

A Redundancy in Nebuchadnezzar 15 and Its Literary Historical Significance

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In spite of the great importance of Nebuchadnezzar II (604–562 B.C.E.) to the history of Babylonia and Israel, his royal inscriptions have not been studied satisfactorily.¹ This is probably due to their lack of reference to historical events and their focus on cult and construction projects following the best of the Babylonian tradition. Nevertheless, even though not much history can be inferred from them, one can still extrapolate the historiographic techniques that were employed in their compositions by virtue of their frequent repetition of much detail that had already been mentioned in previous inscriptions.

This article concerns one of the historiographic techniques that served the author of Nebuchadnezzar's II Inscription 15. This technique is revealed by an inconsistency in the textual structure, and it might very well end up illuminating something of the history of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II and the rise to kingship of his son Amēl-Marduk. The importance of Inscription 15 (also known as the *East India House Inscription*)² is attested by its large size (56 cm × 50 cm), its being written on stone, and its use of antiquarian Babylonian signs. All these suggest its purpose as exhibition.

As with the rest of Nebuchadnezzar's summary inscriptions, this one consists of three sections.³ In the first section, the king introduces himself. In the second one,

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Mordechai Cogan, Prof. Wayne Horowitz, Dr. Uri Gabbay, and Dr. Itamar Kislev, who have commented on the present article at various stages.

1. See the introduction of I. Ephal's study: "Nebuchadnezzar the Warrior: Remarks on his Military Achievements," *IEJ* 53 (2003), 178–91. Contrast, e.g., the Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III: H. Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III, King of Assyria*² (Jerusalem, 2008); the Inscriptions of Sargon II: A. Fuchs, *Die Inschriften Sargons II. aus Khorsabad* (Göttingen, 1994); the Inscriptions of Esarhaddon: R. Borger, *Die Inschriften Assarhaddons Königs von Assyrien, AfO Beih.* 9 (Graz, 1956); the Inscriptions of Assurbanipal: idem, *Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals: die Prismenklassen A, B, C=K, D, E, F, G, H, J und T sowie andere Inschriften* (Wiesbaden, 1996); the Inscriptions of Nabonidus and Cyrus: H. Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonidus von Babylon und Kyros' des Grossen samt den in ihrem Umfeld entstandenen Tendenzschriften, AOAT* 256 (Münster, 2001).

2. The inscription was presented to the representative of the East India Company in Baghdad in 1801, hence its modern name.

3. For a concise summary of the division of Neo-Babylonian inscriptions ([1] *anāku* . . . ; [2] *enūma* . . . ; [3] *inū(mī)šu* . . . [4] Prayer), see: S. H. Langdon, *Die Neubabylonische Königsinschriften, VAB* 4 (Leipzig, 1911), 6–7; E. Reiner, *Your Thwarts in Pieces, Your Mooring Rope Cut: Poetry from Babylonia and Assyria* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1985), 5–16; D. S. Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets* (Atlanta, 1999), 13–16; R. Da Riva, *The Neo-Babylonian Royal Inscription: An Introduction* (Münster, 2008), 93–98 (Inscription 15 does not contain the third part, which opens with *inū(mī)šu*, wherein the king describes the construction project for which the inscription was commissioned, as it is the case in other summary inscriptions).

which opens with a circumstantial clause, the king describes his past deeds. The third section concludes with a prayer to the gods to whom the inscription was dedicated.

Interestingly, the second section of Inscription 15, which tells of Nebuchadnezzar's past deeds, contains two irregularities. First is the opening of the section with two circumstantial clauses. The first clause (I 23–39, hereafter *b1*) opens with *ištu* and *enūma*:

Ever since (*ištu*) the Lord who created me, Marduk, fashioned my creation within (my) mother, (and) ever since (*enūma*) I was born and created, I continuously maintain the holy places of the gods; I always follow the path of the gods. As to Marduk, the great Lord, the God my Creator, I shall praise loudly, continuously, his elaborate deeds. As to Nabu, his faithful son, beloved of my kingship, faithfully I shall walk the path of his supreme divinity. I love with all my heart to fear their divinity (*ina gimir libbiya kinim arāmu puluḫti ilūtišunu*). I fear their lordship (*pitluḫāk bēlūssun*).

The second circumstantial clause (I 40–50, hereafter *b2*) opens with the word *inūm*:

Ever since (*inūm*) Marduk, the great Lord, raised the head of my kingship and appointed me as master of all man; and Nabu, overseer of the heaven and earth, gave the staff of justice to hold with my hand, to justly lead mankind—I appeal to them, and continuously maintain their divinity. At the mention of their honorable names, I fear god and goddess (*pitluḫāk ili u ištar*).

The inclusion of both these paragraphs is redundant. Syntactically, they both open the second section of the inscription; functionally, they both proclaim Nebuchadnezzar's concern for the gods.

The second irregularity in this section is the addition of a prayer after the second relative clause, a prayer that is, uncharacteristically, unrelated to temple construction or war preparations (I 51–II 10).⁴

I have beseeched my Lord, Marduk. I have approached him with prayer, [for] that which my heart seeks—I have told him:

“Without you, my Lord, what can exist? The king, whom you love, and whom you have called by name, (and) who is favored by you—advance his fame, (and) guide him in a straight path. I am the prince who is obedient to you, the product of your hands. You have created me, and entrusted the rule over all people. As your grace, O Lord, which you have always provided for all, make me love your noble lordship,⁵ put in my heart the fear of your divinity (*bēlūka*

4. See N. Ayali, “The Prayers for ‘Fear of God’ in the Biblical Literature and the Neo-Babylonian Inscriptions,” *Tarbiz* 74 (2005), 350–56 [Heb.].

5. Langdon (*VAB* 4, 125; contrary to his interpretation in the earlier edition: S. H. Langdon, *Building Inscriptions of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, Part 1: Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar* [Paris, 1905]) interprets the verb *šuri'imamma* from the root *rēmu*; and so do M.-J. Seux, *Hymnes et prières aux dieux de Babylonie et, d'Assyrie* (Paris, 1976), 509; *CAD R*, 265a and *AHw.*, 171a. Since the root *rēmu* occurs only once in the dictionaries in the causative conjugation Š (while the verb *rāmu*, Š, occurs several times [see *AHw.*, 952b]), it is difficult to understand what moved the editors to derive the word *šuri'imamma* from *rēmu* and not from *rāmu* as did T. Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (New Haven, 1976), 239 (who translated it as: “cause me to love Thy exalted rule!”), as well as by Langdon *Building*, 121. The derivation of the verb from *rēmu* renders its meaning passive which does not fit the context. Furthermore, in the present inscription, as well as in its previous one, Nbk. 14, the verbs *rāmu* and *palāḫu* conjoin several times (Nbk. 15, I 37–39: *ina gimir libbiya kinim arāmu puluḫti ilūtišunu pitluḫāk bēlūssun*, “with all my heart I have loved the fear of their divinity, I fear their lordship”; Nbk. 15, IX 57–59; Nbk. 14, III 39–40: *kima ša arāmma puluḫti ilūtika aštene'ū bēlūka*, “As one who loves the fear of your divinity, I shall seek for your lordship”). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect these verbs to conjoin here too.

širti šuri'imamma puluḫti ilūtka šubšâ ina libbīya), endow me with what is favored by you (*šurkamma ša elika tābu*),⁶ that which is [good] for my life—make it so.”

He, who is most important, honorable and wise of all the gods, Prince Marduk heard my supplications and accepted my prayer. He made his noble lordship pleasant, and made the fear of his divinity dwell in my heart (*uštibamma bēlūssu širti puluḫti ilūtišu ušaškin ina libbīya*), and stirred me into carrying his carriage-shaft. I fear his lordship (*pitluḫāk bēlūssu*).

The main question is why the authors of the inscription opened the second part with two circumstantial clauses that virtually duplicate one another.

Stephen Langdon, who studied the literary structure of Nebuchadnezzar's inscriptions at the turn of the twentieth century, noted two major features that helped him solve the problem.⁷ First, he points out that Inscription 15 is an amalgamation of two previous inscriptions, Inscriptions 14 and 19. Langdon proposed that, in some places, Inscription 15 completely integrates these two inscriptions, whereas here, the author borrowed two whole paragraphs: the first, from Inscription 19 (*b1*, the paragraph that opens with the word *ištu*), and the latter from Inscription 14 (*b2*, the paragraph that opens with the word *inūm*). Then, the authors went on to compose a new prayer for Marduk, after which they continued copying from Inscription 14. In addition, Langdon showed that the phrase at the end of the prayer for Marduk of Inscription 15, *pitluḫāk bēlūssu*—“I fear his lordship”—alludes to the concluding phrase of the second circumstantial clause (*b2*), the same clause that is found in Inscription 14, *pitluḫāk ili u ištār*—“I fear god and goddess.” According to him, the phrase *pitluḫāk bēlūssu* at the end of the prayer section, repeats and harks back to *pitluḫāk ili u ištār* at the end of *b2*, thereby linking to the preceding by an editorial device known as resumptive repetition (*Wiederaufnahme*), in order to integrate the original addition of Inscription 15.⁸ Surprisingly, he does not mention the identical phrase which concludes the first circumstantial clause (*b1*) on Inscription 15: *pitluḫāk bēlūssun*—“I fear their lordship.”

And yet, the opening of the second section of Inscription 19 is lost, and its reconstruction is not possible. Nevertheless, once the words of this inscription become legible again, they differ from the circumstantial clause that Langdon sought to attribute to it. Therefore, there is no reason to assume that Inscription 19 is the source of this paragraph. However, with the exception of the first circumstantial clause (*b1*) and the prayer to Marduk, Inscription 15 is identical to Inscription 14, meaning that Inscription 14 serves as the only source for Inscription 15.

The prayer to Marduk shows that the authors of Inscription 15 did not simply copy from pre-existing inscriptions,⁹ a fact which may suggest that they were also the authors of the first circumstantial clause (*b1*) that, like the prayer, does not appear in Inscription 14. There are stylistic similarities between *b1* and the prayer, chiefly the

6. For this phrase and its Akkadian and biblical parallels, see Ayali, “The Prayers,” 352–54.

7. Langdon *VAB* 4, 25.

8. For the method and its meaning, especially in the Bible, see: C. Kuhl, “Die ‘Wiederaufnahme’—eine literarisches Prinzip,” *ZAW* 64 (1952), 42–44; I. L. Seeligmann, “Hebräische Erzählung und biblische Geschichtsschreibung,” *TZ* 18 (1962), 314–24; for examples in the Mesopotamian literature, see: P. D. Gerardi, *Assurbanipal's Elamite Campaigns: A Literary and Political Study* (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1987 [Ann Arbor, MI, 1992]), 167–72; M. Anbar, “Un ‘mot en vedette’ et une ‘reprise’ introduisant une promesse conditionnée de l'éternité de la dynastie davidique,” *VT* 44 (1994), 1–9.

9. On its importance to Marduk's orientation in Inscription 15 see: Langdon, *VAB* 4, 27–29; P.-R. Berger, *Die neubabylonischen Königsinschriften*, *AOAT* 4 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1973), 42.

love of the fear of the god, which lies at the heart of the prayer.¹⁰ In addition, these two paragraphs conclude with the same phrase: *pitluḥāk bēlūssu* or *pitluḥāk bēlūssun*—“I fear his lordship” or “their lordship.” This phrase opens a new sentence in both paragraphs, unlike in *b2*, where it is a part of the last sentence. Therefore, it seems that the authors of Inscription 15 added a concluding phrase in both *b1* and the prayer, in order to make them more similar to the original concluding phrase in *b2*, both as a resumptive repetition.

Consequently the previous question must be rephrased, and one has to ask why the authors of Inscription 15 added the redundant circumstantial clause on top of the one taken from Inscription 14. Why was this latter one not enough? Both paragraphs tell of Nebuchadnezzar’s fear of his gods. But while the original paragraph (*b2*) conveys his fear of the gods from the time he ascended the throne, the second one (*b1*) depicts his piety even from his conception, immediately after Marduk created him in his mother’s womb.

Modern research, of both Biblical and Mesopotamian historiography, has discerned ancient methods for glorifying the king by predating various events in his history for apologetic purposes. A well-known Biblical example is the predating of King Josiah’s religious reforms. According to the Book of Kings, the discovery of the book of the law during the renovation works in the Temple took place in the 18th year of his reign and prompted the king to undertake a wide-ranging reform (2 Kings 23). However, the Book of Chronicles predates this event to the 12th year of his reign, and also emphasizes that he “began to seek God” already in the “eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young” (2 Chr. 34:3). By doing so, the Chronicler severed the connection between the book’s discovery and Josiah’s actions, transformed the reform into a prolonged process, and also glorified his early faithfulness.¹¹ A Mesopotamian equivalent can be found in Nabonidus’s inscriptions, where the construction of the Temple of Sin at Harran in the 10th year of his reign (according to the Harran Inscription) is predated to its beginning (according to the Sippar Cylinder).¹²

However, unlike both these examples, the authors of Nebuchadnezzar Inscription 15 were not satisfied with the content of Inscription 14, namely the second circumstantial clause (*b2*), which claimed that the king had been attending to the needs of the gods since his enthronement. Rather, they sought to predate it to the day he was conceived. This feature is somewhat difficult since a newborn cannot be expected to fulfill the needs of the gods. However, a close reading of Neo-Babylonian inscriptions shows that the true meaning of this claim is that the newborn was destined to rule even before his birth, a destiny which entrusts him with the cultic maintenance of the gods’ needs. Therefore, the added paragraph implies that he also was designated as king from birth. Obviously, this is not the first inscription in which Nebuchadnezzar refers

10. It is possible that the idea was borrowed from the prayer at the end of Inscriptions 14 and 15; see n. 5 above (Nbk. 14, III 39–40; Nbk. 15, IX 57–59), but it is doubtlessly unique to our place, and the prayer was composed for it, as I have shown (see n. 4 above).

11. For this and other examples, see M. Cogan, “The Chronicler’s Use of Chronology as Illuminated by Neo-Assyrian Royal Inscriptions,” in: J. H. Tigay, ed., *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism* (Philadelphia, 1985), 198–209, esp. 203–5; D. A. Glatt, *Chronological Displacement in Biblical and Related Literatures* (Atlanta, 1993).

12. H. Tadmor, “The Inscriptions of Nabonid: Historical Arrangement,” *Studies in Honor of Benno Landsberger on his Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, AS 16 (Chicago, 1965), 351–63; Glatt, *ibid.*, 26–39.

to divine intervention in the circumstances of his own creation, and many kings made such claims for themselves before him.¹³ However, this notion was absent in Inscription 14, which served as the source for Inscription 15, and so it was added to the latter.

Another example of this motif can be found in the inscriptions of Ashurbanipal.¹⁴ In one of his early royal inscriptions (Inscription L₄ and apparently also the introduction of Prism E), his father is portrayed as the one who petitioned the gods to enthrone him on account of Ashur, due to Ashurbanipal's bravery. On the other hand, in later inscriptions (Prisms A and F), it is noted that the gods had chosen Ashurbanipal to rule even before conception and that they informed his father of this decision

The biblical story of Solomon's ascension to the throne may contain another example of this feature.¹⁵ According to the concluding verses of the story of David and Bathsheba, God acknowledges Solomon upon his birth: "And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon: and YHWH loved him. And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet, and he called his name Jedidiah, because of YHWH" (2 Sam. 12:24–25). However, it seems that neither David himself, nor any of his sons, remembers such an acknowledgement; even Solomon and Nathan do not remember it at the crucial hour of taking the throne. Indeed, when Solomon's allies plot to crown him (1 Kings 1), they mention only the promise David gave to Bathsheba to make Solomon his heir, and not God's love of him since the day he was born. Even after Solomon ascends the throne, and speaks to God for the first time in Gibeon (1 Kings 3), he does not mention God's perennial love for him. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that only later, with the purpose of glorifying Solomon and distinguishing him over the rest of his siblings, were the verses 2 Sam. 12:24–25 added, antedating his divine election with God's designation of him upon his birth. Apparently, it seemed that the right place for the addition of God's designation was after the death of David and Bathsheba's first son; indeed, it was inserted there.¹⁶ However, the interpolation is made at the price of

13. For examples, see S. Paul, "Deutero-Isaiah and Cuneiform Royal Inscriptions," *JAOS* 88 (1968), 184–85.

14. H. Tadmor, "Autobiographical Apology in the Royal Assyrian Literature," in H. Tadmor and M. Weinfeld, eds., *History, Historiography and Interpretation: Studies in Biblical and Cuneiform Literatures* (Jerusalem-Leiden, 1983), 47–53; E. Weissert and H.-U. Onasch, "The Prologue to Ashurbanipal's Prism E," *Or.* 61 (1992), 58–77.

15. On the 'Succession Narrative' and the importance of the verses depicting Solomon's birth, see: L. Rost, *The Succession to the Throne of David*, trans. M. D. Rutter and D. M. Gunn (1926; trans.: Sheffield, 1982), 79–80; G. von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, trans. E. W. T. Dicken (1944; trans.: London, 1966), 180–81, 198–99. For a different opinion, and more up-to-date bibliography, see G. Keys, *The Wages of Sin: A Reappraisal of the "Succession Narrative," JSOTSup* 221 (Sheffield, 1996).

16. According to this story, Bathsheba's son dies making Solomon her eldest, maybe even David's first son born in Jerusalem. However, according to 1 Chr. 3:5, Bathsheba bore David four sons, the last of whom was Solomon. Most commentators relate this "new" information to some dubious tradition, which relies on the list in 2 Sam. 5:14 with some modification of the Chronicler (e.g., S. Japhet, *I and II Chronicles, OTL* (London, 1993), 96; G. N. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1–9, AB* [New York, 2003], 325). Yet others maintain the authenticity of the Chronicler's version; see: S. Ahituv, "King Solomon's Designation for Kingship in Biblical Historiography," in M. V. Fox, V. A. Hurowitz et al., eds., *Texts, Temples and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran* (Winona Lake, 1996), 5* [Heb.]; W. Rudolph, *Chronikbücher, HAT* (Tübingen, 1955), 26. Ahituv is of the opinion that all three of Bathsheba's older sons had died, making Solomon the eldest. Rudolf holds that the order of the sons does not follow their order of birth but the rule of "last but not least" (with which Knoppers agrees).

blurring the severe message of the original story of David and Bathsheba, on the one hand, tainting the story of the birth of Solomon, the kind who is loved by his god, on the other.¹⁷

In Nebuchadnezzar's case, the authors of Inscription 15 claim that his meeting with Marduk and his attention to the temples coincide before his birth, namely, that he is fit to rule. Nebuchadnezzar was the son of Nabopolassar, the founder of the Neo-Babylonian kingdom, who considered Nebuchadnezzar his legitimate heir. Why, then, should Nebuchadnezzar find it necessary to assert his claim to the throne by adding a redundant paragraph? Furthermore, why was this assertion made towards the end of his career, the period when Inscription 15 was composed?

In his discussion of Esarhaddon's and Ashurbanipal's apologies, Hayim Tadmor has shown that there are two factors that motivate the writing of this type of composition towards the end of a king's life. The first factor is that the king felt that there were some irregularities in his ascension to the throne (he was a usurper; he was not the intended heir; etc.). The second one is that, in his old age, the king confronted political problems with his elected successor; as Tadmor suggested: "It is our contention, that they were composed not so much in order to reflect apologetically upon the past but rather to serve certain imminent political aims in the present or some particular design for the future."¹⁸

It is difficult to prove whether one or both factors apply to Nebuchadnezzar since, as was mentioned above, royal inscriptions from his reign do not relate to internal court-politics, while the Babylonian Chronicles report mainly on military achievements and rarely on internal affairs. Therefore, every reference to Nebuchadnezzar's family matters must be meticulously collected in order to arrive at a comprehensive picture.

One of the inscriptions of Nabopolassar, which recounts the construction of the Ziqqurat of Babylon (Nabopolassar I, II 71–III 18; *VAB* IV, p. 62),¹⁹ contains an unusual reference to his sons, Nebuchadnezzar and Nabû-šumu-līšir:

I have had Nebuchadnezzar, my eldest son (*bukram rēštū*), beloved of my heart (*narām libbiya*), carry with my craftsmen mortar mixed with fig-wine, oil and perfumes. I have given Nabû-šumu-līšir, his close brother (*talimšu*)²⁰, the little one (*šerram*), the fruit of my loins (*šit libbiya*), the young brother (*duppussûm*), my beloved one (*dādūa*), to hold a pick-axe and a spade. The basket of gold and silver I have placed upright upon him, (and) to Marduk, as a gift, I have offered him.

The unusual aspect of this text is reflected in three elements: Nebuchadnezzar is mentioned as the "eldest son" and not as the next in line; his brother is mentioned alongside him; the latter is referred to by many epithets alluding to his father's great affection for him. Scholars debate the exact meaning of the word *talimu*, used here

17. See P. K. McCarter, *II Samuel, AB* (Garden City, 1984), 308; and Keys, *The Wages*, 50–52, on the incongruousness of the verses of Solomon's birth in the text. According to them, Solomon's birth took place long after the siege on Rabbah, i.e., long after the death of Bathsheba's first son. It was inserted there only due to its relevance to this death (McCarter, 302; Keys, 157), and there is no doubt about its secondary nature.

18. Tadmor, "Autobiographical Apology," 37. See also n. 23.

19. See now A. R. George, "The Tower of Babel: Archaeology, History and Cuneiform Texts," *AfO* 51 (2005–2006), 83–84, 92–93.

20. Or: *equal, beloved or chosen brother*, see below.

of Nabû-šumu-lišir. Von Soden, for example, suggests it means “the chosen brother”; Tadmor holds that it is the “equal brother”; CAD T renders it as “the close or beloved brother.”²¹ Whatever the case may be, the mere mention of the brother communicates the affinity that his father feels for him, an affinity that many a time may lead to the throne. The same brother, Nabû-šumu-lišir, is mentioned again in Chronicle 5 (BM 21946) in the third year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign.²² Unfortunately, this part of the Chronicle is broken, which makes it hard to know the context of this reference. Von Voigtlander suggests that this line contained the report of the brother’s death,²³ but she agrees with Wiseman’s suggestion that his death might have been related to a failed rebellion, a rebellion led by Nabopolassar’s beloved son, who may have been, at some point, a contender for the throne.²⁴

If the suggestion that Nebuchadnezzar was threatened by his brother as a youth and even in his early years as king is correct, then Inscription 15 aims at asserting that Nebuchadnezzar had been chosen by Marduk even before his birth, and has displayed regal traits since infancy. However, by the time Inscription 15 was written, Nebuchadnezzar had been king for forty years, many decades after the supposed rebellion led by his brother. What was it at this late date that motivated the authors of the inscription to describe his qualification for royalty as innate? Was there something else that threatened him?

As far as historiography is concerned, the end of Nebuchadnezzar’s career was not much different from its beginning. The chronicles and inscriptions do not relate any inside information on the court’s affairs. Therefore, one has to rely on documentation of a different sort.

Economic documents show that Amēl-Marduk, Nebuchadnezzar’s son, was chosen as the crown regent during his father’s life.²⁵ However, two literary texts raise the suspicion of an altercation between the two, and that Amēl-Marduk’s rise to power had not been uneventful. The first text is a fragment of an historical-literary text, published by Grayson, wherein both Nebuchadnezzar and Amēl-Marduk are involved in some sort of a conspiracy, in which one of the two is accused of deplorable behavior towards people and temples:

Concerning [Nebu]chadnezzar they thought [. . .] his life were not treasured [by them . . . the people of] Babylon to Amēl-Marduk spoke, not [. . .] . . . “concerning the treasure of Esaggil and Babylon [. . .] they mentioned the cities of the great gods [. . .] his heart over son and daughter will not let [. . .] family and tribe are [not . . .] in his heart (*libbuš eli māri u mārti la inamd[i . . .]x x kimtu u salātu la ibaš[ši . . .] ina libbišu*). All that is full [. . .] his thoughts were not about the well-being of Esaggil [and Babylon . . .] (*uznuššu lā šaknat ana šullum Esaggil*)

21. *AHw.*, 1310, s.v. *talīmu*; Tadmor, *ibid.*, 47; CAD T, 96 s.v. *talīmu*, for additional bibliography, see D. J. Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon* (Oxford, 1985), 7, n. 5. Note also Da Riva, *Neo-Babylonian Royal Inscription*, 7, who calls this passage “very curious.”

22. A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (Locust Valley, 1975), 101, l. 2

23. E. N. von Voigtlander, *A Survey of Neo-Babylonian History* (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1963 [Ann Arbor, MI, 1969]), 93 and n. 38.

24. Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar*, 6.

25. See: R. H. Sack, *Amel-Marduk: 562–560 B.C.*, *AOATS* 4 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1972), 3; Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar*, 10; I. L. Finkel, “The Lament of Nabû-šuma-ukīn,” in J. Regner, ed., *Babylon: Focus mesopotamischer Geschichte, Wiege früherer Gelehrsamkeit, Mythos in der Moderne: 2. Internationales Colloquium der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft, 24–26 März 1998 in Berlin, CDOG* 2 (Saarbrücken, 1999), 338.

[*u Bābili . . .*]), with attentive ears he went to the holy gates [*. . .*] prayed to the Lord of lords [*. . .*] he cried bitterly to Marduk, the gods [*.w*]ent his prayer to [*. . .*]²⁶

These sorts of allegations are known from defamation texts aimed against Babylonian kings who were either deposed or defeated in battle, like Merodach-baladan, Šamaš-šuma-ukīn, and Nabonidus,²⁷ all of whom were accused of exploiting the people and desecrating the holy places, i.e., failure in regard to the two main duties of a Babylonian king. The fragment above claims that, following these accusations, the defendant prayed to Marduk and cried.

A second text contains a prayer of a captive, named Nabû-šuma-ukīn, the son of Nebuchadnezzar.²⁸ He describes his incarceration as the result of a conspiracy against him: “The wretched, weary person weeps; the wretched, innocent person hastily wipes away his tear. He hastily wipes away his tear [because] of the tricks of humankind (*[aššu]m niklātu amēlūtu*); he weeps in his prison because his situation is so grievous.”²⁹ He was also maligned by his own father: “That one, has drowned his tricks against my sire, my father (*uṭebbi galammāšu eli pātiqū zārūa*.)” Finkel suggests that Nabû-šuma-ukīn is, in fact, Amēl-Marduk, who changed his name to the royal title, “man of Marduk,” after the end of his imprisonment, acknowledging the god to whom he has prayed.³⁰

If the identification of Finkel is accepted, and both texts are versions of reliable Babylonian traditions concerning Amēl-Marduk’s imprisonment,³¹ then it is reasonable to assume that throughout the years of his rule, Nebuchadnezzar believed him to be an unworthy heir, and sought to appoint another son than him. Eventually, for unknown reasons, Amēl-Marduk ascended the throne, but he did not last long as king, as he was killed by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar. A connection between Amēl-Marduk’s murder and these literary texts (whether they were its product or they helped create it) is possible.³² From all of the above, one can see that Nebuchadnezzar’s last

26. A. K. Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts* (Toronto, 1975), 87–92; following the reading of Finkel, *ibid.*, 336–37.

27. For the propaganda against Merodach-baladan, see the Display Inscription of Sargon, 121–24, 134–37 (Fuchs, *Inschriften Sargons II*, 225–30, 350–51); the propaganda against Šamaš-šuma-ukīn, see Prism A of Assurbanipal, III 70–86; IV 77–91 (Borger, *Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals*, 39, 45); the propaganda against Nabonidus, see “The Verse Account” and the Cyrus Cylinder (Schadig, *Inschriften Nabonidus*, 565–78, 550–56).

28. Finkel, “The Lament,” 325–32.

29. The translation follows Uri Gabbay, in accord with his research on the idiom *dīmta ḥaṭāpu*; U. Gabbay, “Wiping Away Tears in Akkadian Literature: *dīmta ḥaṭāpu* and the Semitic Roots *ḥtp/ḥtp*,” *UF* 36 (2004), 177–84.

30. Finkel, “The Lament,” 333–38.

31. The rabbinic midrashim (e.g., *The Chronicles of Jerahmeel*, ed. M. Gaster [New York, 1971]) also report Evil-merodach’s (= Amēl-Marduk) imprisonment by Nebuchadnezzar. However, it appears to be a mere coincidence since the rabbis sought to explain the improvement in Jehoiachin status by Evil-merodach, after their meeting in prison, and it is hard to think that they had access to an original Babylonian story (however, see the next note). See Sack, *Amel-Marduk*, 18–23; Finkel, “The Lament,” 334–35.

32. In any case, future generations perceived the murderer as legitimate and his victim as the reprobate. This is shown in one of Nabonidus’s inscriptions (Nab 8, V 14’–33’) written only five years after the murder. In it Nabonidus portrays himself as the successor of Nebuchadnezzar and Neriglissar and maligns Amēl-Marduk and Lābāši-Marduk (the reading follows Schadig, *Inschriften Nabonidus*, 518): “As to Nebuchadnezzar and Neriglissar, the kings who preceded me, I am their legal heir (*našparšunu dannu anāku*). Their armies were entrusted in my hand . . . Amēl-Marduk the son of Nebuchadnezzar and Lābāši-

days were unstable, a fact that drove him to assert at this late date his right to rule, and to appoint his successor.

In light of these internal court problems, the reason for adding the supposedly redundant paragraph to Inscription 15 becomes apparent. It asserts Nebuchadnezzar's divine election even before conception and his regal capabilities. It also seems reasonable to assume that it was meant to replace the old paragraph from Inscription 14, but this latter one was kept, in spite of its redundancy, with the new paragraph canceling its substance by being inserted before it.³³

In conclusion, Nebuchadnezzar's inscriptions do not contain a continuous record of his life or of his court's history. For this reason, one has to focus on every divergence of his inscriptions from the expected pattern. In the case studied, it is the redundant paragraph that was added to Inscription 15, in which Nebuchadnezzar is described as the provider for the gods' needs since birth. It may have been sufficient to understand the main reason for the redundant paragraph as Nebuchadnezzar's wish for self-glorification. However, I have attempted to explore its *Sitz im Leben* by comparing it to similar examples from Mesopotamian and Biblical literature, and what little historical documentation that has come down to us from this period. It seems that by examining the historiographical techniques shared by the Biblical texts and their counterparts in the ancient Near East, it is possible to assemble a more coherent historical picture of Nebuchadnezzar, who was one of the most influential figures in the history of both Babylon and Judah during the Neo-Babylonian Period.

Marduk the son of Neriglissar [. . .] their fathers [. . .] of them [. . .] set free . . ." (For a different restoration, which interprets Nabonidus's resistance to Amēl-Marduk and Lābāši-Marduk as the result of difference of opinions regarding military matter, see P.-A. Beaulieu, *The Reign of Nabonidus King of Babylon 556–539 B.C.* [New Haven, 1989], 106–7). In the inscription of Adad-guppi, the mother of Nabonidus, written by the scribes of Nabonidus, the king is also considered the legitimate heir of Nebuchadnezzar and Neriglissar. Adad-guppi accuses their sons, Amēl-Marduk and Lābāši-Marduk, of neglecting the offerings to the spirit of their deceased fathers (see Beaulieu, *ibid.*, 78). This case recalls the rabbinic midrashim concerning Evil-Merodach, who took the corpse of Nebuchadnezzar from its grave and fed it to the vultures. Therefore, it seems that some hidden strings might indeed connect the Babylonian and the rabbinical folklore after all. Berossus also retains a negative tradition of Amēl-Marduk (Euilmaradokhos): "He ruled capriciously and had no regard for the laws" (according to the translation of G. P. Verbrugge and J. M. Wickersham, *Berosus and Manetho Introduced and Translated: Native Traditions in Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt* [Ann Arbor, MI, 2001], 60, F10a).

33. For further Biblical examples of this method, see: I. L. Seeligmann, "On the History and Nature of Prophecy in Israel," *Eretz Israel* 3 (1954), 129 [Heb.]; A. Rofé, "The Laws of Unification of Worship (11:31–12:12)," *Introduction to Deuteronomy* (Jerusalem, 1988), 13 [Heb.].