmut, a man probably richer and more fortunate than his neighbours, lends a sum of money which was hardly to be considered small ($\frac{5}{8}$ ths of a mana = 50 shekels) to Musêzib-Marduk and Kullâ, his wife, without interest (for none is mentioned). This money is lent, not for a week or a month, but *until the land brings forth again*,¹ whenever that might be. All honour to Rêmut. It is to be hoped that he and his friends passed happily through this trying time when there was "want and famine in the land, and the people were dying for want of food"; and well has Marduk-êdhir, the scribe, done in recording the fact.

The name of the city mentioned in the last paragraph (Lamîma) is doubtful. The last syllable may be *ra*, in which case we must read Lamîra. There

¹ Such is evidently the meaning of the words "In the day when the face of the land sprouts" (ittaptû). *Zêrû taptû* (82-3-23, 775) is apparently "sprouting seed."

is yet a third possibility, namely, that the characters are quite correctly read, but that the final *ma* is the well-known enclitic particle. If this be the case, we must read "At this time, in the city of Lamî also, there is want and famine in the land." After the word *makalê* there is a small piece of the tablet broken away, but this seems to have contained no word of importance, if, indeed, it was inscribed at all.

II.—A TESTIMONY TO BABYLONIAN OVERLORDSHIP IN TYRE

THE GOVERNOR OF KADESH MAKES A PLEDGE WITH REGARD TO SOME CATTLE

This little text, which is an ordinary contract-tablet of unbaked clay, is important not only as giving the date of the Babylonian dominion so far from Babylonia, but also for the names, some of which are clearly Phœnician. The text is slightly damaged, but the wanting characters can, in every case, be restored with perfect certainty. The number is 81-4-28, 88.

TRANSLATION

On the 15th day of the month Iyyar, Milki-idiri, Governor of Kidis, will get *three* cows and their young, and will give them to Ablâ, son of Nadin-âkhi, descendant of the priest of the Sungod. If he cannot get (them), Milki-idiri will give to Ablâ, son of Nadin-âkhi, son of the priest of the Sungod, 5 mana of silver.

Witnessing: Bunduti, son of Nabû-ukîn, descendant of Nabutu; Musêzib-Marduk, son of Ablâ, descendant of the

fisherman (?) ; Marduk-sakin-sumi, son of Marduk-êdhir, descendant of Êdheru ; and the scribe, Pir'u, son of Sulâ. Tyre, month Tammuz, day 22d, year 40th, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon.¹

The cause of Milki-idiri taking the obligation here recorded upon himself it is unfortunately impossible to determine. Judging, however, from the fact that it is cattle that are given, and that only in event of inability to get the animals money was to be substituted, it may be inferred that he entered into the obligation by way of compensating Ablâ for a loss for which he was in some way responsible. The contract gave Milki-idiri nearly ten months in which to discharge the obligation (22d of Tammuz, or June-July, to the 15th of Iyyar, or April-May).

Special interest centres in the name of the principal contracting party, Milki-idiri, Governor of Kidis. His name forms an analogy with that of Ben-Hadad, whose full name was Ben-Hadad-hidri, the meaning of which, as I have elsewhere remarked,² was probably "The Son of Hadad (is) my glory."³ The

¹ Transcription of the Babylonian text :

[Ad]lî ûmu khamisserit sa arakh Aari, *salsit* littê û mârê-sunu, Milki-idiri, bêl pikhâti sa al Kidis, ibbakamma ana Ablâ, abli-su sa Nadin-âkhi, abil sangî Samas, inamdin. Kî la itabbakka, khamsit mana kaspi Milki-idiri ana Ablâ, abli-su sa Nadin-âkhi, abil sangî Samas, inamdin.

Mukinnu : Bunduti, abli-su sa Nabû-ukin, abil Nabutu ; Musêzib-Marduk, abli-su sa Ablâ, abil ba'iri ; Marduk-sakin-sumi, abli-su sa Marduk-êdhir, abil Êdheru ; u rittu, Pir'u, abli-su sa Sulâ. Al Tsurru, ârakh Du'uzi, ûmu êsrâ-sanê, sattu irbaa, Nabû-kudurri-utsur, sar Bâbili.

The word "three" (*salsit*, line 2) is doubtful.

² *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* for February 1883, pp. 71-74.

³ See Gesenius's Hebrew Dictionary (Bagster and Sons), under בְּנֵי הָאֵל.

The Assyrian form of the name Ben-hadad is Addu-idri ('-idri), for Bin-Addu-'idri (Ben-Hadad-heder(i) or -hidri). It is difficult to say whether

most likely meaning of Milki-idiri (= Melech-heder(i) or Melek-hidri) is therefore "Molech (is) my glory." As for the name of the place of which he was governor, Kidis¹ (which was probably pronounced Kedes or Kedes), this is undoubtedly Kadesh (Kadesh), on the lake of Homs, a site of considerable interest, in that it was the scene of a conflict between Ramses II and the Kheta or Hittites, and is supposed to be mentioned in 2 Samuel xxiv. 6, under the name of Takhtim Khodshi, in the neighbourhood of Tyre and Sidon.²

All the other personal names in this text are Babylonian, though it is possible that at least some of the people who bore them were not Babylonians.

About the beginning of July, therefore, in the year 564 B.C., Melek-hidri, Governor of Kadesh, visited Tyre for the purpose of attending to his affairs.

III.—NERIGLISSAR GIVES HIS DAUGHTER GIGITUM IN MARRIAGE TO NABÛ-SUM-UKIN, PRIEST OF NEBO, AND DIRECTOR OF E-ZIDA.

This tablet is one of the class of wedding-contracts, and is unfortunately only a fragment. Such as it is,

the Greek form *Ader* arises from a simple (and easy) interchange of the letters *d* and *r*, or from the fact that the last element of the name was *heder* (or *hidri*).

¹ As I have elsewhere pointed out, Qoph changes into Kaph in Assyrian before *e* and *i*, hence Kidis (Kedes) for Qidis (Qedes).

² See the Rev. H. G. Tomkins's paper in the *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, vol. vii. p. 394.

however, it is a welcome addition to our knowledge, and it is greatly to be hoped that a duplicate, completing the text, will some day be found. The Museum number is 81-11-3, 222.

TRANSLATION

Nabû-sum-ukîn, priest of Nebo, director of E-zida, son of Siriktum-Marduk, descendant of Isdē-īlāni-danan, said to Neriglissar, king of Babylon: "Give Gigītum, thy virgin daughter, to wifehood, and let her be a wife." Neriglissar [said] to Nabû-sum-ukîn, priest of Nebo, director of E-zida

About twenty-eight lines are wanting here, the text becoming again legible at the end of the list of witnesses on the reverse:—

. . . . son of Nabû-sum-lîsir
 ri, son of Nabu-sarra-utsur, the judge (??)
 Nabû-sum-utsur, the scribe, son of Assur . . .
 Babylon, month Nisan, day 1st, year 1st,
 [Neriglis]sar king of Babylon. Copy of E-zida.¹

Although this tablet is not by any means perfect, and the text does not, in its present state, communicate to us the conclusion of the matter, it may neverthe-

¹ The transcription is as follows:—

Nabû-sum-ukîn, TU-MAL Nabû, satam E-zida, abli-su sa Siriktum-Marduk, abli Isdē-īlāni-danan, ana Nergal-sarra-utsur, sar Bâbili iqbi: Gigītum, mârât-ka batultum, ana assutu binamma lû assati sl. Nergal-sarra-utsur, sar Bâbili, ana Nabû-sum-ukîn, TU-MAL Nabû, satam E-zida [iqbi?]:

. mârû sa Nabû-sum-lîsir . . . ; -ri,
 mârû sa Nabû-sarra-utsur, [daanu].

Nabû-sum-utsur, dupsarru, abil Assur . . . Bâbili, arakh Nisannu, ūmu estin, sattu estin, [Nergal-sarra]-utsur, sar Bâbili. Gabri E-zida.

less be regarded as tolerably certain that Neriglissar did give his daughter Gigîtum in marriage to Nabû-sum-ukîn; for, had it been otherwise, there would have been no need for this document, the importance attached to which may be gathered from the fact that more than one copy was made, the text preserved in the British Museum being that belonging to the temple (E-zida, the Birs-Nimroud) of which Nabû-sum-ukîn was high-priest and director.

As will be seen from the translation, Nabû-sum-ukîn does not use any pronoun when making his request known to Neriglissar. He merely says, "Give Gigîtum, thy virgin daughter, to wifehood, and let her be a wife," or "the wife." An examination of texts of a similar class shows that this was the customary formula. The word for "wife" is written with the usual ideogram, and is unaccompanied by any pronoun. A similar text in the Liverpool Museum, however, spells the word out, and gives the same form, *assati*, as is transcribed in the present article. It is possible, therefore, that this terminal *-i* was always understood and read as the possessive pronoun of the first person, even when not written. Other examples of this grammatical usage exist.

The remainder of the tablet was probably taken up with the usual conditions—the penalty on Nabû-sum-ukîn if he should divorce or abandon his wife; the penalty on Gigîtum if she should disown or forsake her husband; directions with regard to the

amount and disposal of her dowry, etc. It is here to be noted that Herodotus was probably wrongly informed with regard to the compulsory nature of the public prostitution of unmarried women practised in ancient Babylonia, for the expressions found in these tablets point, sometimes, as in the present case, to a belief, on the part of the bridegroom, in the chastity of the woman chosen by him to be his wife.

Doubtless the priesthood of Babylon were highly elated that one of their number had allied himself by marriage with the royal family of Babylon, for this must have added greatly to their prestige and influence at the time. The date is March-April, the Babylonian New-Year's Day, 560 B.C.

IV.—THE MEDES AND PERSIANS IN BACTRIA.

SAN-ABŪ-DUPPU SELLS HIS BACTRIAN SLAVE-GIRL.

This text, which is rather mutilated, is an ordinary sale-tablet. Its importance, however, will be easily seen, for it is seldom that records of battles and warlike expeditions are to be found on contract-tablets. It is therefore one of the most interesting tablets of its class, and even the names of the witnesses possess a special value. The tablet is composed of three fragments, which were found by me to join some years ago. The number is 82-9-18, 4215 + 4226.

TRANSLATION

Sa-Nabû-duppu, son of Nabû-sarra-utsur, with cheerfulness of heart, has sold Nanâ-silim, his Bactrian slave, from the 5th battle of the sipiri against *dursu*, whose right side and hand are inscribed with the name of Dhîbtâ, daughter of Sin-êdhir, for [. . . mana . . . shekels of silver], which is by the 1 shekel piece, coined, not standard, for the price complete, to Issar-Taribi, son of Mur-êpus. [N.], son of Sa-Nabû-duppu, takes the responsibility [of defeasor, claimant], royal-handmaidship, (or) born-daughter-ship, which (may be) upon Nanâ-silim. [The money, . . . mana . . . shekels of silver], which is by the 1 shekel piece, coined, not standard, [the price of the slave], Sa-Nabû-duppu, son of Nabû-sarra-utsur, has received [from the hands of] Issar-taribi, son of Mur-êpus.

Witnessing: Tsillâ, son of Akhume- . . . ; son of Gamaryâwa (Gamariah); Sa-pi- [Bel? son of]; Barikîa (Berechiah), son of; son of Quddâ; Samas-îriba, [son of]; Ilâni-bakhâdi, son of; and the scribe, Marduka, son of Epes-îli. Sippar, month Iyyar, 18th day, 10th year, Dariuswush (Darius), king of Babylon and countries.

At the sitting of Dhîbtâ, daughter of Sin-êdhir, wife of Man- . . . -Samas.¹

¹ The following is a transcription of the text :—

Sa-Nabû-duppu, abli-su sa Nabû-sarra-utsur, ina khud libbi-su Nanâ-silim, gallat-su (âl) Bakhtaru'iti, sa khamilta mikhkhiltum sa sipiri ina mukhkhi dursu, sa imni-su u sitta-su ana sumu sa Dhîbtâ, mârât-su sa Sin-êdhir sadhdhirta ana [. . . mana . . . siqli kaspi], sa ina estin siqli bitqa nukhutu, sa la ginnu ana simi gam[rutu, ana Is]sar-taribi, abli-su sa Mur-êpus, iddin. But [sikhi, pakirranu], âmat-sarrûtu, mâr[at-banûtu] sa ina mukhkhi Nanâ-si[lim] abli-su sa Sa-Nabû-duppu, nasi. [Kaspâ, . . . mana . . . siqli kaspi], sa ina estin siqli bitqa, nukhutu, sa la [ginnu, simi amelutti], Sa-Nabû-duppu, abli-su sa Nabû-sarra-utsur, ina qatâ] Issar-taribi, abli-su sa Mur-êpus], edhir.

Mukin : Tsillâ, abli-su sa Ahume- . . . ; . . . abli-su sa Gamaryâma; Sa-pi-Bêl (?); Barikîa, abli-su sa;, abli-su sa Kuddâ; Samas-îriba [abli-su sa]; Ilâni-bakhâdi', abli-su-sa . . .

Ina asabi sa Dhîbtâ, mârât-su sa Sin-êdhir, assat Man- . . . , -Samas, U rittu, Marduka, abil Epes-îli. Sippar, arakh Aari, ûmu [samasserit], sattu esrit, Dariuswush, sar Bâbili u mâtâti.

One of the important points concerning this text is that, by the tenth year of Darius, five battles had been fought with a Bactrian tribe; and it is not unlikely that Sa-Nabû-duppu acquired Nanâ-silim (the unfortunate woman had received a Babylonian name, in accordance with the custom of the time) from the daughter of the man who captured her, namely, Sin-êdhir. The remainder of the contract proper is of the usual kind, and refers, like many others, to the taking of a duty or responsibility by one of the contracting parties (in this case the son of the seller), to guarantee the buyer against any claim hereafter on the part of the seller, his kinsfolk, or the king.

In my first rendering I read the name of the slave as Nanâ-khusi; and Khupiri (which I regarded as the name of a Bactrian tribe) instead of *sipiri*. Noting, however, that the *khu* in Akhume (see the list of witnesses) was differently formed, it now seems to me better to read these words as *Nanâ-silim* and *sipiri*, which readings I have adopted here. The *sipiri* was a Babylonian official attached to the household of the king and princes of the blood. From our text it would seem that this official also conducted military expeditions, at least in Persian times. What is the meaning of the word *dursu*, against which the *sipiri* seems to have gone, is uncertain. There is no determinative prefix or suffix indicating that it is the name either of a person, a place, or a river, though something of the kind might be expected.

Another point of interest is the names. Issar-taribi, the buyer, a well-known tradesman of the time when the tablet was drawn up,¹ bears one of the most interesting. About the first element, Issar, there is some uncertainty, as it sometimes appears as Istar.² This name apparently means "The goddess Issar (Istar) has made increase." His father's name, Mur-êpus, means "the windgod has made" or "created," Mur³ being one of the names of the windgod Rammānu or Addu (Rimmon or Hadad). To many, however, the two witnesses, Gamar-yāwa (Gamar-Jahwa, "Jehovah has perfected" = Gamariah), and Barikīa ("Jah has blessed" = Berechiah), both being probably—indeed, almost certainly,—Jews, will be of even greater interest. Though Jewish names are not uncommon on tablets of this class, it is to be noted that Jews settled at Babylon had no objection to taking Babylonian names, such as were given to Daniel and his companions. The name of the scribe (though he is seemingly a Babylonian, and the name is a common one) is not without interest, for Marduka is apparently for Mardukāa, "the Merodachite" (worshipper of Merodach), the same as Mordecai, the name of a well-known Israelite frequently mentioned in the book of Esther. It must not be supposed, however, in the case of Mor-

¹ See the articles by Prof. E. and Dr. V. Revillout in the *Babylonian and Oriental Record*, vol. i. p. 102, ff.; and vol. ii. p. 57, ff.

² I have a faint recollection of having seen the form Assur-taribi, but I could not find this form again when I looked for it afterwards to quote the reference.

³ Also *Muru* and *Mermer*.

decai, that he was in any way favouring heathenism in accepting such a name as this, for at that time, the word Marduk (Merodach) often meant simply "god." A tablet I have recently copied, in mentioning the various gods, explains them all as Marduk or Merodach ; thus Nergal is "Marduk of battle" (qablu), Zagaga is "Marduk of battle" (takhazi), Bel is "Marduk of lordship and dominion (?)," Sin is "Marduk the illuminator of the night," etc. etc. ; and it is manifest that the word "god" may be substituted for Marduk with a very acceptable improvement in the sense. This use of Marduk in the sense of *ilu* is probably late.

It has been thought best, in the translation, for the sake of clearness, to place the reference to the locality where the transaction was made at the end. In the original (as will be seen from the transcription), it comes between the list of witnesses and the name of the scribe.

All the above texts were excavated by Mr. Hormuzd Rassam, in 1881 and 1882 at Babylon and Sippara, the latter supposed to be the Sepharvaim of the Bible.

END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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