

## THE DEDICATION OF THREE BABYLONIANS TO THE SERVICE OF THE SUN-GOD AT SIPPARA

TRANSLATED BY THE EDITOR

THE text of the following curious document has been published by Dr. Strassmaier in his *Inschriften von Cambyses König von Babylon*, Part I, No. 273 (Leipzig, 1890). It has unfortunately been injured in one or two places, though in each case the reading can be restored with more or less probability. The text describes the dedication of three young men by their mother, Ummu-dhabat, to the service of the Sun-god of Sippara, and thus offers an interesting parallel to the history of the dedication of Samuel by his mother Hannah (1 Sam. i.) Samuel, however, was "brought unto the house of the Lord in Shiloh" as soon as he had been weaned, whereas the Babylonian mother waited until her sons were grown up and had been "counted among the men," before she presented them to Samas the Sun-god.

They then became attached to "the house of the males" (*bit zikari*), of which we hear several times in the tablets published by Dr. Strassmaier.

Thus we are told that on the 6th day of the month Iyyar, in the 5th year of Kambyses, a large quantity of dates were conveyed from the *sutummu* or "store-house" of the king for the support of "the males" and their superintendant Takh-Gula, on account of their ministry in the temple during the preceding month of Nisan; while ten measures of dates were delivered to a certain Arduya for their use in the service of the goddess Anunit during the month of Iyyar.<sup>1</sup> So, again, on the 21st day of the month Ab in the same year, sixty measures of tribute (*makka'su*, Heb. *meke's*, Numb. xxxi. 28) were registered as having been provided for them and their superintendent on account of the "daily sacrifice" during the month Elul.<sup>2</sup> It would therefore seem that a Babylonian temple had attached to it a sort of college of priests, who lived together apart from women, under a head or president, and who were called upon to perform certain religious functions in the services of the temple. It is possible that the priests, who are specially distinguished by the title of "males," were celibates. At all events they could be dedicated to the service of the gods by their mothers, just as Samuel was by Hannah.

The college or "house of the males" reminds us of the Roman *collegia*, as well as of the cells inhabited by the celibate monks who were attached to the Serapeum at Alexandria. It also reminds us of the

<sup>1</sup> Strassmaier *l. c.* No. 274. The *sutummu*, over which an officer called the *satam* presided, is the Egyptian *larit*, for which see *Records of the Past*, new series, vol. iii. pp. 7 sq.

<sup>2</sup> Strassmaier, No. 281.

account given in the book of Daniel of the education of Daniel and his three companions, though in their case it was a temporary isolation from female society and not a perpetual dedication to divine worship, and was, moreover, intended to fit them for the service of the king and not of the gods.

## THE DEDICATION OF THREE BABYLONIANS TO DIVINE SERVICE

THE woman Ummu-dhabat,<sup>1</sup> the daughter of Nebo-bil-utsur, the wife of Samas-yuballidh, the son of Bel-Ê-Babara the priest of SAMAS,<sup>2</sup> who has brought a tablet to him,<sup>3</sup> and also Samas-edhir, Nidittuv, and Arad-Kin,<sup>4</sup> her sons [three in number<sup>5</sup>], (and) who has spoken as follows to Bel-yuballidh, the priest of SIPPARA:<sup>6</sup> "They have not (yet) entered the House of the Males; with my sons I have lived; with my sons I have grown (old) since they were little,<sup>7</sup> until they have been counted among the men"; on the day when Ummu-dhabat [has said this], may she enter the House of the Males, according to<sup>8</sup> the writing of the document which (is) before Bel-yuballidh the priest of SIPPARA for . . . . . Samas-edhir, Nidittuv, [and Arad-

<sup>1</sup> The name signifies "The mother is good."

<sup>2</sup> The Sun-god, the presiding deity of Sippara, where the great temple of E-Babara, or E-Parra, was dedicated to him.

<sup>3</sup> Among a literary and business-like people like the Babylonians no act was valid unless embodied in writing, and drawn up according to the legal forms. Consequently a mere verbal declaration, as in the case of Hannah, was not sufficient; it had to be accompanied by the prescribed legal document with the names of the witnesses attached to it.

<sup>4</sup> "The servant of Kin." The triad or trinity of deities worshipped at Sippara consisted of Samas, A (who, in the Semitic period, was regarded as the wife of the Sun-god), and Kin (perhaps the son of Samas and A). The reading of the last name is doubtful, and may be Khur.

<sup>5</sup> The traces of the characters given by Dr. Strassmaier show that this must be the reading (*sal-si anna*).

<sup>6</sup> Sippara, written Sippar in the cuneiform, the Sepharvaim or "two Sipparas" of the Old Testament (2 Kings xvii. 31, etc.), is now represented by the mounds of Abu Habba and Anbar (?). It consisted of two cities, one known as "Sippara of Samas," and the other as "Sippara of Anunit."

<sup>7</sup> 'Sikhurrutî.

<sup>8</sup> We must read *akî* instead of *adi*.

Kin] her [three] sons she gives to [the service of the Sun-] god. The witnesses are: Nebo-zira-yukin the son of Bel-[natsir] the son of Mukallim, Bel-natsir the son of Samas-yuballidh; Nebo-[musetiq-udda] the son of Tsillâ; Rimut the son of Musezib-Bel, the son of Babutu; [. . . the son] of Bel-yukin, the son of Rimmon-yumê: (dated) [SIPPARA<sup>1</sup>] the 21st day of the month Nisan, the fifth year of Kambyses, king of BABYLON, the king of the world.

<sup>1</sup> The characters are illegible here, but the fact that Ummu-dhabat appeared before the priest of Sippara shows that we must supply the name of that city.

# END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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