

NOTES ON THE GEZER CALENDAR AND SOME
BABYLONIAN PARALLELS.

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THE Hebrew Calendar-Inscription from Gezer (see *Quarterly Statement*, pp. 26-34), extremely interesting in itself, may prove of still greater interest when compared with the calendars of other Semitic nations, and I should like, therefore, to point out here briefly a few parallels from the Babylonian calendar.

The Babylonian-Assyrian names of the months, Nisannu, Aiaru, Šimānu, etc., are known to us mainly from a tablet published in *the Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*, Vol. V, pl. 29, ll. 1-13.¹ The same tablet which contains these (most probably Semitic²) month-names (in the right column) gives (in its left column) an ideographic name for each month. The names in the right column are not translations of the names in the left column. The ideograms have meanings entirely different from the meanings of the names Nisannu, Aiaru, etc. We have, therefore, in the two columns two different calendars. The ideographic calendar seems to be the older of the two (see below) and with very few exceptions (especially in the contracts of the Hammurabi period³) the ideograms seem to have been used at all times in contracts, historical inscriptions, etc., for the names of the months. In V R., pl. 43, a list (unfortunately broken) is published, in which each month has six different designations. The right column contains the usual names of the months, and the left column gives

¹ To be quoted here as R. Cf. also Haupt, *Akkadische und Sumerische Keilschrifttexte*, p. 64, and Delitzsch, *Assyrische Lesestücke*, 4th ed., pp. 114-15.

² Cf. Delitzsch, *The Hebrew Language*, pp. 14-16 and *Assyrisches Handwörterbuch*, s. vv.; see also on this question Meissner, *Vienna Oriental Journal*, Vol. V, pp. 180-181 and W. Muss-Arnolt, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. XI, pp. 72-94 and 160-176.

³ See my *Altbabylonische Rechtsurkunden aus der Zeit der Hammurabi-Dynastie*, p. 55.

their various designations. And the names in the right column are identical with the ideographic names of the left column of V R., pl. 29, ll. 1-13. This also shows that those were the usual designations for the months.¹

Now, several names of this ideographic calendar are agricultural. Araḥsamna is called in the ideographic calendar² *arab* APIN-GAB-A, which means "the month of the opening up of the field."³ Tebētu is called *arab* AB-BA-UD-DU, which most probably means "the month of the coming out of the grass." Šabātu is called *arab* AŠ-A-AN which seems to refer to corn.⁴ Adaru is called *arab* ŠE-ḲI-KUD, which means "the month of in-gathering" (*araḥ ešēdi*).⁵ The second Adar is called *arab* DIR-ŠE-ḲI-KUD, which means "the month of the fulness (completion) of the in-gathering." Tammuz (Du'uzu) is called *arab* ŠŪ-KUL-NA (also ŠŪ-GAR-KUL-NA⁶), which means "the month of the completion (end) of the seed." These six names of the months are clearly agricultural. We find, however, agricultural designations for two more months which have other designations in the tablets referred to.

In the *Journal Asiatique*, ninth series, Vol. 7, first half, pp. 339-343, Thureau-Dangin published a list of the names of the months as used on tablets from the second dynasty of Ur (middle of the third millennium B.C.) There the first month (Nisannu) is called *arab* ŠE-İL-LA, which means "the month in which the corn rises"⁷). The second month (Aiaru) is called *arab* GAN-MAŠ, which means "the month in which the field shines" (with flowers).⁸ Tammuz, Adar, and Adar II have there the same

¹ Cf. also, for instance, III R., pl. 55, especially no. 4, ll. 29-41; pl. 56, especially no. 5, ll. 42-56, and IV R., pl. 33, ll. 36-48 ("List of Months and their Regents").

² I say ideographic calendar because we do not know whether the Semitic Babylonians or the Sumerians were the authors of these month-names. It is very probable, however, that these names owe their origin to the Sumerians.

³ See Jensen, *Z.A.*, II, p. 210, n. 1.

⁴ Cf. Zimmern, *K.A.T.*,⁽⁸⁾ p. 556.

⁵ See Delitzsch, *Assyrisches Handwörterbuch*, pp. 29 and 120-121.

⁶ In III R., pl. 34, l. 96; see *Z.A.*, II, p. 209, n. 2.

⁷ Thureau-Dangin compares the Hebrew קָרַע הַאֲרָבִיב. It is worthy of note that İL-LA (= *elū* "to rise"; see Brünnow, *Classified List*, No. 6146, and Delitzsch, *Assyrisches Handwörterbuch*, p. 62) is used here for "springing up," "growing." An exact parallel to this is עלות הלִקֵשׁ in עלות (Amos vii, 1); cf. also Deuteronomy xxix, 22.

⁸ Thureau-Dangin compares וְ.

designations as those given above for these months. We have thus in this list two more agricultural month-names,¹ namely, for Nisannu and Aiaru.² In both lists, we have, therefore, eight agricultural names for the months in the Babylonian Calendar.³

We see from this⁴ that the Babylonians also called the months after their agricultural significance. Of course, not all the months of the year could be given agricultural names, as not all the months of the year are of agricultural importance.

If we now compare the agricultural month-names of the Babylonian calendar with the names in the Gezer inscription, we find several similarities between the two calendars. *arab* APIN-GAB-A "the month of the opening up of the field" seems to be identical with ירד זרע. They both refer to מרחשון. *arab* AB-BA-UD-DU and *arab* AŠ-A-AN have scarcely an exact parallel in the Gezer inscription. *Arab* ešēdi (Adar) may be identical with ירד (ה) לקש⁵ or with ירד קצר שערם. In the latter case the barley-harvest would have taken place about a month earlier in Babylonia. The same seems to apply to *arab* DIR-ŠE-KI-KUD (in an intercalary

¹ These two names are, however, in so far slightly different, as they refer only to the *state* of the field, and not to the work of man connected with it. אביב and זרע are the exact parallels.

² Cf. also *Recueil de Travaux*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 65-74.

³ The names of the other months are also interesting, but they are not wanted for our purpose here. I hope to deal with them and several other problems connected with the Babylonian names of the months in some other place.

⁴ Cf. also the month-names in the Cappadocian tablets; see Delitzsch, *Beiträge zur Erklärung und Entzifferung der Kappadokischen Keilschrifttafeln*.

⁵ The following passage in *Babli Sanhedrin*, 18b, would seem to support this identification:

אם בכיר ולקיש כחדא יינין דין הוא אדר ואם לאו לית דין אדר
(One of three shepherds said) "When the early seed and the late seed blossom simultaneously, then it is Adar, and if not, it is not Adar" (but still Šebat). As a result of this, we read further on the same page, the Rabbis proclaimed the year a leap-year. As the seeds were not ripening yet, they inserted a second Adar. The first Adar could not be regarded as Adar proper, on agricultural grounds. We see from this that the time of the sprouting of the לקיש (as well as the בכיר) was the month of Adar. לקיש in ירד (ה) לקש seems to be identical with לקיש in *Sanhedrin* 18b. Cf. also *Jerushalmi Sanhedrin*, I, 2, and *Rosh Hashanah*, II, 5. See also the following note.

year).¹ For ירח קצר וכל and ירח וזמר there do not seem to be parallels in the Babylonian calendar. I must, however, mention that in the list in V R., pl. 43, l. 13a, Simānu is called *araḥ širi ebūri* "the month of the luxurious growth of the produce of the field."² This may also refer to the *harvest* of the fruit of the field.³ If so, this may be identical with ירח קצר וכל. The most striking parallel is, however, the name for Tammuz ("the month of the end of the seed"). It seems to me that it is entirely identical, in time and in meaning, with ירח קץ in the Gezer inscription. The explanations for קץ offered by Prof. Lidzbarski and Prof. Gray are not satisfactory (*Quarterly Statement*, pp. 29 and 32). A defective writing of קץ for קיץ is very improbable. Besides, we would have expected a word like אסף or קצר before קץ (*cf.* Micha vii, 1). I therefore think that קץ here really means "end." The meaning of ירח קץ would then be "the month of the end (*i.e.*, of the seed)." This would most probably signify the last harvest. The agricultural year actually finishes in Tammuz and begins again in Tishri.

Another difficulty in the Gezer tablet is, I think, solved through the Babylonian names. In l. 3, עצר can scarcely mean "to cut" or "to lop" (*Quarterly Statement*, pp. 28 and 31). We expect here, too, a word like "in-gathering," "harvest." It seems, therefore, to me that עצר here is not to be taken together with the Hebrew word מעצר "axe" (*l.c.*), but represents the root which is found in the Assyrian *ešēdu* "to gather in," which also occurs (ideographically) in the name for Adar (*araḥ ešēdi*) and for Adar II. Although the Assyrian *ešēdu* no doubt corresponds with the Aramaic חצר, I scarcely see any objection to assuming that in Old Hebrew the root was עצר. The sense of l. 3 would then be a far better one: "the month of the in-gathering of the flax."

¹ It is worthy of note that we find in the Babylonian Talmud that one of the reasons for proclaiming a leap-year was the delay in the ripening of the ears of barley (על האביב). When Adar passed away and the barley was not yet ripe for reaping, the year was made a leap-year (see *Sanhedrin* 11b). And the old Babylonians, too, called Adar II *araḥ DIR-ŠE-ḲI-KUD* for the same reason. See also the preceding note. I am indebted to Professor Büchler for having kindly drawn my attention to this passage in *Sanhedrin*.

² See Delitzsch, *Assyrisches Handwörterbuch*, pp. 12 and 687-8, and Muss-Arnolt, *A Concise Dictionary of the Assyrian Language*, pp. 10 and 1109.

³ See Muss-Arnolt, *l.c.*

The main result of this short¹ comparison is the fact that the Babylonians (or perhaps already the Sumerians) gave to the months agricultural names, and that these names are incorporated in the Babylonian calendar. This would prove that the Gezer tablet was not "the attempt of someone, probably a peasant, to group and name the months according to their agricultural importance," and that it does not represent "the writer's original effort" (see *Quarterly Statement*, p. 26). It would clearly show that the Gezer tablet contains a *generally recognised calendar*. The difference between the two calendars would be this: while the Babylonian calendar contains all the twelve or thirteen months of the year and only six or eight of the names are agricultural, the Gezer calendar has only those months which are of agricultural importance. It is, therefore, a purely agricultural calendar, but one that was generally recognised. It is worthy of note that, together with the two agricultural names for Nisannu and Aiaru in the list in the *Journal Asiatique*, we have in the Babylonian calendar also eight agricultural month-names. That all the months are not identical in both calendars as far as the time is concerned is only natural. Babylonia certainly differed from Palestine in agricultural matters. It might be a different question whether in each case each name in the Gezer tablet refers to a different month. Might not, for instance, ll. 5-6 refer to the same month? As mentioned above, the list in V R., pl. 43, has six designations for each month. Of interest also is the fact that before each month-name 𐎶𐎵 is written. In the Babylonian calendar, too, the ideogram for *arḫu* is placed before each month.²

Another result that follows from this comparison is that the Gezer tablet is complete (*see also Gray, l.c., p. 31*). Only seven or eight months are of agricultural importance, and the object of this calendar was to give only these names. If it had contained other month-names too, those names would have been placed *between* some of the present names. An interesting question would be: what is the relation of the Gezer calendar to the Babylonian calendar? But I am afraid that it would be very difficult to give a definite answer. There may have been agricultural calendars in the whole

¹ I may be allowed to say here that in accordance with the request of the Editor I had to get these remarks ready for print in a very short time.

² It is remarkable that in V R., pl. 29, the month-names Nisannu, Aiaru, etc., have not got *arḫu* before them.