

A HISTORY OF BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA.

BOOK III: THE HISTORY OF ASSYRIA.

CHAPTER I.

THE BEGINNINGS OF ASSYRIA.

OF the period when the first settlers of a Semitic race entered Assyria nothing is known, but all things point to their coming from Babylonia. The oldest traditions of the Semitic peoples connect the Assyrians with the Babylonians, and the earliest titles of their rulers point to dependence upon the previous civilization in the south. We are unable to trace the political and social history of Assyria to any point at all approaching the vast antiquity of Babylonia.

There is evidence, as already seen, that the city of Nineveh was in existence at least three thousand years before Christ, but of the men who built it and reigned in it we know absolutely nothing. As in Babylonia, we are confronted in the beginnings of

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Assyrian history only by a name here and there of some early ruler of whose deeds we have only the simplest note, if indeed we have any at all. The first Assyrian ruler bears the title of *Ishakku*, which seems to mean priest-prince, and implies subjection to some other ruler elsewhere. These early rulers must have been subject princes of the kings in Babylonia, for there is no evidence yet found to connect them with any other state, while their traditional connections are all with the southern kingdom. The names of several of these *Ishakke* have come down to us, but we are unhappily not able to arrange them in any definite order of chronological sequence. Apparently the first of them are Ishme-Dagan and his son, Shamshi-Adad I. The latter of these built a great temple in the city of Asshur and dedicated it to the gods Anu and Adad. We have no certain indications of the date of these rulers, but we are probably safe in the assertion that they ruled about 1830–1810 B. C.¹ After a short interval, probably, there follow two other priest-princes, whose names are Igur-Kapkapu and Shamshi-Adad II.² The names of two other *Ishakke* have also come down to us, Khallu and Irishum,³ but their date is unknown.

¹ The date rests upon a statement in the inscriptions of Tiglathpileser I. See above, vol. i, p. 326.

² There is a little inscription of Shamshi-Adad II, published I R. 6, No. 1, and republished by Winckler, *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, ii, plate iii, No. 9, translated by Schrader in *Keilinschrift. Bibl.*, i, p. 2.

³ I R. 6, No. 2; Winckler, *ibid.*, No. 10.

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These six names are all that remain of the history of the early government of Assyria. At this period, about 1800 B. C., the chief city was Asshur, then and long after the residence of the ruler. There is no hint in these early texts of hegemony over other cities; though Nineveh certainly, and other cities probably, were then in existence. The population was probably small, consisting, in its ruling classes at least, of colonists from Babylonia. There may have been earlier settlers among whom the Semitic invaders found home, as there were in Babylonia when the Semites first appeared in that land, but of them we have no certainty. It is an indistinct picture which we get of these times in the temperate northern land, but it is a picture of civilized men who dwelt in cities, and built temples in which to worship their gods, and who carried on some form of government in a tributary or other subject relation to the great culture land which they had left in the south. The later Assyrian people had but faint memory of these times, and to them, as to us, they were ancient days.

At about 1700 B. C. the priest-prince ruling in Asshur was Bel-Kapkapu, according to a statement of Adad-Nirari III (811–783), a later king of Assyria, while Esarhaddon would have us believe that he was himself a direct descendant of a king, Bel-bani, and, though we may put no faith in such genealogical researches, perhaps greater credence may be given the other historical statement with which the name of Bel-bani is fol-

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lowed.¹ According to the historiographers of Esarhaddon, Bel-bani was the first *Ishakku* of Asshur who adopted the title of king, having received the office of king from the god Marduk himself. If there be any truth at all in these statements, we must see in Bel-bani the first king of Assyria, but the fact is empty of real meaning, whether true or not, for we know nothing of the king's personality or works.

After these names of shadowy personalities there comes a great silent period of above two hundred years, in which we hear no sound of any movements in Assyria, nor do we know the name of even one ruler.² At the very end of this period (about 1490 B. C.) all western Asia was shaken to its foundations by an Egyptian invasion. Thutmosis III,³ freed at last from the restraint of Hatshepsowet, his peace-loving sister or aunt, had swept along the Mediterranean coast to Carmel and over the spur

¹ Whatever may be thought of Esarhaddon's statements concerning Bel-bani there is at least evidence that a king of this name actually existed, for Scheil has found a tablet dated in the reign of Bel-bani and written in archaic Babylonian script (*Recueil de Travaux*, xix, p. 59).

² It is quite probable that our ignorance of this period is due simply to the fact that excavations hitherto made in Assyria have been chiefly upon sites, such as Kuyunjik and Khorsabad, famous rather in the later than in the earlier periods of Assyrian history. When Kal'ah Shergat, the site of ancient Asshur, is explored we may perhaps be able to fill out some of the *lacunæ* in the earliest times.

³ Hatshepsowet, Thutmosis II, and Thutmosis III reigned together from about 1516 to 1449. It was in the twenty-second year that the advance began upon Syria, Thutmosis III being then sole ruler of Egypt. See Petrie, *History of Egypt during the XVIIth and XVIIIth Dynasties*, 3d ed., 1899, and Steindorff, *Die Blütezeit des Pharaonen Reichs*. Leipzig, 1900.

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of the hill to the plain of Esdraelon. At Megiddo the allies met him in defense of Syria, if not of all western Asia, and were crushingly defeated. The echo of that victory resounded even in Assyria, and whoever¹ it was who then reigned by the Tigris made haste to send a "great stone of real lapis lazuli"² and other less valuable gifts in token of his submission. It was well for Samaria that Thutmosis was satisfied with those gifts, and led no army across the Euphrates.

Soon after the invasion of Thutmosis III we again learn the name of an Assyrian king, for about 1450 B. C. we find the Kassite king of Babylonia, Karaindash, making a treaty with the king of Assyria, whose name is given as Asshur-bel-nisheshu.³ This latter is the first king of Assyria of whom we may consider that we know anything. He claims a certain territory in Mesopotamia, and makes good his claim to it. Assyria now is clearly acknowledged by the king of Babylonia as an independent kingdom. The independence of the northern kingdom was probably achieved during the two hundred years preceding, through the weakness of the kingdom of Babylonia. It must be remembered that it was in this very period

¹ Hommel (*Dictionary of Bible*, ed. Hastings, i, p. 180) places this tribute paying in the reign of Asshur-bel-nisheshu or Puzur-Asshur, but this is scarcely probable. The question is purely chronological, and differences of opinion are particularly allowable.

² The quotation is from the Annals of Thutmosis III. See translation in Petrie, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

³ Synchronistic Hist., col. i, lines 1-4, *Keilinschrift. Bibl.*, i, pp. 194, 195. See further above, vol. i, p. 414.

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that Babylonia was torn with internal dissension and fell an easy prey to the Kassites. While the Kassites were busy with the establishment of their rule over the newly conquered land the time was auspicious for the firm settling of a new kingdom in Assyria.

Shortly after, though perhaps not immediately, his successor, Puzur-Asshur, came to the throne (about 1420 B. C.). Like his predecessor, he also had dealings with the Babylonians concerning the boundary line; and beyond this fact noted by the Assyrian synchronistic tablet,¹ we know nothing of him.

After Puzur-Ashur came Asshur-nadin-akhe (it is Asshur who giveth brothers), a contemporary of Amenophis IV,² the heretic king of Egypt, with whom he had correspondence.³ A later king also records the fact that he built, or rather perhaps restored, a palace in Asshur. His reign was an era of peace, as these two facts apparently would prove, namely, the correspondence with the far distant land of Egypt, indicating a high state of civilization, and the restoration of a palace, and not, as heretofore, a temple.

He was succeeded by his son, Asshur-uballit (Asshur has given life), about 1370 B. C., and in

¹ Col. i, lines 5-7.

² Amenophis IV ruled 1383-1365 B. C. (Petrie); according to Steindorff, 1392-1374.

³ No letter of his to Egypt has been preserved, but Asshur-uballit mentions the correspondence. Letter No. 9, lines 19-21, in Winckler's edition. For translation see *Tell-el-Amarna Letters*, part i, p. 31.

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his reign there were stirring times. His daughter, Muballitat-Sheru'a, was married to Kara-Khardash, the king of Babylon. Herein we meet for the first time, in real form, the Assyrian efforts to gain control in Babylonia. The son of this union, Kadashman-Kharbe I, was soon upon the throne. The Babylonian people must have suspected intrigue, for they rebelled and killed the king. This was a good excuse for Assyrian intervention, for the rebels had killed the grandson of the king of Assyria. The Assyrians invaded the land, and the Babylonians were conquered, and another grandson of Asshur-uballit was placed upon the throne, under the title of Kurigalzu II.¹ This act made Babylonia at least partially subject to Assyria, but many long years must elapse before any such subjection would be really acknowledged by the proud Babylonians. They were already subject to a foreign people, the Kassites, who had indeed become Babylonians in all respects, but it would be a greater humiliation to acknowledge their own colonists, the Assyrians, a bloodthirsty people, as their masters. Asshur-uballit also made a campaign against the Shubari, a people dwelling east of the Tigris and apparently near the borders of Elam.²

Friendly relations between Assyria and Egypt were continued during his reign, and a letter³ of

¹ See above, vol. i, p. 419.

² See Delitzsch, *Paradies*, pp. 234, 235, and compare Hommel, *Geschichte*, p. 498.

³ Published by Winckler, *Der Thontafelfund von El-Amarna*, No. 9, translated in *Keilinschrift. Bibl.*, v, part 1, pp. 29, 30.

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his to the Egyptian king Amenophis IV has been preserved, in which occur the following sentences: "To Napkhuriya¹ . . . king of Egypt my brother: Asshur-uballit, king of Assyria, the great king thy brother. To thyself, to thy house, and to thy country let there be peace. When I saw thy ambassadors I rejoiced greatly . . . A chariot . . . and two white horses, . . . a chariot without harness, and one seal of blue stone I have sent thee as a present. These are presents for the great king." The letter then proceeds to ask very frankly for specific and very large gifts in return, and tells very clearly of the present state of the road between Egypt and Assyria.

In the reign of Asshur-uballit Assyria made a distinct advance in power and dignity, and this development continued during the reign of Asshur-uballit's son and successor, Bel-nirari (Bel-is-my-help)—about 1380 B. C. Of him two facts have come down to us, the mutual relations of which seem to be as follows: Kurigalzu II had been seated on the Babylonian throne by the Assyrians and therefore owed them much gratitude, but to assure the stability of his throne he must needs take the Babylonian rather than the Assyrian side of controversies and difficulties between the peoples. The grandson of Bel-nirari boasts concerning him that he conquered the Kassites² and in-

¹ The official name of Amenophis IV, representing the Egyptian NEFER-KHEPRU-RA.

² IV R. 44, line 24; *Keilinschrift. Bibl.*, i, p. 7.

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creased the territory of Assyria. By this he must mean not the Kassite rulers of Babylonia, but rather the people from whom they had come—that is, the inhabitants of the neighboring Elamite foothills. This conquest simply carried a little further the acquisition of territory toward the east and south which had been begun by Asshur-uballit's conquest of Shubari. But these Assyrian conquests led to Babylonian jealousy and then to a conflict between Kurigalzu II and Bel-nirari, in which the latter was victorious, and this, in turn, brought about a rearrangement of the boundary line by which the two kings divided between them the disputed territory,¹ though it does not appear which was the gainer.

Again the succession to the throne passed from father to son, and Pudi-ilu (about 1360 B. C.) reigned in Asshur. He has left us only brief inscriptions,² in which he boasts of building at the temple of Shamash, probably that at the capital city. From his son we learn that he was a warrior of no mean achievements, though our geographical knowledge is not sufficient to enable us to follow his movements closely. He is represented as overrunning the lands Turuki and Nigimkhi, and conquering the princes of the land of Gutium.³ Beside these conquests to the north of the city of Asshur he also extended his borders

¹ Synchronistic History, col. i, lines 5-7.

² *Keilinschrift. Bibl.*, i, pp. 2-5.

³ Inscription of Adad-nirari I, col. i, lines 16-18.

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toward the southwest by the conquest of the nomad people the Sutu. From reign to reign we see the little kingdom of Asshur grow. These conquests were probably not much more than raids, nor is it likely that at so early a period a serious effort was made by the Assyrians to govern the territory overrun.¹ It was preparatory work; the peoples round about Asshur were gradually being brought to know something of its growing power. They would soon come to regard it as a mistress and consolidation would be easy. It was in similar fashion that the empire of Babylonia had grown to its position of influence.

Pudi-ilu was succeeded by his son, Adad-nirari I (about 1345 B. C.), who has left us two records, the one a bronze sword inscribed with his name and titles,² the other a considerable inscription,³ carefully dated by the eponym name, the oldest dated Assyrian inscription yet found. The latter is largely devoted to an account of the enlargement of the temple of Asshur in the capital, his wars being but slightly mentioned. In the enumeration of the lands conquered by him the countries already overrun by his predecessors are

¹ It is, however, to be noted that Assyrian colonists were settled in distant countries at a very early date. The Kappadokian tablets would seem to show that Assyrians were settled near Kaisariyeh as early as 1400 B. C.

² See *Transactions of Society of Biblical Archaeology*, iv, p. 347.

³ Published IV R. p. 39, translated by Peiser in *Keilinschrift. Bibl.*, i, pp. 5, ff.