

Session 6:

The Final Years of Judah

Emergence Winter Sessions, 2022–23



Esarhaddon (680–669 BC)



Manasseh (697–643 BC)

“For he rebuilt the high places that Hezekiah his father had destroyed, and he erected altars for Baal and made an Asherah, as Ahab king of Israel had done, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. And he built altars in the house of Yahweh, of which Yahweh had said, ‘In Jerusalem will I put my name.’ And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of Yahweh. And he burned his son as an offering and used fortune-telling and omens and dealt with mediums and with necromancers. He did much evil in the sight of Yahweh, provoking him to anger. And the carved image of Asherah that he had made he set in the house of which Yahweh said to David and to Solomon his son, ‘In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever.’”

2 Kings 21:3–7

“Moreover, Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides the sin that he made Judah to sin so that they did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh.”

2 Kings 21:16

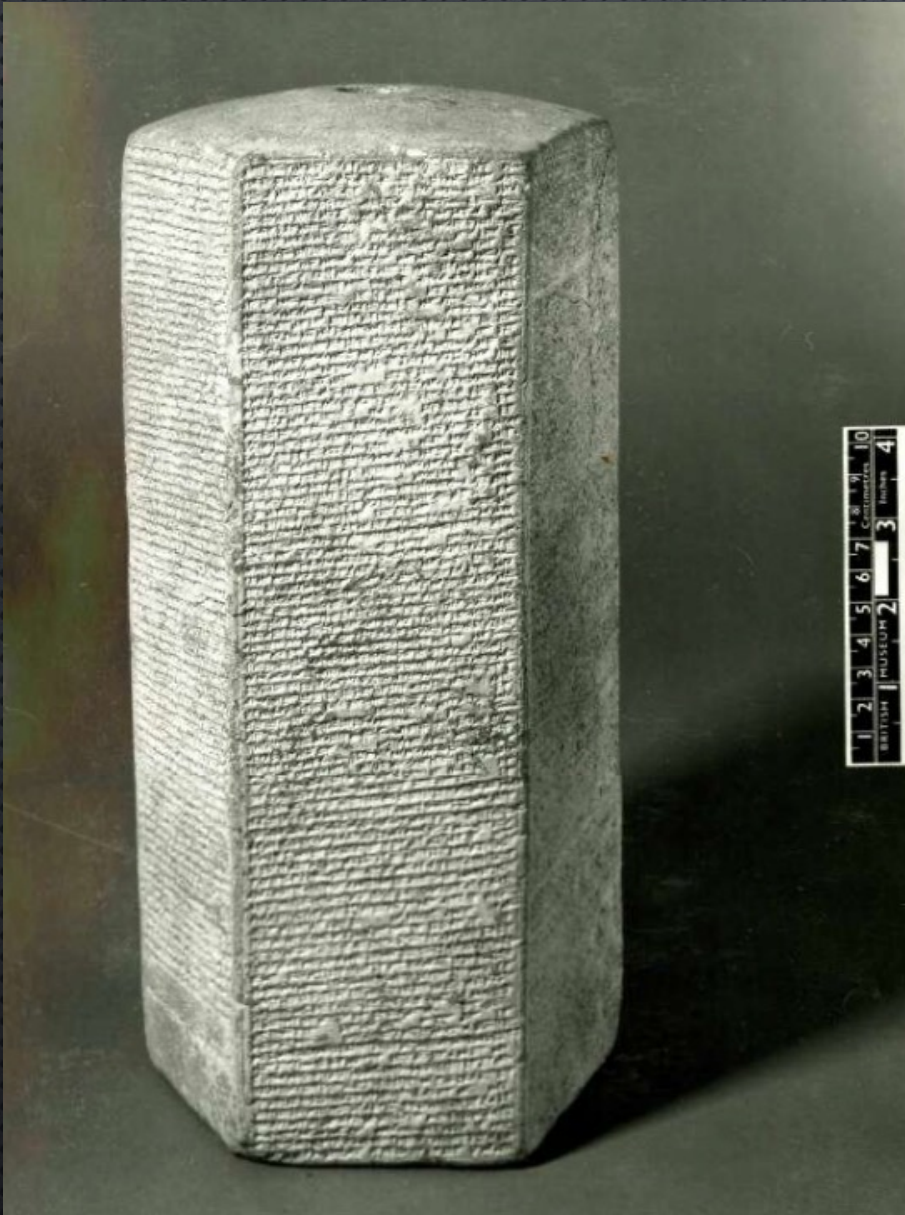
“And Yahweh said by his servants the prophets, ‘Because Manasseh king of Judah has committed these abominations and has done things more evil than all that the Amorites did, who were before him, and has made Judah also to sin with his idols, therefore thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing upon Jerusalem and Judah such disaster that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria, and the plumb line of the house of Ahab, and I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. And I will forsake the remnant of my heritage and give them into the hand of their enemies, and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies, because they have done what is evil in my sight and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came out of Egypt, even to this day.’”

2 Kings 21:10–15

“Yahweh spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they paid no attention. Therefore Yahweh brought upon them the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria, who captured Manasseh with hooks and bound him with chains of bronze and brought him to Babylon. And when he was in distress, he entreated the favor of Yahweh his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. He prayed to him, and God was moved by his entreaty and heard his plea and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that Yahweh was God.”

2 Chronicles 33:10–13

Esarhaddon's Nineveh Prism



“I summoned the kings of Ḫatti and Across the River (Syria-Palestine): Ba’alu, king of Tyre, Manasseh, king of Judah, Qa’uš-gabri, king of Edom, Mušurī, king of Moab, Šil-Bēl, king of Gaza, Mitinti, king of Ashkelon, Ikausu, king of Ekron, Milki-ašapa, king of Byblos, Mattan-Ba’al, king of Arvad, Abī-Ba’al, king of Samsimurruna, Būdi-il, king of Bīt Ammon, Ahī-Milki, king of Ashdod—twelve kings from the shore of the sea; Ekištūra, king of Idalion.”

Erle Leichty *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria (680–669 BC)* (RINAP 4; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 1.23.

The Mešad Ḥashavyahu Ostrakon



“May my lord, the official, hear the word of his servant.
Your servant—your servant was reaping in Ḥaṣar-’asam.
And your servant was reaping and he measured and he stored,
according to schedule, before resting.
As your servant was measuring the harvest
and the store, according to schedule, Hoshayahu, son of
Shobay, came and he took the garment of your servant. When
I had been measuring my harvest for some time, he took the
garment of your servant.
And all my companions will testify on my behalf, those who
reaped with me in the heat of the sun—all my companions
will testify on my behalf. Truly I am innocent of guilt.
Therefore, and if not, may it be up to the officer to return the
garment of your servant, and may he grant to him mercy (for)
your servant, and do not banish him. [...].”

“If ever you take your neighbor’s cloak in pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down, for that is his only covering, and it is his cloak for his body; in what else shall he sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.”

Exodus 22:26–27

“. . . they lay themselves down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge, and in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined.”

Amos 2:8

Josiah
(641–609 BC)

Meanwhile, in Assyria ...

Aššur-banipal (668–631 BC)

Aššur-etil-ilani (631?–627 BC)

Sîn-šarru-iškun (627–612 BC)



“In his days Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. King Josiah went to meet him, and Pharaoh Neco killed him at Megiddo, as soon as he saw him. And his servants carried him dead in a chariot from Megiddo and brought him to Jerusalem and buried him in his own tomb. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him and made him king in his father’s place.”

2 Kings 23:29–30



“And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father’s place.”

2 Kings 23:30

“And Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in place of Josiah his father, and he changed his name to Jehoiakim. But he took Jehoahaz away, and he came to Egypt and died there.”

2 Kings 23:34

Jehoiakim
(608–598 BC)

The Baruch Bullae



lbrkyhw bn nrhyw hspr

“(belonging) to Baruch,
son of Neriah, the scribe”

“In his days, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant for three years.”

2 Kings 24:1b

“Then he turned and rebelled against him. And Yahweh sent against him bands of the Chaldeans and bands of the Syrians and bands of the Moabites and bands of the Ammonites, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of Yahweh that he spoke by his servants the prophets. Surely this came upon Judah at the command of Yahweh, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done, and also for the innocent blood that he had shed. For he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and Yahweh would not pardon.”

2 Kings 24:1b–4

Jehoiachin
(598–597 BC)

“At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up to Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to the city while his servants were besieging it, and Jehoiachin the king of Judah gave himself up to the king of Babylon, himself and his mother and his servants and his officials and his palace officials. The king of Babylon took him prisoner in the eighth year of his reign and carried off all the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king’s house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold in the temple of Yahweh, which Solomon king of Israel had made, as the Lord had foretold. He carried away all Jerusalem and all the officials and all the mighty men of valor, 10,000 captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths. None remained, except the poorest people of the land. And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon.”

“The king’s mother, the king’s wives, his officials, and the chief men of the land he took into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. And the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon all the men of valor, 7,000, and the craftsmen and the metal workers, 1,000, all of them strong and fit for war. And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin’s uncle, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah.”

2 Kings 24:10–17

The Babylonian Chronicle



“Year 7: in Kislev the king of Babylonia called out his army and marched to Hattu. He set his camp against the city of Judah [*Ya-a-ḫu-du*] and on the 2nd of Adar he took the city and captured the king. He appointed a king of his choosing there, took heavy tribute and returned to Babylon.”

Alan Millard, “The Babylonian Chronicle,” *COS* 1.137.

Zedekiah
(596–586 BC)

“Send word to the king of Edom, the king of Moab, the king of the sons of Ammon, the king of Tyre, and the king of Sidon by the hand of the envoys who have come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah. Give them this charge for their masters: ‘Thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel: This is what you shall say to your masters: ‘It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the men and animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomever it seems right to me. Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and I have given him also the beasts of the field to serve him. All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson, until the time of his own land comes. Then many nations and great kings shall make him their slave.’”

Jeremiah 27:3–7

“And he did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. For because of the anger of Yahweh it came to the point in Jerusalem and Judah that he cast them out from his presence. And Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.”

2 Kings 24:19–20

“And in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came with all his army against Jerusalem and laid siege to it. And they built siegeworks all around it. So the city was besieged till the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. On the ninth day of the fourth month the famine was so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land. Then a breach was made in the city, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, by the king’s garden, and the Chaldeans were around the city. And they went in the direction of the Arabah. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho, and all his army was scattered from him. Then they captured the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and they passed sentence on him. They slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him in chains and took him to Babylon.”

2 Kings 25:1–7

“Nebuchadnezzar then ordered Jerusalem and its Temple razed, and the order was carried out on August 16, 586. Conquest and looting were insufficient punishment for the capital city that had proven itself recalcitrant so many times; the city’s destruction establishes that there were no plans to reconstitute Judah around a Babylonian provincial center in Jerusalem.”

Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *2 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AYB 11; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 323–24.

Three Deportations of Judah

First (Jehoiakim, 605 BC): Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah

Second (Jehoiachin, 597 BC): Ezekiel, Jehoiachin

Third (Zedekiah, 586 BC): Zedekiah

“And over the people who remained in the land of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left, he appointed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, governor.”

2 Kings 25:22

“But in the seventh month, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, son of Elishama, of the royal family, came with ten men and struck down Gedaliah and put him to death along with the Jews and the Chaldeans who were with him at Mizpah. Then all the people, both small and great, and the captains of the forces arose and went to Egypt, for they were afraid of the Chaldeans.”

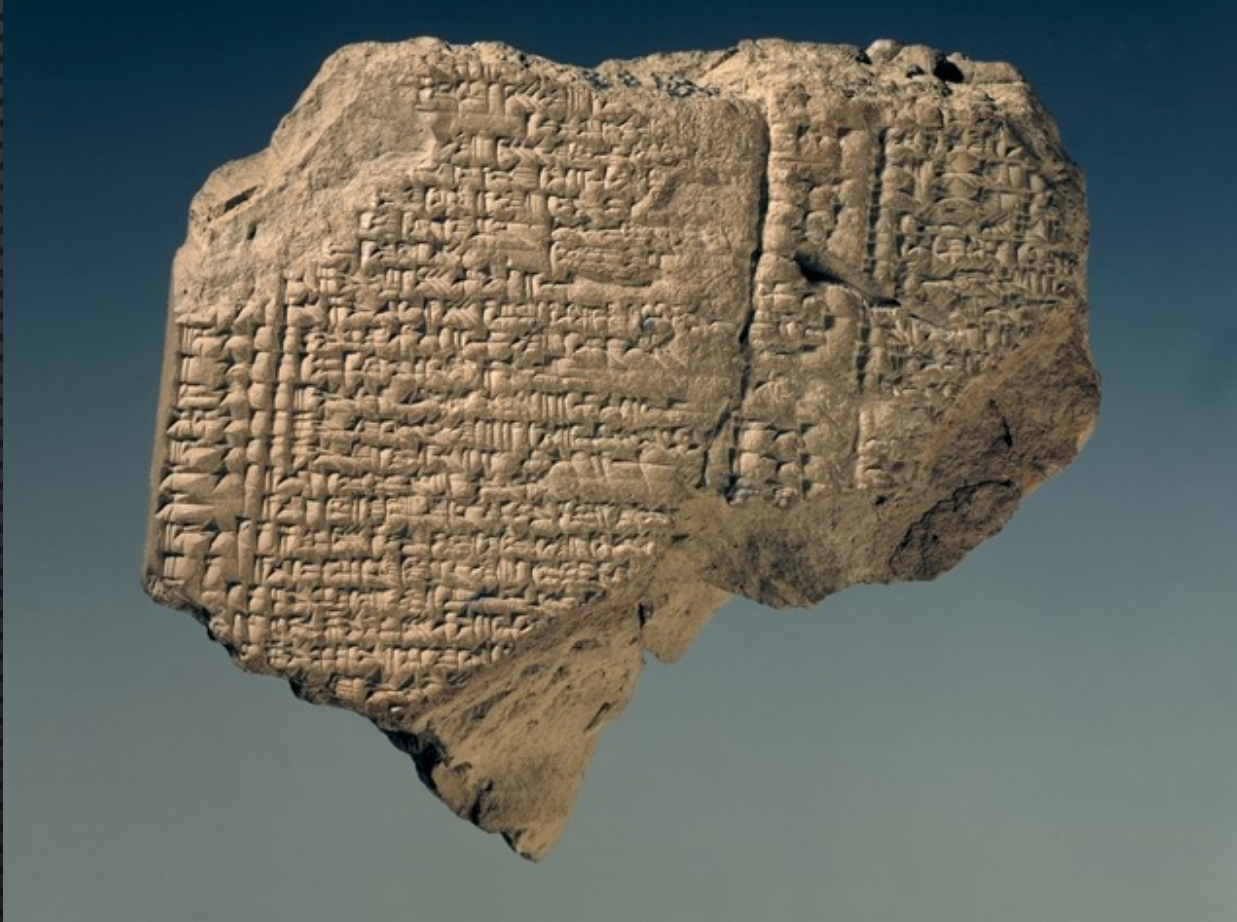
2 Kings 25:25–26

Amel-Marduk of Babylon
(561–560 BC)

“And in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, graciously freed Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison. And he spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat above the seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon. So Jehoiachin put off his prison garments. And every day of his life he dined regularly at the king’s table, and for his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, according to his daily needs, as long as he lived.”

2 Kings 25:27–30

Babylonian Ration Tablets



“10 liters? (oil) for Ya’u-kina
(^m*ia-’u-DU[kīnu]*), king of the
land of Judah.

2 ½ liters (oil) for 5 sons of the
king of Judah [...]

4 liters (oil) for 8 Judahite men;
each ½ liter (of wheat).”

Translation K. Lawson Younger, Jr. Original
publication in E. F. Weidner, “Jojachin, König
von Juda, in babylonischen Keilschrifttexten,” in
*Mélanges Syriens offerts à Monsieur René
Dussaud II* (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1939, 923–35.

Meanwhile, in ~~Assyria~~ Babylon...

Nergal-šar-uṣur (559–556 BC)

Labaši-Marduk (556 BC)

Nabu-na'id (Nabonidus, 556–539 BC)

“Verse Account” of the Reign of Nabonidus



“Against the will of the gods he (i.e., Nabonidus) performed an unholy action, he thought out something worthless: he had made the image of a deity which nobody had ever seen in this country, he introduced it into the temple, he placed it on a pedestal; he called it by the name of Moon. It is adorned with a necklace of lapis Lazuli, crowned with a tiara, its appearance is that of the eclipsed moon, the gesture of its hand is like that of the god Lugal-[*unintelligible*], its head of hair reaches to the pedestal, and in front of it are placed the Storm Dragon and the Wild Bull. When he worshipped it, its appearance became like that of a demon crowned with a tiara, his face turned hostile [...]

A. Leo Oppenheim, “Nabonidus and the Clergy of Babylon,”
ANET, 313.

Nabonidus Cylinder 27



“(As for) me, Nadonidus, the king of Babylon who reveres your great divinity, may I be sated with happiness in life. Moreover, with regard to Belshazzar (Bēl-šarru-uṣur), (my) first-born son, my own offspring, prolong his days. May he not commit a(ny) sin.”

“Nabonidus 27,” in Frauke Weiershäuser and Jamie Novotny, *The Royal Inscriptions of Amēl-Marduk (561–560 BC), Neriglissar (559–556), and Nabonidus (555–539 BC), Kings of Babylon* (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2020), 138.

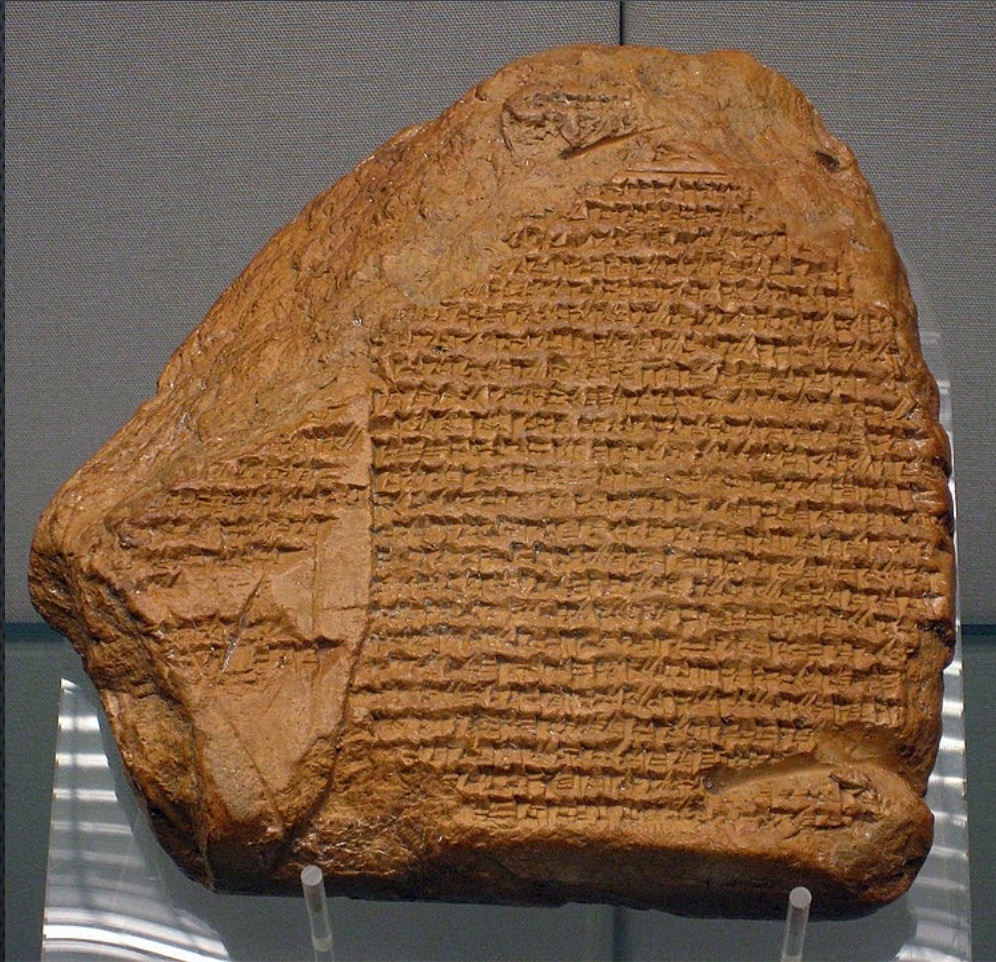
“Verse Account” of the Reign of Nabonidus



“After he had obtained what he desired, a work of utter deceit, had built this abomination, a work of uholiness—when the third year was about to begin—he entrusted the army [?] to his oldest son, his first born, the troops in the country he ordered under his command. He let everything go, entrusted the kingship to him, and, himself, he started out for a logn journey. The military forces of Akkad marching with him, he turned to Tayma deep in the west.”

A. Leo Oppenheim, “Nabonidus and the Clergy of Babylon,”
ANET, 313.

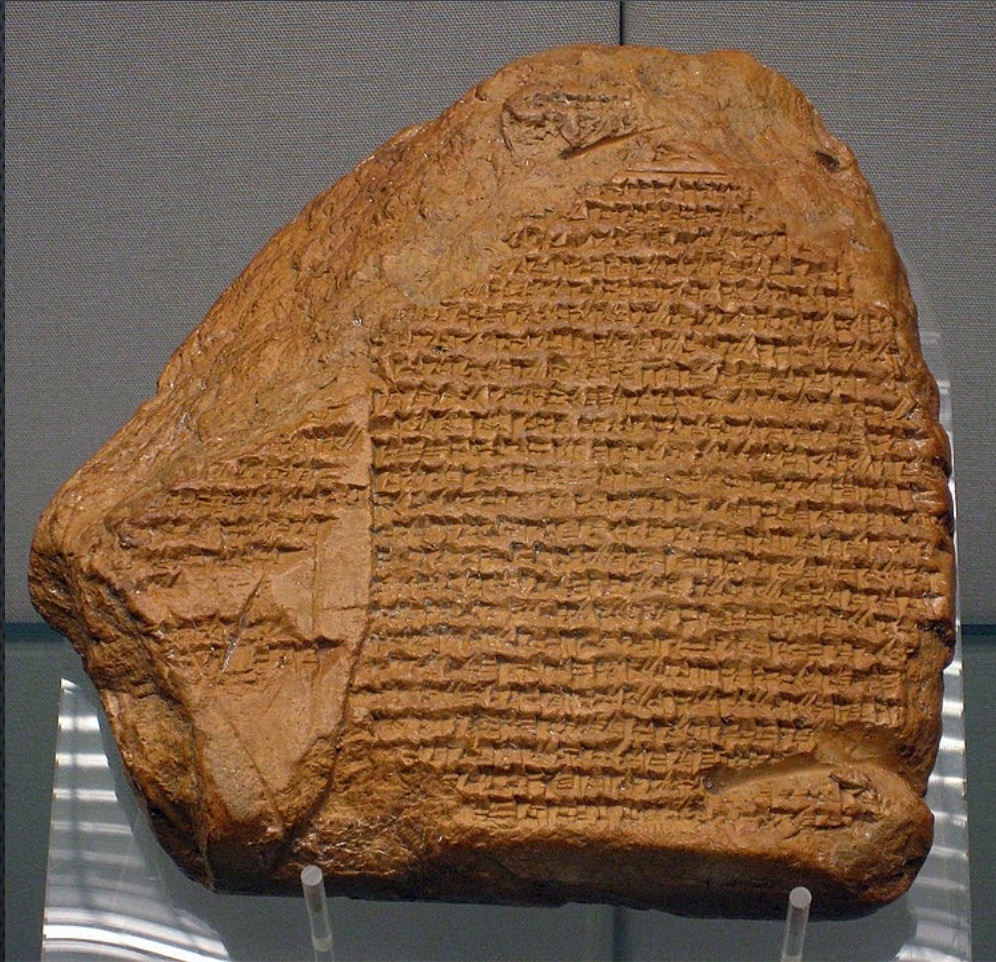
Nabonidus Chronicle



“The seventh year: The king (was) in Tema (while) the prince, his officers, (and) his army (were) in Akkad. [The king] did not come to Babylon [in the month Nisan]. Nabu did not come to Babylon. Bel did not come out. The [Akitu festiv]al [did not take place].”

A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (TCS V; Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin, 1975), 106.

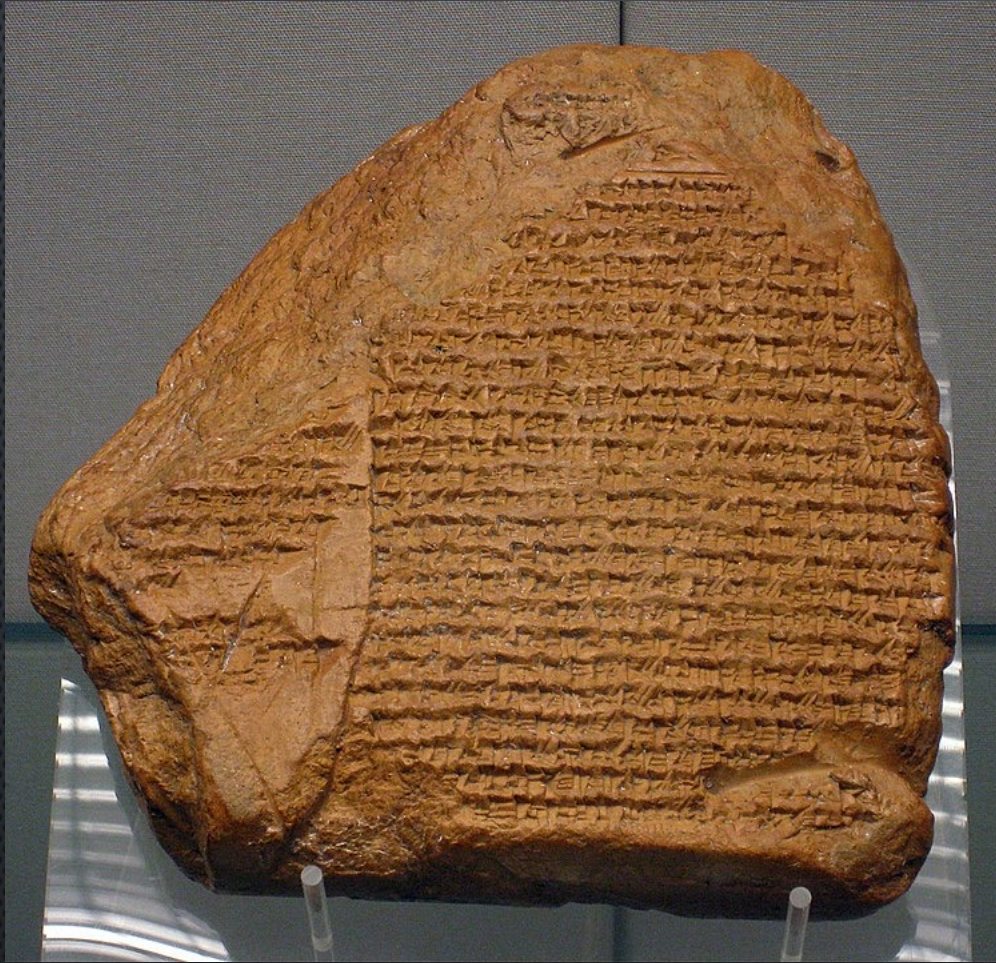
Nabonidus Chronicle



“[The seventeenth year: ...N]abu [came] from Borsippa for the procession of [Bel. Bel came out]. [... In the month] Tebet the king entered Eturkalamma. In the *temple* [...] [...] ... He made a libation of wine ... [...] [...] B]el came out. They performed the Akitu festival *as in normal times*.”

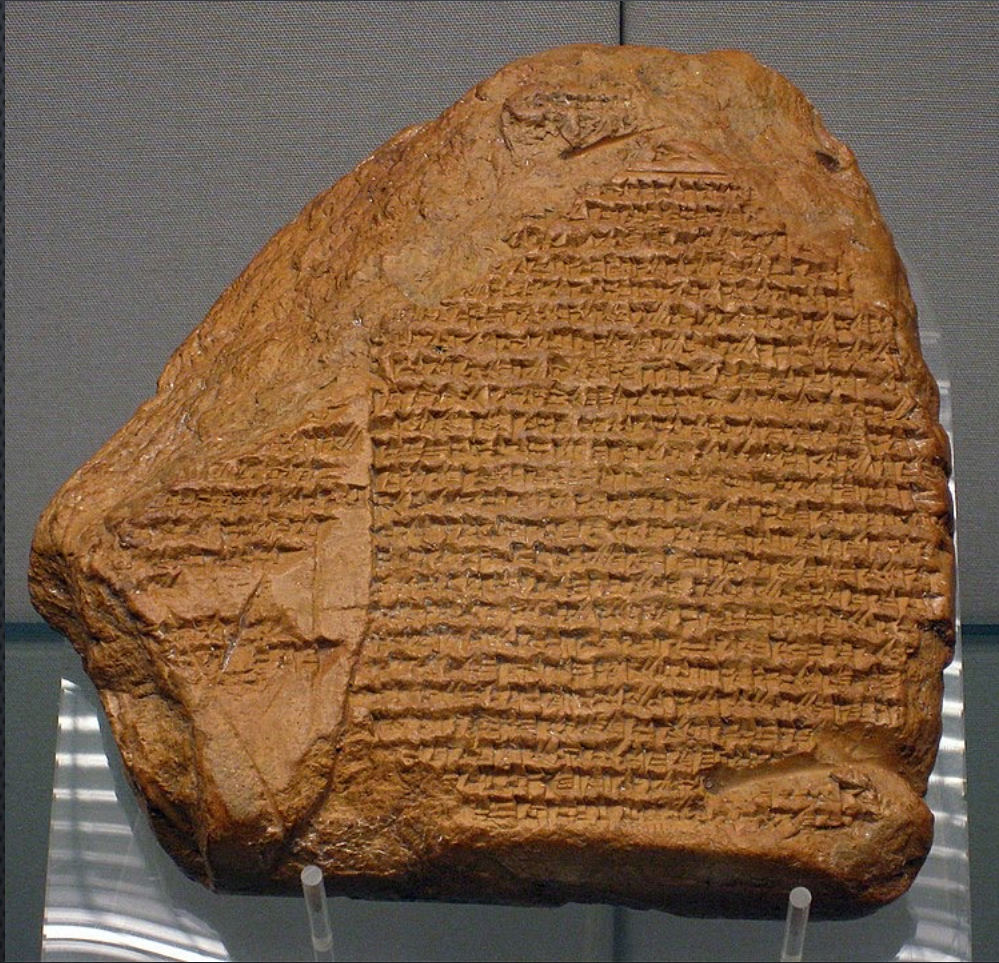
A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (TCS V; Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin, 1975), 109.

Nabonidus Chronicle



“In the month Tishri, when Cyrus (II) did battle at Opis on the [*bank of*] the Tigris against the army of Akkad, the people of Akkad retreated. He carried off the plunder (and) slaughtered the people. On the fourteenth day Sippar was captured without a battle. Nabonidus fled. On the sixteenth day, Ugbaru, governor of the Gutí, and the army of Cyrus (II) entered Babylon without a battle.”

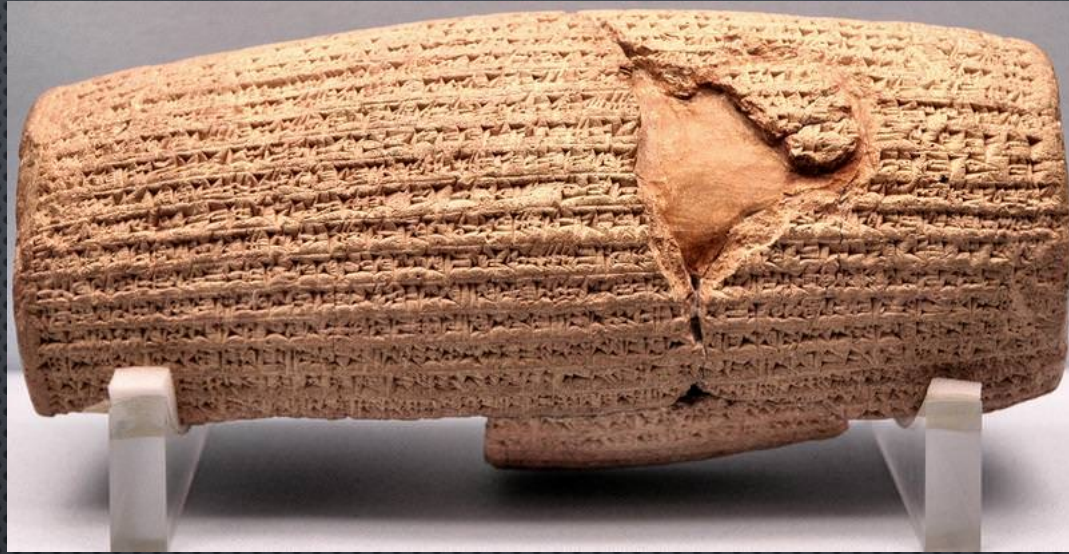
Nabonidus Chronicle



“Afterwards, after Nabonidus retreated, he was captured in Babylon. Until the end of the month the shield-(bearing troops) of the Guti surrounding the gates of Esagil. (But) there was no interruption (of rites) in Esagil or the (other) temples and no date (for a performance) was missed. On the third day of the month Marchesvan Cyrus (II) entered Babylon. ... were filled before him. There was peace in the city while Cyrus (II) spoke (his) greeting to all of Babylon.

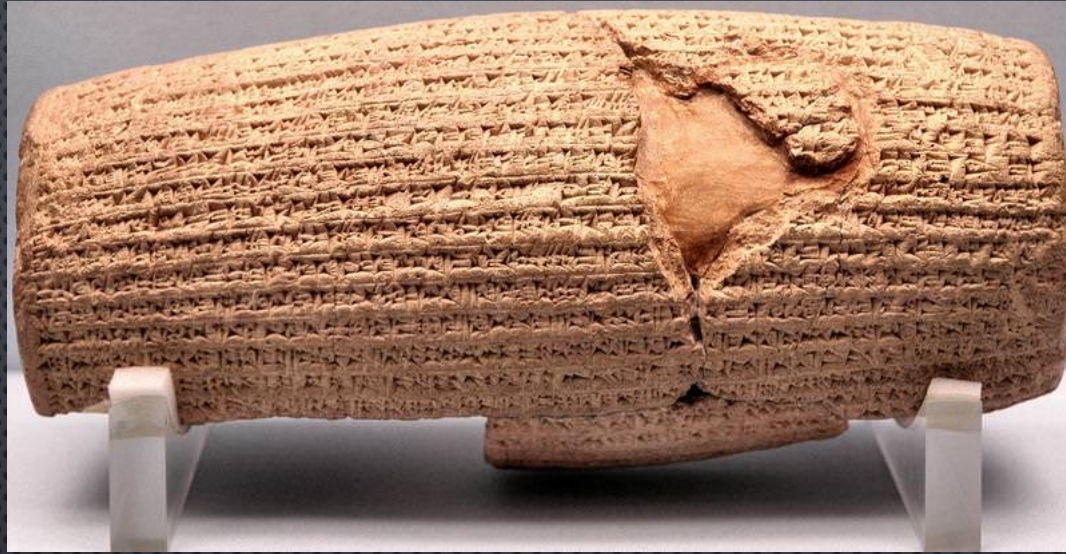
A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (TCS V; Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin, 1975), 109–110.

The Cyrus Cylinder



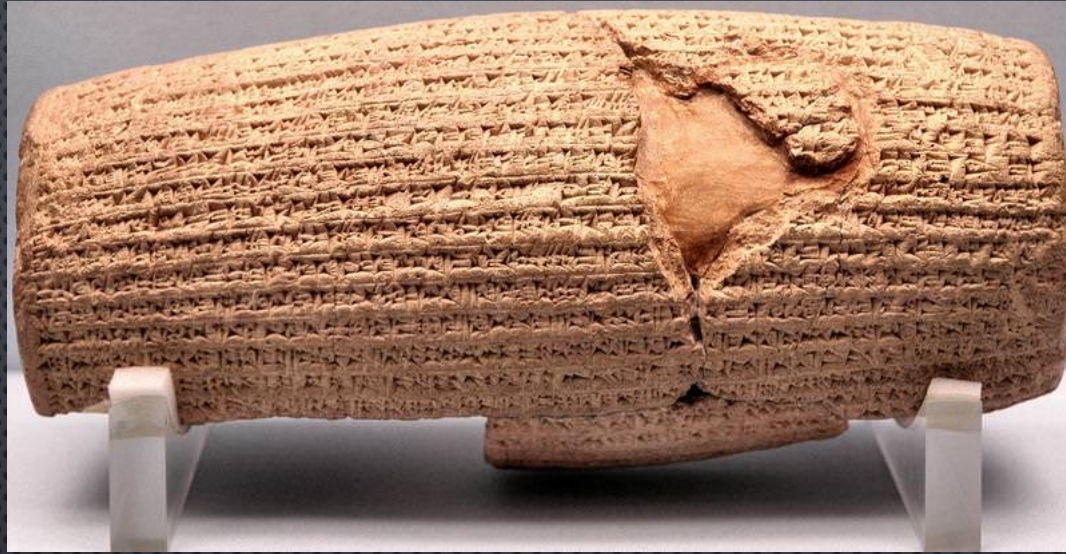
“An incompetent person was installed to exercise lordship over his country. [...] he imposed upon them. An imitation of Esagila he ma[de?], for Ur and the rest of the sacred centers, improper rituals [] daily he recited. Irreverently, he put an end to the regular offerings; he [], he established in the sacred centers. By his own plan, he did away with the worship of Marduk, the king of the gods; he continually did evil against his (Marduk’s) city. Daily, [without interruption ...], he [imposed] the corvée upon its inhabitants unrelentingly, ruining them all.”

The Cyrus Cylinder



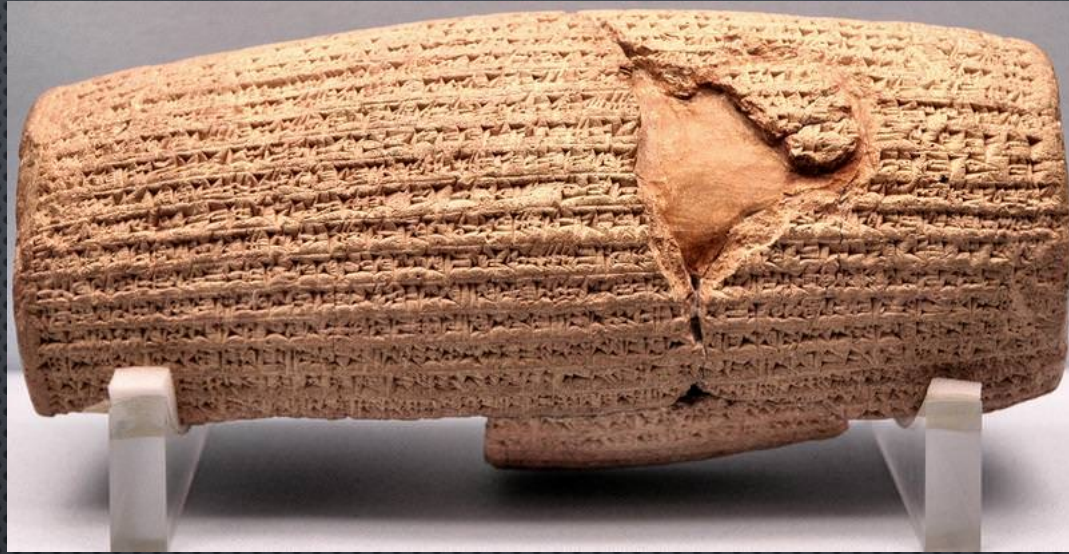
“Upon (hearing) their cries, the lord of the gods became furiously angry [and he left] their borders; and the gods who lived among them forsook their dwellings, angry that he had brought (them) into Babylon. Mardu [] turned (?) towards all the habitations that were abandoned and all the people of Sumer and Akkad who had become corpses; [he was recon]ciled and had mercy (upon them). He surveyed and looked throughout all the lands, searching for a righteous king whom he would support. He called out his name: Cyrus, king of Anshan; he pronounced his name to be king over all (the world).”

The Cyrus Cylinder



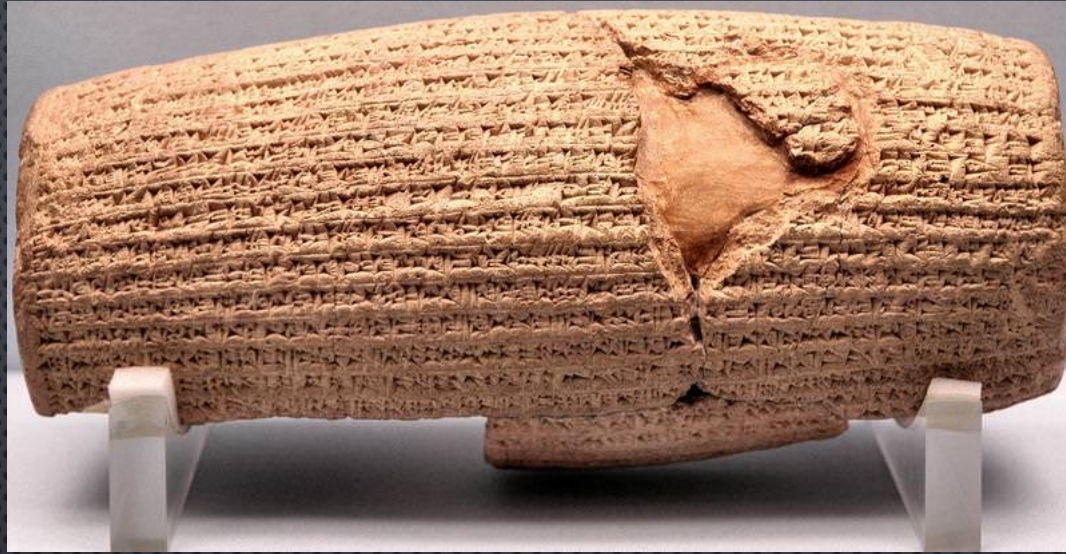
“He (Marduk) made the land of Gutium and all the Umman-manda bow in submission at his feet. And he (Cyrus) shepherded with justice and righteousness all the black-headed people, over whom he (Marduk) had given him victory. Marduk, the great lord, guardian (?) of his people, looked with gladness upon his good deeds and upright heart. He ordered him to march to his city Babylon. He set him on the road to Babylon and like a companion and friend, he went at his side. His vast army, whose number, like the water of the river, cannot be known, marched at his side fully armed.”

The Cyrus Cylinder



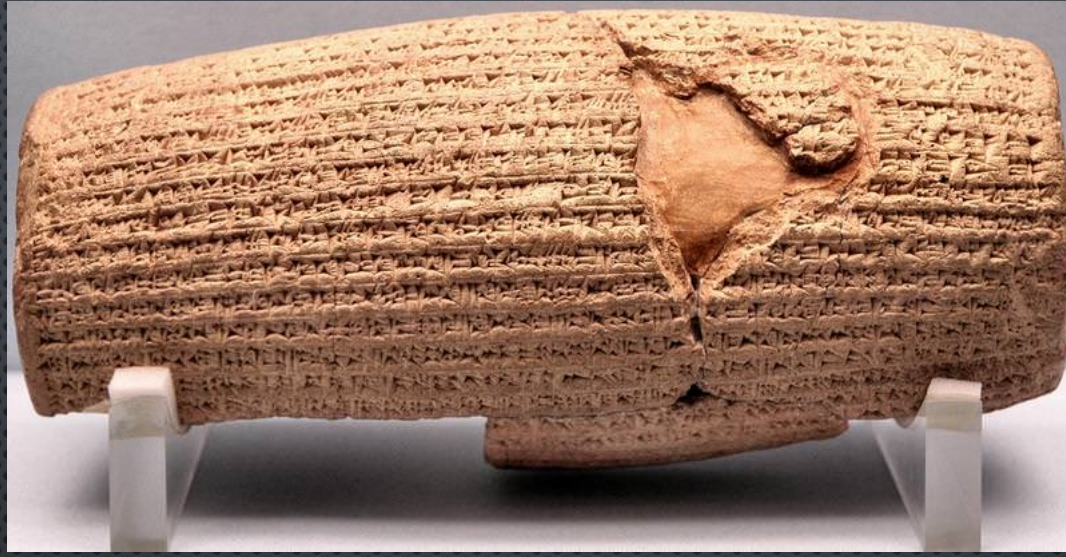
“He made him enter his city Babylon without fighting or battle; he saved Babylon from Hardship. He delivered Nabonidus, the king who did not revere him, into his hands. All the people of Babylon, all the land of Sumer and Akkad, princes and governors, bowed to him and kissed his feet. They rejoiced at his kingship and their faces shone. Ruler by whose aid the dead were revived and who had all been redeemed from hardship and difficulty, they greeted him with gladness and praised his name.”

The Cyrus Cylinder



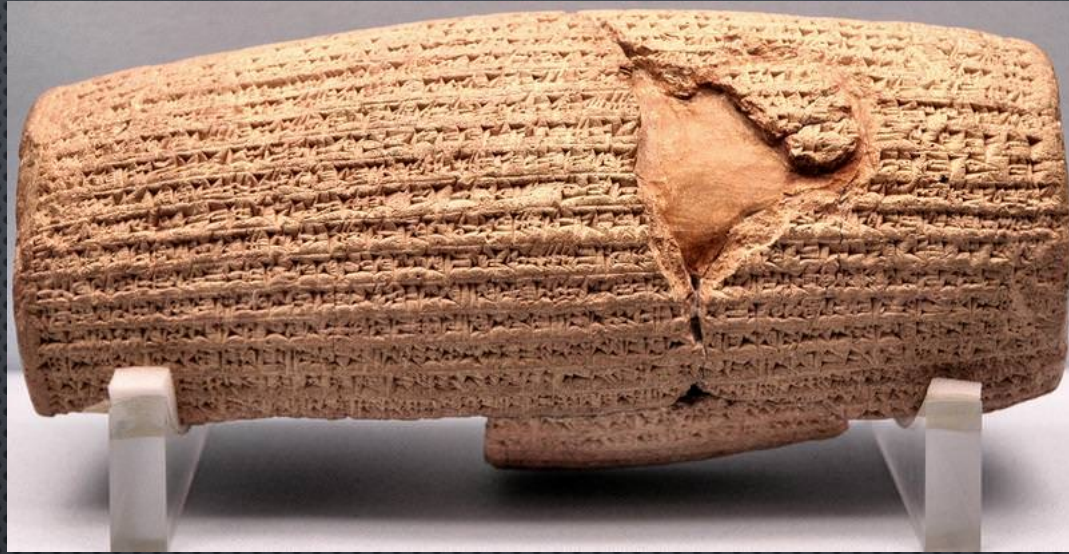
“I am Cyrus, king of the world, great king, mighty king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters, son of Cambyses, great king, king of Ashan, grandson of Cyrus, great king, king of Anshan, descendant of Teispes, great king, king of Anshan, (of an) eternal line of kingship, whose rule Bel (i.e., Marduk) and Nabu love, whose kingship they desire for their hearts’ pleasure.”

The Cyrus Cylinder



“By his exalted [word], all the kings who sit upon thrones throughout the world, from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea, who live in the dis[tricts far-off], the kings of the West, who dwell in tents, all of them brought their heavy tribute before me and in Babylon they kissed my feet. From [Ninev]eh (?), Ashur and Susa, Agade, Eshnunna, Zamban, Meturnu, Der, as far as the region of Gutium, I returned the (images of) the gods to the sacred centers [on the other side of] the Tigris whose sanctuaries had been abandoned for a long time, and I let them dwell in eternal abodes.”

The Cyrus Cylinder



“I gathered all their inhabitants and returned (to them) their dwellings. In addition, at the command of Marduk, the great lord, I settled in their habitations, in pleasing abodes, the gods of Sumer and Akkad, whom Nabonidus, to the anger of the lord of the gods, had brought into Babylon. May all the gods whom I settled in their sacred centers ask daily of Bel and Nabu that my days be long and may they intercede for my welfare. May they say to Marduk, my lord: ‘As for Curus, the king who reveres you, and Cambyses, his son, [] a reign.’ I settled all the lands in peaceful abodes.”

Mordechai Cogan, “Cyrus Cylinder,” *COS* 2.124.

Persian Kings

Kurash II (Cyrus the Great, 539–530 BC)

Cambyses II (529–523 BC)

Darius I (522–486 BC)

“Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘Yahweh, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may Yahweh his God be with him. Let him go up.’”

2 Chronicles 36:23

