

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_churchman\\_os.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php)

standing will in the end tolerate that the truth by which he lives is the unnatural and hybrid development which some criticism has presented.

We thank the author for the courage which prompted him to write this book; we hope that his example will stir up an increase of courage in others before it is too late. The victorious prevalence of these opinions means the sterility of the Church. The majority of men will not accept the imperious claims of a religion resting on such a basis. We greatly appreciate the large-minded tone and temper of this book; and we devoutly hope that in these troubled times many who have read one side, impressed by the glamour of a fascinating but pernicious theory, will in fairness read the other; and that those Christian men who have set themselves to be protagonists of the critical position may be induced to give a kinder and more serious consideration to so powerful a protest, lest at any time they should be found to have destroyed the work of God, and even the weak brother perish for whom Christ died. It was not a triumph when the world woke up to find itself Arian.

F. ERNEST SPENCER.



ART. VI.—TIGLATHPILESER, KING OF BABYLON—  
THE KEY TO ISAIAH XIII. 1 TO XIV. 27.—I.

OF the different oracles concerning heathen nations, which form the third part of the Book of Isaiah, the Burden of Babylon is of especial interest, not only on account of the striking sublimity of the *māshāl* or “parable” contained in it, but also because of the problem which it presents as to authorship and the circumstances under which it was written; for if this “burden” can be proved to be from the pen of Isaiah, then something is done to substantiate the unity of authorship of the entire book, seeing that Isa. xiv. 1, 2 contains, as Delitzsch observes, chaps. xli. to lxvi. *in nuce*. I shall endeavour to show that the solution of this problem can now be obtained from the testimony of undoubted historical facts. All, indeed, is not clear nor can it be, so long as our knowledge of Babylonian history remains in its present fragmentary condition; but enough evidence has come to hand to enable us to credit the prophet Isaiah with a prophecy strikingly Isaianic in the terms employed,<sup>1</sup> enough to explain the main outlines of that prophecy, its fulfilment, and even the date of its composition.

<sup>1</sup> See additional note 1 at the close of this article.

Let me say at the outset that the solution which I am about to give is not original. So long ago as the year 1874 the late Sir Edward Strachey, in his work on "Jewish History and Politics in the times of Sargon and Sennacherib," expressed his belief that the King of Babylon against whom the "parable" of Isaiah (chap. xiv.) was hurled was a King of Assyria. Admitting the difficulty arising from the fact that in previous chapters Israel's oppressor is called the King of Assyria, whilst he is here styled the King of Babylon, Sir Edward observes that Isaiah's authority for any historical fact is as good as that of any other record of his times, and that the absence of direct confirmation ought not to throw doubt on the genuineness of the prophetic allusions to a fact probable in itself and uncontradicted.<sup>1</sup> It will be my part to show that the "direct confirmation" which was lacking at the time when Sir Edward Strachey wrote is now obtainable. The contemporary cuneiform inscriptions prove that at the very time when, from its position in his book, Isaiah may be supposed to have written this prophecy,<sup>2</sup> an event of great importance had happened in Western Asia—a mighty conqueror, who in the first instance had usurped the throne of Assyria, had just succeeded in establishing his power in Babylon, so that for the first time in the history of Assyria her King was the acknowledged master of the two thrones, and could, and did, hold his Court both at Nineveh and Babylon.

It will be necessary, however, in the first place to explain the position which Babylon occupied in the then political world. In Isaiah's days, as the cuneiform inscriptions show, there were, from a political point of view, two Babylons—a Chaldean Babylon and an Assyrian Babylon. The former of these was inclined to be friendly to Israel, the latter hostile. Chaldea itself—*i.e.*, the low country which stretches south-east from Babylon to the head of the Persian Gulf—was divided into several small kingdoms, and the possession of the ancient, sacred city was a much-coveted prize in the eyes of the Chaldean kinglets. These facts gathered from the contemporary inscriptions correspond exactly with the terms in which Babylon is described in Isa. xiii. 19—

"Babylon, the glory of kingdoms,  
The beauty of the Chaldeans' pride"<sup>3</sup>—

---

<sup>1</sup> See "Jewish History and Politics in the Times of Sargon and Sennacherib," p. 166.

<sup>2</sup> On the chronological sequence of the earlier part of the Book of Isaiah see some remarks by the late George Smith in the *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archæology*, vol. ii., p. 328.

<sup>3</sup> All quotations are from the Revised Version.

in which passage, as the parallelism suggests, the "kingdoms" spoken of are the petty Chaldean States. Further, when Babylon was not in the hands of the Chaldeans, it was in the hands of the Assyrians, until after one or two fluctuations it fell entirely under the Assyrians in B.C. 689, during the reign of Sennacherib, and remained under them till B.C. 625, when the Chaldeans again obtained the ascendancy in the person of Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, and remained masters of the sacred city down to the time of Cyrus, B.C. 540.<sup>1</sup>

Now, the great tyrant of Isaiah's "parable" was clearly no petty Chaldean King, but a world-ruler, before whom all opposing powers had gone down, a "man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness, and overthrew the cities thereof; that let not loose his prisoners to their home."<sup>2</sup> Supposing, then, the prophet to be writing in the days of Ahaz, as is suggested by the note of time at the commencement of his next "burden,"<sup>3</sup> and to have before his mind some ruler then living, it is clear that the only monarch who at all answers to the description given is the same great King, concerning whom he has already uttered several predictions in chaps. vi. to x.—viz., Tiglathpileser, King of Assyria. Let us inquire, then, how far the history of those times warrants such an identification.

Tiglathpileser III. was a usurper,<sup>4</sup> who mounted the throne of Assyria in B.C. 745, at a time when that great military empire was torn asunder by civil dissensions and was altogether at a very low ebb. The usurper's proper name was Pul.<sup>5</sup> The name Tiglathpileser was assumed by him after a great and powerful monarch, who had sat on the throne of Assyria half a century before the time of David. The first Tiglathpileser is described by Professor Sayce as "the central figure of the Old Empire, towering above his fellows on the Assyrian throne." By the assumption, then, of this name the usurper intended, doubtless, to ingratiate himself with his Assyrian subjects. To the Babylonians, however, the name could not be equally pleasing, for Tiglathpileser I. had defeated one of their Kings, Merodach-nadin-akhi, and had even captured Babylon. When, then, he presently became their master they preferred to call him by his original name, Pul.

---

<sup>1</sup> I hope in a subsequent paper to be able to show the truthfulness of the above description as to the position occupied by Babylon.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xiv. 16, 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>4</sup> Hence in the Second Dynastic Tablet no dynasty is attached to his name, any more than to that of Sargon ("Records of the Past," New Series, vol. i., p. 18).

<sup>5</sup> On the Second Dynastic Tablet he is called "Pulu"; in Ptolemy's Canon, "Poros"; while Berosus styles him "Phulus, rex Chaldeorum."

Our usurper having seized the reins of power, the Assyrian Empire, under his vigorous and politic rule, at once started up into fresh life, and became active and aggressive, as was ever its wont in prosperous days. The new reign was only six months old when the Sovereign went on his first campaign "to the country of the rivers,"<sup>1</sup> *i.e.*, to Chaldea, which lies on the lower reaches of the Euphrates and Tigris and other smaller streams. This region was soon conquered and laid under tribute. Even Kardunias, the district round Babylon, was subdued; but the Assyrian King did not attempt to remove Nabonassar, the Chaldean Sovereign who then occupied the throne of Babylon. After this first campaign followed a career of uninterrupted conquest, chiefly in the North and West. Arpad fell after a three years' siege in B.C. 740. Hamath, which was in alliance with Azariah of Judah, was defeated and partially annexed in the same year. In B.C. 738 took place the expedition against Calno,<sup>2</sup> and in that same year Menahem of Samaria and Rezin of Damascus are mentioned as tributaries, along with the Kings of Hamath and Carchemish and divers other potentates. This was no doubt the result of the campaign referred to in 2 Kings xv. 19. The great King was not again in the West till B.C. 734, when he undertook the campaign described in the Chronicle as "to Philistia." On this occasion he carried his arms as far south as Gaza, on the confines of Egypt. About this time, or a little later, Pekah was slain, and Hoshea placed on the throne of Israel. Rezin of Syria was also slain, and in B.C. 732 Damascus was taken by the Assyrians after a two years' resistance. To this city Abaz of Judah and several tributary Kings came in the same year to pay their homage.

Being thus master of the whole West country up to the very borders of Egypt, Tiglathpileser was now able to turn his attention to Babylon at a very opportune moment. Nabonassar had died in B.C. 733, and in the two short years which had elapsed since his death the throne of Babylon had changed hands three times, the present occupant being the ruler of the petty Chaldean State of Beth-Amukkan. Tiglathpileser saw and seized the opportunity. In B.C. 731 he overran three of the small Chaldean States "like a deluge wave, and reduced them to heaps and ruins."<sup>3</sup> The other three, including Bit-

<sup>1</sup> See the Assyrian Chronicle for the year B.C. 745, where the correct reading is: "On the thirteenth day of the month Iyyar Tiglathpileser seated himself on the throne; in the month Tisri he marched to the country of the rivers."

<sup>2</sup> See Isa. x. 9, and compare the Assyrian Chronicle for B.C. 738: "He captures the city of Kullani."

<sup>3</sup> Clay Tablet Inscription, line 25.

Jakin, the hereditary principality of Merodach Baladan, saved themselves by a timely tribute. Whether Tiglathpileser was actually master of Babylon in B.C. 731 is uncertain, but, in any case, he had achieved that position by B.C. 729, in which year we find him in the sacred city engaging in a solemn religious ceremony of great political importance, known as "taking the hands of Bel."<sup>1</sup> Bel-Merodach was the patron god of Babylon. By "taking the hands of Bel," the Assyrian Kings had their claim to be overlords of Babylon acknowledged by the powerful Babylonian priesthood. It was in this same year (B.C. 729) that the important inscription on the Clay Tablet from Nimrud was written.<sup>2</sup> That inscription opens with the following list of titles: "Tiglathpileser, the great King, the mighty King, the King of nationalities, the King of Assyria, *the King of Babylon*, the King of Sumer and Accad" (*i.e.*, Southern and Northern Babylonia), etc. Now, with regard to this title *sar Babilî*, "King of Babylon," which appears again on Slab Inscription No. 2, it is a remarkable fact that no other Assyrian King, as far as we know, ever ventured to assume it. Even the great Sargon, who in B.C. 709 also "took the hands of Bel," and his grandson Esarhaddon, the rebuildler of Babylon, who raised the city from a state of utter desolation, were both of them content with the more modest title *sakkanak Babilî*, "Viceroy of Babylon," *i.e.*, Viceroy of the god Bel-Merodach. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the title *sar Babilî* was borne by those Sovereigns, who, like Merodach Baladan, Samas-sum-ukin, the son of Esarhaddon, and the great Nebuchadnezzar, actually lived and reigned in Babylon. The presumption, then, is that Tiglathpileser not merely held his Court at Babylon for a short time, but that he actually took up his abode there during the closing years of his reign, or, at any rate, made it his southern Ecbatana, if one may so say. Such an inference is borne out by the short, significant statement, "the King took the hands of Bel," being repeated in the Assyrian Chronicle for the two successive years B.C. 729 and 728.<sup>3</sup>

Let us now imagine ourselves in the world of Western Asia at this eventful period. What is the great political feature that would fix itself on the mind of a statesman-prophet like Isaiah? Would it not be the towering ascendancy of this mighty usurper, who has achieved what no other Assyrian King had ever done before, *viz.*, to make himself master of

<sup>1</sup> See the Assyrian Chronicle for B.C. 729.

<sup>2</sup> For the chief inscriptions of Tiglathpileser see note 2 at the end of this article.

<sup>3</sup> See "Records of the Past," New Series.

the two thrones—the throne of Assyria and the throne of Babylon.<sup>1</sup> So, then, when the prophet utters his sublime “parable” against this ambitious potentate, by what name shall he call him? Shall he call him “King of Assyria”? He doubtless would have done so in B.C. 734, but in B.C. 729 he will style him by his last and greatest achievement. On the Clay Tablet, indeed, brought from an Assyrian palace, the title “King of Assyria” naturally takes precedence of the title “King of Babylon”; but the world at large, and in all probability the usurper himself, would think most of the latter title, for Babylon was both the mother city and the sacred city, and as such enjoyed a prestige to which Assyria could lay no claim. Further, the throne of Assyria was not the hereditary patrimony of Tiglathpileser; to his ambitious mind it may only have appeared as a stepping-stone to the throne of Babylon. That early expedition “to the country of the rivers” is very suggestive, and seems to indicate that he had his eye on Babylon from the first, and designed to tread in the steps of Tiglathpileser I., whose name he had assumed. On these grounds, then, it seems to me most natural that Isaiah in his lofty “parable” should style the usurper “King of Babylon” rather than “King of Assyria.” But when we note that this “parable” itself forms part of the Burden of Babylon, it at once becomes evident that the prophet could not have used any other title. In a prophecy uttered against Babylon it would clearly be most incongruous to address her monarch as “King of Assyria,” even although that country were under his sway, and had witnessed the first rise of his power.

But though the usurper is very properly, and of necessity, styled “King of Babylon,” there is yet a remarkable indication in the burden that he is in some way connected with Assyria. The “parable” which forms the close of the burden concludes with a twofold asseveration uttered in the name of “the LORD of hosts.”<sup>2</sup> Then immediately, without any break or the mention of any fresh “burden,” the prophet predicts a catastrophe presently to overtake the Assyrian in Jehovah’s land, and upon His mountains, introducing into his prediction the same twofold asseveration, only in yet stronger terms:

<sup>1</sup> Paul Rost, in his valuable work “*Die Keilschrifttexte Tiglatpileser’s III.*,” speaks of this monarch as “The first Assyrian King who was also King of Babylon.” Tukulti-Ninip, who reigned over Assyria *circa* B.C. 1275, and whose name, curiously enough, is an equivalent of the name Tiglathpileser (= my trust is in the son of the Sharra temple, *i.e.*, the god Ninip), did indeed hold Babylonia in subjection for seven years, but cannot be said to have occupied the throne of Babylon in the same sense as Tiglathpileser III.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xiv. 22, 23.

"The LORD of hosts hath sworn," "The LORD of hosts hath purposed."<sup>1</sup> Thus, the tragic overthrow of the Assyrian in the Holy Land, which received its fulfilment in the destruction of Sennacherib's host, is, so to say, appended as a postscript to the downfall of the King of Babylon, a thing inexplicable unless there had existed at the time such a union of the thrones of Babylon and Assyria as that which I have just traced.

But what evidence have we that Isaiah's Burden of Babylon was uttered during that short period in which the usurper reigned in Babylon? The evidence is as follows: Immediately after the remarkable postscript at which we have just glanced, occurs another "burden," or oracle, against Philistia, introduced by a valuable note of time, "In the year that King Ahaz died was this burden. Rejoice not, O Philistia, all of thee, because the rod that smote thee is broken,"<sup>2</sup> etc. This oracle, then, was uttered in the death-year of Ahaz. Now, Ahaz must have died in B.C. 727, the same year as Tiglathpileser; for the fall of Samaria, which is known from contemporary sources to have happened in B.C. 722, took place in the sixth year of his successor, Hezekiah.<sup>3</sup> Further, this oracle of the death-year of Ahaz must have been uttered *before* the death of that King, otherwise it would have been dated the first year of Hezekiah. Who, then, was "the rod that smote" Philistia, and which is stated to be already "broken"? Clearly not Ahaz, for he was still living; but rather that great King, master of the two thrones, concerning whom the prophet declares in his parable, "The LORD hath broken the staff of the wicked, the sceptre," or *rod*—it is the same word as in xiv. 29—"of the rulers, that smote the peoples in wrath with a continual stroke."<sup>4</sup> But did Tiglathpileser smite Philistia? Yes; as noted above, the entry in the Chronicle for B.C. 734 is "To Philistia," and the great King tells us, in his sadly obliterated annals, how in that year Hanun of Gaza fled to Egypt before the Assyrian arms, and how his gods and his treasure were carried off to Assyria, and his land annexed. This was only a beginning of woes for Philistia, for in B.C. 720 this same Hanun was defeated by Sargon, and carried off captive to Assyria. Zedekiah of Ashkelon suffered the same fate at the hands of Sennacherib. Ashdod was taken by Sargon, Ekron by Sennacherib. Thus, all the four principal cities of Philistia—for Gath was now no more—were to suffer from the Assyrian scourge. The prophet, therefore, warns Philistia not to conclude that the trouble is all over, because

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xiv. 24, 27.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Kings xviii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>4</sup> Isa. xiv. 5, 6.



one tyrant "rod" is broken, for there are others about to spring up from that same masterful race, who will lay their strong hand upon her: "Out of the serpent's root shall come forth a basilisk, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent."<sup>1</sup> Thus, the oracle against Philistia, written in B.C. 727, points very clearly to the death of Tiglathpileser as having just taken place; and from its position immediately after the Burden of Babylon, as well as from the similarity of the matter with which it deals, viz., the breaking of the "rod," which smites Philistia just as it smites "the peoples,"<sup>2</sup> teaches us to assign that burden to a slightly earlier date, and to regard it as a prediction of the sudden end of the all-powerful tyrant, and of wrath presently to be poured out on that famous city in which he had fixed his second capital.

According to the tenor of both these prophecies, the Burden of Babylon and that against Philistia, the tyrant's end both was to be, and actually was, sudden; the "rod" was "broken," snapped short. All the glory came to an end in a moment, like the fall of a star from heaven.<sup>3</sup> Further, we gather from the "parable" that the end was to come on the field of battle, and that the usurper's body would be left amid the carnage, dishonoured, unburied. "All the kings of the nations, all of them, sleep in glory, every one in his own house. But thou art cast forth away from thy sepulchre, like an abominable branch, clothed with the slain, that are thrust through with the sword, that go down to the stones of the pit, as a carcase trodden under foot. Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, thou hast slain thy people."<sup>4</sup> That Tiglathpileser died in battle is rendered probable by the entry in the Assyrian Chronicle for the year B.C. 727: "Against the city of . . .<sup>5</sup> Shalmaneser seated himself on the throne." In the Babylonian Chronicle the reign and death of Tiglathpileser are set down as follows: "Tiglathpileser sat upon the throne in Babylon. In his second year Tiglathpileser died in the month Tebet. For [eighteen] years Tiglathpileser exercised the sovereignty over Accad and Assyria; for two years he reigned legitimately in Accad. On the 25th day of the month Tebet Shalmaneser sat upon the throne in Assyria."<sup>6</sup> The Assyrian word for "died" in the above is literally "met his fate." It tells us

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xiv. 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 12. Note that Isa. xiv. 29 witnesses to the fulfilment of the prediction in Isa. xiv. 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-20.

<sup>5</sup> The name is illegible. See "Records of the Past," New Series, vol. ii., p. 126.

<sup>6</sup> "Records of the Past," New Series, vol. i., p. 23.

nothing as to the manner of death, being used both of a peaceful death in the palace, like that of Nabonassar, or of one in war, like that of Tirhakah.

C. BOUTFLOWER.

*(To be continued.)*

---

ART. VII.—THE DISCOVERY OF JEWISH "MOLTEN IMAGES" AT DAN (JUDGES xvii, xviii.).

STANDING in a glass case by themselves, and placed in a prominent position in the Musée Guimet in Paris, is a small collection of bronze figures, which cannot fail to attract the attention of even the most casual observer. Seven of them are archaic statuettes of purely Semitic type, but most remarkable in detail; another is labelled "a Stryge," and is noteworthy for its complex form; while the last is an exquisite little Greek figure of Aphrodite from Sidon, a relic of Greek art grafted upon Phœnician civilization. These much-valued treasures have only recently been added to the possessions of the Musée Guimet, and of them the seven little statuettes are of priceless value to the archæological world, being the first and only specimens as yet found of Jewish gods.

They were found by M. Durighello, a well-known Italian archæologist, upon the site of the city of Dan, and are the result of fifteen years patient working and waiting. It may well be said that only those who try to pursue archæological researches in the Ottoman dominions know the meaning and value of the verb "to wait"; these can conjugate it in every mood and tense, and with every inflexion of meaning which it is possible to read into it. Upon Tel-el-Kâdi, "the Hill of the Judge," did Durighello set his mind to excavate many years ago, knowing that there, beneath the tangle of shrubs and wild plants with which it is now overgrown, lay the sites of two super-imposed cities, the one Jewish—Dan—and the other Phœnician—Laish—and feeling certain that, could he but dig down into them, he must assuredly find among the ruins of the one and the ashes of the other some traces of the lives of their former occupants.

Of their former history we have an outline given us in the Book of Judges (xvii. and xviii.); but, apart from this, we know that Laish was a Phœnician agricultural colony, and extremely fertile. Its inhabitants were a peaceable and peace-loving people, living entirely by their tillage of the soil; in