



## Appendix "B"



# Nebuchadnezzar II, King of Babylonia

**N**EBUCHADNEZZAR THE II was a Chaldean king who ruled Babylon during the Neo-Babylonian Empire. The Empire existed from 626 BC through 539 BC, of which Nebuchadnezzar II personally ruled from 605 BC through 562 BC. He is widely accepted as the greatest King of the Babylonian Empire and quite possibly the greatest King that Mesopotamia has ever seen. It was Nebuchadnezzar that was responsible for Ezekiel's captivity in Babylon, as well as thousands of other Israelites and foreign captives. Unfortunately, there is but a few records that have been preserved through the trials of time to tell us of his history and reign. Of course, the Old Testament makes many references to Nebuchadnezzar, as his Empire effected the lives of those that lived in Judah and the captive Hebrews. However, the Bible history is limited to the history of the Lord's people and doesn't spend very much time dealing with Nebuchadnezzar's life outside of that realm. The Jewish Historian Flavius Josephus also makes references to Nebuchadnezzar; however, like the Bible, Josephus limits his accounting to the primary goal of recording the history of the children of Israel. There are several Greek Historians that wrote of Babylon and the great Empire, though the accuracy of their writings is sometimes questioned. Most of the sources that include records of Nebuchadnezzar's life and time come from clay tablets that somehow survived the wear of time. The few tablets that are intact are written in an ancient cuneiform text. The language of the texts are Aramaic.

**Nebuchadnezzar**

נְבוּכַדְנֶצְרַר

In Hebrew

Aramaic was the dialect used at the time of Nebuchadnezzar, especially by officials, royalty, and the well to do. There is little doubt that it was the language of Nebuchadnezzar. This ancient language is thought to be responsible for the changes in the Hebraic language during the time of the exiles, creating the box or square style Hebraic script (Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon, D.J. Wiseman, pages 1-2).

Perhaps the best place to start in summarizing what we know about the man named Nebuchadnezzar the II is with his father. His father's name was Nabopolassar and was the first King of what is called the Neo-Babylonian period. Nabopolassar was truly the first King of the new dynasty. He had no claim to any royal lineage or likewise any claim to the throne, though many say that he was a Chaldean Sheikh. Through his own admission in ancient text, Nabopolassar said that he was a native of Babylonia, but **not** of royal lineage. We know that Nabopolassar was a Chaldean, which we will discuss a little further on, and many speculate that Nabopolassar was a member of the ruling Chaldean tribe at the time the Neo-Babylonian period started. Others go as far as saying that he was the King of the Sealand tribe in Uruk. At the least, we can probably deduce that Nabopolassar was a man of high influence and stature among the Chaldeans.

The events leading up to the creation of the Neo-Babylonian Empire were opportunistic at best. Years and even decades prior to the start of the Empire, the Assyrians had ruled the region with an iron hand. There were none that dared defy the Assyrian rule, that is, without severe repercussion. This all changed when the Assyrian Empire began to weaken within. In the years leading up to the establishment of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, the aging King of Assyria became incapable of ruling his Empire. His sons and military leaders ruled, but not without some unrest within the Empire. In the year 627 BC, King Ashurbanipal of Assyria died, leaving the throne to his oldest son Ashur-etil-ilani. There was opposition to Ashur-etil-ilani's ascension, and consequently the beginning of the end of the Empire. At almost the same time that the Assyrian King died, the Assyrian appointed governor of Babylon died also. The governor's name was Kandalanu, and was a long time faithful leader to the Assyrian King. Seeing the unrest in the kingdom, and a weakened state in Babylon, the newly appointed King's brother, Sin-shum-lishir, seized the state of Babylonia and proclaimed himself King of Assyria. Assyria was now faced with a civil war. After some minor upheavals it appeared the Sin-shum-lishir had good control over the state of Babylonia.

The circumstances surrounding Nabopolassar's rise to the Babylonian throne are somewhat cloudy. Though this is an unproven theory, many feel that Nabopolassar was appointed the Governor of the city of Babylon by the Assyrian king Ashur-etil-ilani. It is speculated that after the long time faithful Assyrian governor of Babylon died and King Ashur-etil-ilani's younger brother, Sin-shum-lishir proclaimed himself King that Ashur-etil-ilani promoted Nabopolassar to Governor in a move to unite the Babylonians under him and regain the state as his own. The plan succeeded in removing his brother from the state of Babylon; however, the Babylonian support fell under Nabopolassar rather than Ashur-etil-ilani. King Sin-shum-lishir was ousted from Babylon sometime in 626 BC.

With the support of the Babylonians, Nabopolassar began to pull away from the Assyrians. On approximately November 22<sup>nd</sup>, or 23<sup>rd</sup>, 626 BC Nabopolassar declared independence from Assyria. This move by Nabopolassar was not immediately opposed by the Assyrians. The ousted King Sin-shum-lishir took his forces from Babylon to Ninevah where he planned on taking the Empire away from his brother by force. Assyria was engaged in civil war for three years, until in 623 BC King Ashur-etil-ilani died in battle leaving the kingdom to Sin-shum-lishir. The now undisputed Assyrian king immediately declared war on Nabopolassar and Babylonia in 623 BC. It is pretty well accepted that King Sin-shum-lishir had not forgotten he was ousted by the Chaldean that

was appointed governor by his brother. Furthermore, he was probably anxious to regain Babylonia as an Assyrian State and reset order in the once great kingdom.

After several years of governing the city of Babylon, uniting the people of the region, and for the first time uniting the Chaldean tribes under one flag, so to speak, the once governor of Babylon made a bold move that proved to elevate his status from Governor to King. Not only had he declared independence from Assyria, but he accepted their declaration of war and launched his own military campaign against the once great Empire, which was now weakened by civil war and disunity. The battles between the two Empires lasted almost 12 years.

After several years of war, Governor Nabopolassar met secretly with the Median King “Cyaxares”. After the Medians, who had also launched a military campaign against the Assyrians, had defeated the city of Assur the leaders of the two countries formed an alliance **against** the Assyrians. It would seem the Assyrians who had oppressed the inhabitants of Lower Mesopotamia or the area surrounding Babylon, had in like manner oppressed the Medians. The Medians, though currently free of the Assyrian yoke, continued to feel Assyria's ominous presence, and with the memory of once being oppressed and ruled over by the Assyrians, they too had seized the opportunity to attack a weakened Assyria. The new alliance formed a common goal, the destruction of Assyria. As part of the established plan, the armies of Medes, which is modern day Iran, joined with the armies of the “Chaldeans” or Nabopolassar's armies and marched against the capital of Assyria, “Ninevah” in the year 612 BC. The city of Ninevah fell to the alliance. Though the annihilation of the Assyrians carried on for a short time after, the fall of Ninevah reshaped the region. The southern possessions of Assyria were given to Nabopolassar for the New Neo-Babylonia Empire, while the Assyrian regions north of Ninevah were given to the Medes. Nabopolassar was now the undisputed King of Babylonia. Nabopolassar's chief concern for the new Babylonia was the rebuilding of its cities after years of oppression and poverty. He most especially wanted to rebuild the city of Babylon; its temples and its splendor.

Though Babylonia and Babylon, its capital city, had existed for thousands of years prior to Nabopolassar's Babylonia, the new Babylonia differed in many ways. Due to the influences of the Assyrian Empire, the new Babylonia was more centralized, organized, and structured. The Babylonian King was no longer a sacred religious figure, who was revered for his power and influence with the gods, but the new Babylonian king was more of an administrator, planner, commander, and chief. Though the Assyrians influenced tremendous change in the new Babylonian Empire, they were not successful in totally eliminating the Babylonian ties to their gods, and their king's relationship to the Babylonian gods.

Not much is mentioned of Nabopolassar's wives or concubines. There is mention of a Queen Mother named Adda Guppi; however, it has been determined that this Queen Mother was actually the Mother of Nabonidus a later King of Babylonia and not Nabopolassar's wife. This confusion might stem from the theory that Nabonidus was married to an unnamed daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, hence Nebuchadnezzar would have been the Father-in-law to Nabonidus. Others say Nebuchadnezzar's mother was merely an unnamed Chaldean woman who evaded fame. The bottom line is the mother of Nebuchadnezzar II is unknown to us today.

The name Nebuchadnezzar was probably chosen in honor of another great Babylonian King after the same name. The first Babylonian King with the name Nebuchadnezzar ruled Babylon from 1125 BC through 1104 BC. Though our Nebuchadnezzar was of a totally different bloodline, his name would honor another Babylonian from years past. The ancient texts do not refer to Nebuchadnezzar as the “II”. Modern scholars have assigned the added title to differentiate between the two Nebuchadnezzars. Due to differences in translation of ancient cuneiform texts, the name “Nebuchadnezzar” has several different possible spellings, pronunciations, and meanings. The most accepted syllabic spelling or pronunciation is **na-bi-um-ku-du-ur/dur/dur/-ri/ru-u/u-su-ur/sur**. The spelling, “Nebuchadnezzar” is probably the most accepted for the great King of Babylon. It is commonly spelt “Ναβουχοδονοσορ” in Modern Greek. One spelling, Nebuchadrezzar, which is pronounced Nabû-kudurri-usur, and can be translated to mean, “**O Nabu, guard my borders**”. “Nabium” or “Nabu” is the Babylonian name for the planet-god mercury. The god Nabu was an idol of significant importance in the religion of the region. Nabu was also considered the god of wisdom, and the patron god of Babylon. Others have translated the name “Nebuchadnezzar” to mean “**O Nabu, protect the crown!**” or “**O Nabu, the land-mark**”. Other spellings for the name “Nebuchadnezzar” are “Nebuchodonosor”, “Nabukodrossoros”, “Nebuchadrezzar”, “Nabochadnezzar”, “Nabsucodonosor” or “Nebukadnezzar”.

### Nabu



Caricature of Nebuchadnezzar



One point that has caused some confusion is that Nebuchadnezzar is referred to as a Chaldean and not a Babylonian. To a certain extent, the two can be used synonymously. Similar to the way a New Yorker and an American could easily be the same person if the person resided in the State of New York. The Chaldeans were a race of people that according to the secular world inhabited southern Mesopotamia around 1,000 BC. Though Biblical accounting places their settling of this area much earlier, the Chaldeans were a race that was an intricate part of Mesopotamia by the time of Nebuchadnezzar II. They were indeed Babylonians.

The Chaldeans were much like what we would imagine when we form a mental picture of the not so ancient Arabians. The Chaldeans existed in tribes. Though they all belonged to one basic race, the tribes often acted independent and at times even warred with one another. They were typically led by a leader whom they called a “Sheikh”. The Chaldeans were typically nomadic herdsmen who roamed the southern Mesopotamian Valley (also called “the Fertile Crescent”) migrating from river valleys to Oasis’ and other fertile areas of land. There were, however, exceptions to this statement. Some Chaldeans were said to have been date palm farmers and to have been far from nomadic.

The Chaldeans kept with many of the customs that are quite familiar to us when we think of the Middle Eastern culture. The Sheikhs and other ranking members of the

Chaldean tribes typically had harems. Harems were a group of women reserved for the man of the house. They consisted of wives, concubines, and female relatives. They typically had structures built for them where they could be secluded and protected.

Nebuchadnezzar II was indeed a Chaldean Sheikh, presumably from a leading tribe in Uruk where his father, it is presumed, once presided as Sheikh. His culture and tendencies were greatly influenced by his heritage. Even so, his childhood probably didn't reflect the typical Chaldean youth. By the time Nebuchadnezzar II was a teen he had been learned in ways of government, military strategy, and social structure that were more Assyrian than Chaldean.

We have no written record as to the date or year that Nebuchadnezzar was born. We do have record that Nebuchadnezzar, as a young boy, was present when his father began work in rebuilding the ziggurat (a large stepped pyramid used in a form of idol worship) temple called the "Etemenanki" in 620 BC. From this information, we can speculate that Nebuchadnezzar was born between 635 BC and 625 BC.

We don't know a whole lot about Nebuchadnezzar's childhood. We know that he and his brother were present at the groundbreaking ceremony for the restoration work on the Ziggurat in Babylon. They carried a ceremonial basket and hoe to the groundbreaking. Nebuchadnezzar, according to one of the surviving clay tablets, had several siblings. One was named Nabû-suma-lisir, who we assume was the brother that accompanied Nebuchadnezzar to the ceremony at the Ziggurat. This son was described by his father, Nabopolassar, as "*his next succeeding brother, ...the second born.*" Another brother named in the ancient tablets was named Nabû-zer-usabsi. We assume that Nebuchadnezzar had other siblings; however, we have no record of any other than those already discussed.

We can surmise several facts about Nebuchadnezzar's childhood from history. He grew up during the transition of Babylon from an Assyrian state, to an independent country. He watched his own father go from a Chaldean of stature to Babylonian King. He grew up during times of war, which must have brought about hard times, as war usually does. And yet, he watched as his father began to transform the run down city and state into a world power with beauty and splendor. This unique childhood must have shaped and molded Nebuchadnezzar's character such that it became worthy of royal status.

At some point during his early life, Nebuchadnezzar married. We are not sure as to the number of wives and concubines that he had, though tradition would indicate that his "Harem" would have been numerous. It is evident that he took to wife the daughter of the Median King. Her name was "Amyitis" and it is felt that her marriage to Nebuchadnezzar was part of the alliance between Nabopolassar and King Cyaxares of Medes. Other details of Nebuchadnezzar's married life are quite vague. We surmise he had a deep love for Amyitis since he built many grand things for her, one of which was the famous Hanging Gardens.

Nebuchadnezzar did manage to have quite a few children in his lifetime. Unfortunately, they are never mentioned at one time in the surviving ancient tablets. Their names are found as they find place in history. At this time only eight children can be recorded. They are as follows.



	Gender	Name	Information About
1.	Son	Amel-Marduk	He is often referred to in literature as Evil-Marduk, which isn't too far from the truth. Amel-Marduk was considered corrupt and far from a man of the people. He ruled Babylon after his father's death, being the eldest son of Nebuchadnezzar, from 562 BC to 560 BC. He was assassinated by what appears to be his brother-in-law, Neriglissar.
2.	Son	Eanna-sarra-usur	Mentioned as a royal prince in an ancient text that refers to donations to the poor.
3.	Son	Marduk-suma-usur	Mentioned as a royal prince in an ancient text that recorded tithes to the Ebabbar temple.
4.	Son	Marduk-nadin-ahi	Mentioned as a royal prince in an ancient purchase transaction.
5.	Son	Musezib-Murduk	Mentioned as a royal prince in an ancient contract.
6.	Son	Marduk-nadin-sumi	Mentioned as a royal prince in an ancient contract.
7.	Daughter	Kassaya	She was married to Neriglissar, the same Neriglissar that is believed to have assassinated Evil-Marduk for the crown. It is also the same Neriglissar that led the attack on Jerusalem in 588 BC. Kassaya's husband is considered, by historians, as a wicked and corrupt man. Not much is recorded about Kassaya.
8.	Daughter	Unknown Name	Ancient records show that another daughter was existent; however, her name or information about her is not given. Many feel that she married Nabonidus a future king of Babylonia.

By 607 BC, it would appear that not only was Nebuchadnezzar given the status of crown prince, but was accepted as a man and was perceived with enough respect and maturity to be given his own army to command. Like his father, he appears to have been a great military leader. No doubt he was taught and schooled in military whitt by his father and his father's most loyal Chaldean generals. At a relatively early age, Nebuchadnezzar II was asked to lead his father's armies throughout the Middle East, and Asia Minor. This was the early days of the Empire. His leadership and military whitt lead his Father's armies to tremendous success. Among the many expansions in the Empire that were brought about under Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar II was sent into Jerusalem for the conquest of Judah in 606 BC.

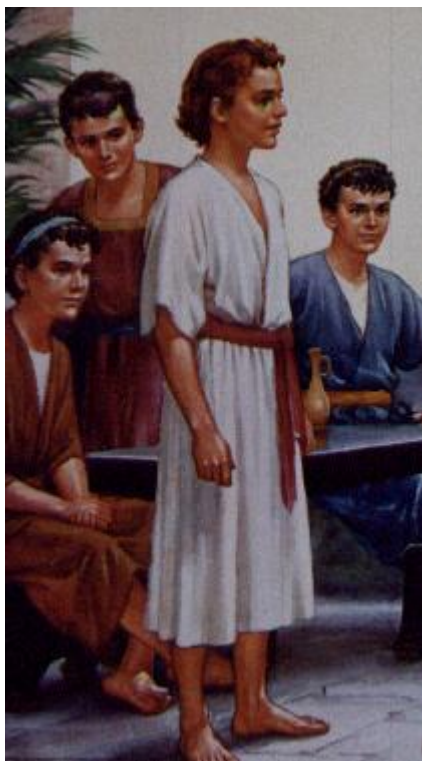
It should be noted that almost immediately after the fall of Assyria, the Egyptians took the opportunity to capitalize on the changes in the region. In 609 BC, the Egyptians took Palestine, Syria, Judea and the entire region clear up to Carchemish. This advance by the Egyptians marked the Babylonians next military conquest; the ousting of the Egyptians from what the Babylonians felt was their territory. There are many that feel that the Babylonian goal was much more; the entire conquest of Egypt.

The first conquest of Judah, in 606 BC, by Babylonia was not much more than a small victory on the way to the Babylonian conquering of the Egyptians. At the time of the Babylonian invasion, Judah was under Egyptian rule. As Babylonia attempted to drive the Egyptian out of the land they claimed as their own, Judah became but a casualty of war. There isn't much written on the Babylonian take over of Judah; however, we know that Nebuchadnezzar himself was in charge of the Babylonian armies as they conquered the city. It doesn't appear that Judah put up much of a fight against a formidable Babylonian army. Furthermore, history would suggest that the Judeans had hoped that the Egyptians would defend them from their attackers. Unfortunately, the Egyptians gave no support to what they felt was an insignificant sovereign nation. Nebuchadnezzar tore through the city of Jerusalem and placed its King, Jehoiakim, under oath to pay homage to Babylonia as well as a healthy tribute. Nebuchadnezzar reportedly took many of the wisest and skilled Hebrew captives and sent them back to Babylon to serve the Empire. Of these captives, whose numbers we do not know, the prophet Daniel was supposedly numbered. The Bible makes little to no mention of the Babylonians first invasion of Jerusalem. Fortunately, the Jewish Historian Josephus records,

*“Now in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim, one whose name was Nebuchadnezzar took the government over the Babylonians, who at the same time went up with a great army to the city Carchemish, which was at Euphrates, upon a resolution he had taken to fight with Neco, king of Egypt, under whom all Syria then was. And when Neco understood the intention of the king of Babylon, and that this expedition was made against him, he did not despise his attempt, but made haste with a great band of men to Euphrates to defend himself from Nebuchadnezzar; and when they had joined battle, he was beaten, and lost many ten thousands of his soldiers in the battle. So the king of Babylon”, (Nebuchadnezzar would have been the crown prince at this time and not yet King), “passed over Euphrates, and took Syria, as far as Pelusium, excepting Judea. But when Nebuchadnezzar had already reigned four years, which was the eighth of Jehoiakim’s government over the Hebrews, the King of Babylon made an expedition with mighty forces against the Jews, and required tribute of Jehoiakim, and threatened on his refusal, to make war against him. He was affrightened at this threatening, and bought his peace with money, and brought the tribute he was ordered to bring for three years” (The complete works of Josephus, Translated by William Whiston A.M., Kregel Publications, page 217, Antiquities of the Jews, Chapter 6, verse 1).*

In the Book of Daniel, we read of the first captives that were taken by Nebuchadnezzar in 606 BC. It records,

*“In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the*



*Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god. And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: Unto*

*whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego” (Daniel 1:1-8).*

From this passage in Daniel, we learn several things about Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonians, and the Judean captives. First, we learn that the Babylonians often made captives, especially those that would be serving in the palace, eunuchs. Eunuchs of the ancient Near East were generally men who had been deprived of their manhood, generally through castration. This made them acceptable for tasks in the palace where the King's harem might reside. It is speculated that Daniel and his fellow servants in the palace were made to eunuchs. It might also be theorized that Ezekiel and the captives that were not assigned to the palace were not force to such a horrible act.

We also learn that Nebuchadnezzar was a wise and somewhat teachable man. He was not above the counsel and direction of others, even foreigners. He understood that there was much knowledge in the world outside the realm of Babylon and was not above seeking that knowledge. We learn that many of the Hebrews were taken to the palace to become advisors and counselors to the King.

We learn that the captives were generally well taken care of, relative to what other countries typically did with their prisoners of war. They were fed food from the king's table, meaning that they were given of the finest food and wine available.



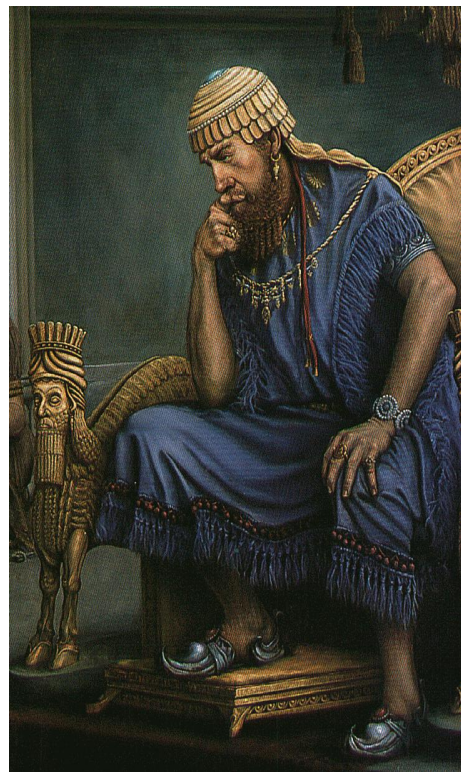
We also learn that it was common practice to rename captives with more common Babylonian names.

After the conquest of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar continued his goal of ousting the Egyptians. In the year 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar II was directing and guiding the Babylonian armies against a very formidable Egyptian army for what many would consider world domination. The Babylonians were battling the Egyptians at the city of Carchemish, in mid August, when Nebuchadnezzar received word that his father had passed away in Babylon. Being as Babylon was 12 to 15 days away by horse (approximately 580 kilometers or 360.5 miles), many speculate that smoke and fire signals were used to convey the crucial message. After receiving the message, the crown prince turned over the nearly completed battle to his captains and headed for home. He took with him only a small company and made for the capital city. Due to Nebuchadnezzar's hasty exit many suppose that he was worried about the stability of the throne. Some have even supposed that Nebuchadnezzar was concerned that his brother was looking to take the throne from him.

Nebuchadnezzar arrived in the city of Babylon to take over the throne of Babylonia on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 605 BC. There is no recorded text that indicates that there was trouble or opposition associated with him ascending the Babylonian throne. He actually ascended the throne on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 605 BC, though some scholars say the date is better placed as September 24<sup>th</sup>, 605 BC.

After Nebuchadnezzar's ascension to the throne it would appear that he removed himself from the battlefield and engaged himself as much more of a governing King, though at times he still applied his formidable skill and talent as a military tactician to further Babylonia's expanding kingdom. His new role changed his focus from just a military general to one of "commander and chief" and economical planner. As such, he increased the entire Empire's defensive strength, with special emphasis on the capital, Babylon. Babylon was beautified and strengthened unlike any time before or after.

Nebuchadnezzar's first years were far from easy. His Kingship was tested as well as his character. They were years of learning. The Book of Daniel is probably the best biblical source for understanding the character of the man Nebuchadnezzar. One story starts in Babylon, in approximately 603 BC, with the prophet Daniel being served food from the King's table. The prince of the eunuchs served Daniel the King's meat and wine, which under Jewish law was defiled and was prohibited for Daniel to eat. Daniel pleaded with the prince that he might not be required to eat so that he might not defile himself. The prince was named Melzar, and had grown to love



**An Artistic Rendition of King Nebuchadnezzar II**

Daniel, but feared the King and did not wish to go against the King's orders and not serve Daniel the appointed food. Daniel said to Melzar, "Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse" (Pulse is classified as peas, grain, barley and such) "to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and



**Daniel refusing Melzar's platter of the King's Food**

the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants" (Daniel 1:12-13). Melzar agreed and fed Daniel and his three cohorts just pulse and water for ten days.

After ten days of eating pulse and water Daniel and his three cohorts "countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse. As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and

Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm" (Daniel 1:14-20). And Daniel lived all his days in the service of the King. In fact, the King gained so much respect for Daniel it is thought that he was appointed Governor over a province. Here we see that the King and his court accepted the ways of the Hebrews and utilized their great knowledge. The King's court even found ways to accommodate the Hebrew religion and people.

Filling Nabopolassar's shoes was an enormous task. Nebuchadnezzar needed to send a clear message to his people that he was indeed a King of royal stature. In 603 BC, Nebuchadnezzar constructed a large golden statue of himself which he erected within the province of Babylon. This was probably done as a sign of his ascension to the throne. Throughout Babylonian records and artifacts from Nebuchadnezzar's reign it is evident that Nebuchadnezzar had somewhat of an ego. This is also evident in the inscriptions

that Nebuchadnezzar had placed into most of the bricks he used in his extensive building program. Of the great statue, the book of Daniel records,

*“Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up” (Daniel 3:1-7).*

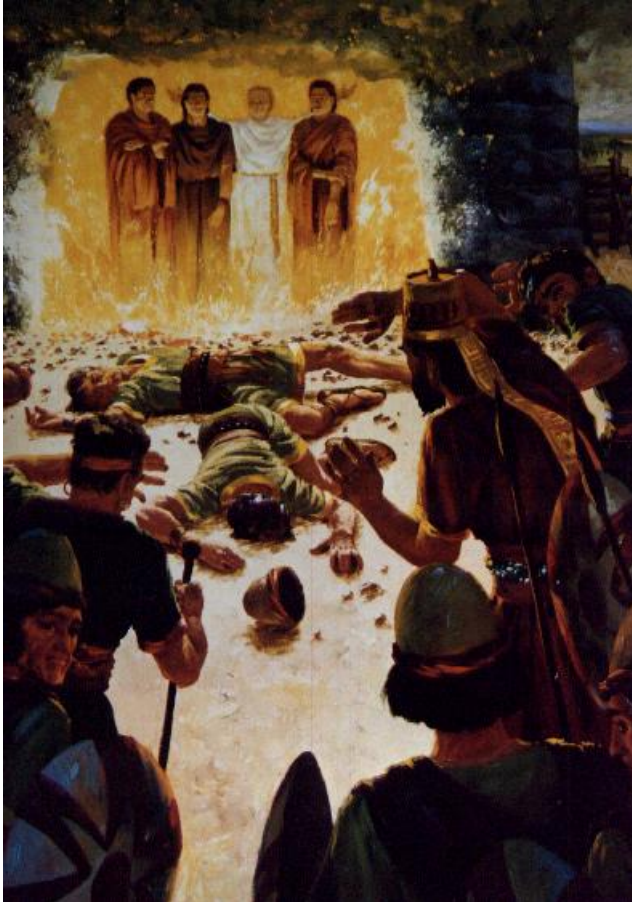
The Biblical accounting of Nebuchadnezzar’s great statue conveys a size of approximately 87½ feet tall and 87½ wide. This enormous statue, reportedly made out of gold (though most probably plated in gold), would have been the size of a nine-story building. If these figures were not exaggerated, it would convey the wealth that the new Empire had acquired in a relatively short amount of time. It is also noteworthy to suggest that Nebuchadnezzar must have developed somewhat of a healthy ego to have not only have created a monstrous statue of himself, but to also have commanded all to worship it.

In custom with past Babylonian kings, one can see that Nebuchadnezzar was placing himself on the same plain as deity. This was a common Babylonian belief, that the king was a God in his own right, and that the people of the Empire should worship him as such.

Another story tells of Daniel’s three friends defying the King’s wishes to worship the large golden statue made by Nebuchadnezzar. The punishment for such defiance was death. Nebuchadnezzar was fond of these three men, and had already come to know of their great wisdom and knowledge as we have just read; however, he was the supreme upholder of the law. Upon hearing the news the King “*commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego*” before him that he might question their reported actions. The three Hebrews stood before the King and he said to them, “*Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute,*



*harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?” Though they feared the King's wrath, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (Daniel 3:8-9).*



**Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego  
in the Fiery Furnace**

*and Abednego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the*

After the three Hebrews answered the King, “Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.” The furnaces in Babylon were used to bake bricks for building. They often reached temperatures of 2000° Fahrenheit. After the furnaces were superheated, Nebuchadnezzar “commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach,

fire. And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon” (Daniel 3:10-30). The Lord had given another powerful witness to the Babylonian King. Even so the King did not significantly change the pattern by which he lived his life.

In approximately 603 BC, “the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar”, the King had a dream that deeply troubled him, in as much as his sleep was disrupted. The dream disturbed him so much that he called his court “magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans” in hopes they could interpret the dream and put his mind at ease.

The King’s interpreters came before the King where they were to be told the details of the King’s dream. Unfortunately, the details of the dream were forgotten by the King, however the troubling of his mind was increasing making the task of interpretation even more challenging. The King, putting his interpreters to the test, told the interpreters, “the thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. But if ye show the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore show me the dream, and the interpretation thereof” (Daniel 2:5-6). The King appears to have had very little confidence in his interpreters’ ability to draw on supernatural powers. It would also appear that he was aware of past situations where the magicians, astrologers, and sorcerers had prophesied falsely so Nebuchadnezzar told the interpreters that they must not only recall his dream and the interpretation thereof, but they were not to be given time to fabricate a story.

Seeing the desperate position that the King had put them in, the interpreters responded to the King by saying, “There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh” (Daniel 2:10-11). The reply of the interpreters questioned the King’s ability and fitness to rule. Questioning the King was a bold and probably desperate move by the powerless interpreters. In an action of anger, the King sent forth a decree that “all the wise men should be slain”. Since Daniel and his comrades were considered part of the Kings council or wise men, they too were to be slain.

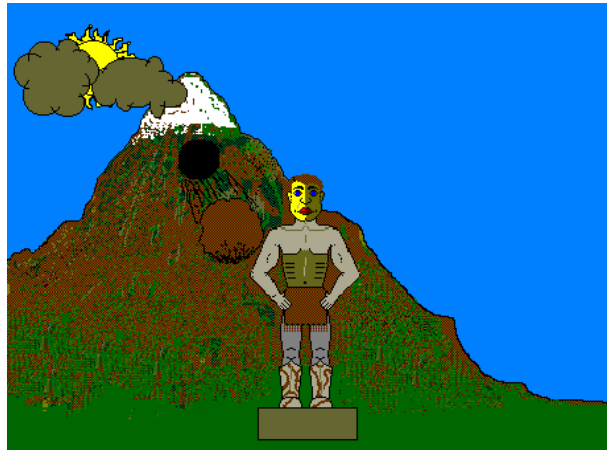
Knowing he and his friends would be killed, Daniel prayed to the Lord for guidance. That night he received a vision that revealed the King’s dream and the interpretation thereof. As Arioch, the captain of the King’s guards, went forth to carry out the King’s decree he came to the prophet Daniel. As he came to Daniel, the Hebrew



asked if he could speak with the King and interpret his dream. The captain brought Daniel before King Nebuchadnezzar and said, *“I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation”* (Daniel 2:25).

King Nebuchadnezzar, probably still greatly troubled by his dream, asked Daniel, *“Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?”* Daniel responded to the King and said, *“The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, show unto the king; But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass. But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart”* (Daniel 2:26-30).






Using the gift of prophecy from the God of Israel, Daniel brought back to memory the vivid image of the dream that the Lord God gave to Nebuchadnezzar. He told the King, *“Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth”* (Daniel 2:31-35).



The King, probably somewhat amazed with Daniel’s ability to recall his dream, waited as Daniel went further by explaining the meaning of the dream. Daniel said, *“Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potter's clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the*

iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure” (Daniel 2:36-45).

Daniel’s interpretation can be further explained in our day since we can look to the past for information about the dream. The King saw a statue who's "form thereof was terrible”. The head was made of pure gold, the shoulders and arms were silver, the abdomen of fine brass, the legs were of iron and the feet were of iron mixed with clay. Each part of the statue represented the progressive leadership of world power. The meanings of the parts of the statue are as follows;

	<p><b>Head of Pure Gold</b></p>	<p>"Thou (<i>Nebuchadnezzar</i>) art this head of Gold" - The nation of Babylon represents the head of Gold. Daniel 2:31</p>
	<p><b>Chest and arms of silver</b></p>	<p>Cyrus united with Medes and Persia to conquer Babylon in 538 BC. They founded the Persian Empire. The Persian Empire represents the chest and arms of silver.</p>
	<p><b>Abdomen of Brass</b></p>	<p>Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire in 334 BC. He was named King of "Macedon" and his people were known as the Greeks.</p>
	<p><b>Legs of Iron</b></p>	<p>Alexander the Great died in 323 BC. There arose no solid empire until approximately 66 BC when the great Roman Empire arose. Like the division of legs, the Roman Empire became divided. It split into the Holy Roman Empire and the Ottoman Empire.</p>
	<p><b>Feet of Clay and Iron</b></p>	<p>After the Roman Empires collapse the countries of Europe and the world divide into many nations. They were strong like iron, but their weakness lied in their division, like iron mixed with clay.</p>

What was the rock that was cut out of a mountain without hands? Well, mountains can symbolize the earth or a nation of the earth, while rocks are usually used in scripture to symbolize the gospel, kingdom, and power of God. For example, *"the rock of my salvation"*, or *"upon this rock I will build my church"*. The fact that the rock was cut without hands would indicate that no human hand could build or accomplish such a feat, but rather the Almighty is responsible for this great event. So, out of the earth, or a nation of the earth, the Lord will bring forth His kingdom. This kingdom will go forth, and destroy the kingdoms of the earth to establish Christ as the King of this earth.

It was evident that Nebuchadnezzar was being shown the end of his Empire, and subsequent Empires until the Kingdom of God ruled the Earth. Such a revelation would have usually angered the great King; however, after the King heard the words Daniel had spoken to him he *"fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him"*. The King, obviously feeling a witness from the spirit of God of the truthfulness of Daniel's words said, *"Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret. Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon. Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king"* (Daniel 46-49).

Nebuchadnezzar's willingness to listen to the prophet of God, and ability to acknowledge the truthfulness of God's word blessed him in his rule. His people fell firmly behind him, and his Empire did prosper.

With his people firmly behind him, Nebuchadnezzar proceeded with his father's master plan. In 601 BC, Nebuchadnezzar directed his forces against his aging foe, Pharaoh Necho and the Egyptians who are recorded to have been advancing into Syria and creating alliances with Israel who was supposedly subject to Babylonia. The Babylonians appear to have been the aggressors, though the outcome cannot be classified in anyone's favor. Both sides suffered tremendous losses, to the point that Nebuchadnezzar was forced to withdraw his forces. The Egyptians, suffering equal losses chose not to pursue the retreating Babylonians.

According to Biblical accountings, King Jehoiakim of Israel, more specifically Judea, was considering an alliance with the Egyptians to protect himself against the rising Babylonian Empire who had already invaded his borders once and currently claimed Judea. The prophet Jeremiah warned the King that forming such an alliance with the Egyptians and terminating the payment of tribute to the Babylonian King would be a grave mistake. Despite the prophet's counsel, the King formed the Egyptian alliance and cut off the tribute that was required by the Babylonians. He was no doubt encouraged by the Babylonian withdrawal in the clash with the Egyptians.

The Judean King's decision to break away from the Babylonian control resulted in a backlash from King Nebuchadnezzar that would cost him his life and the lives of many of his citizens. In the year 598 BC (some would say that the year was 597 BC), the first Babylonian troops arrived at Jerusalem to lay siege to the city and regain Babylonian control. Sometime between their arrival and the arrival of the main Babylonian troops, King Jehoiakim was killed, though Biblical accountings say he was carried captive into

Babylon. The main Babylonian army arrived shortly after to reclaim lost tribute and set order to Jerusalem. The bible records the second Babylonian attack on Jerusalem as follows.

*“Against him”, Jehoiakim, “came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the Lord to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon.” (Quite possibly Marduk’s Temple or the Ziggurat) “...and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead. Jehoiachin was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem: and he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. And when the year was expired, king Nebuchadnezzar sent, and brought him to Babylon, with the goodly vessels of the house of the Lord, and made Zedekiah his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem (2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 36:6-10).”*

Elsewhere in the bible we read of the same accounting as follows.

*“In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and rebelled against him. And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets. Surely at the commandment of the LORD came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did; And also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; which the LORD would not pardon. Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead. And the king of Egypt came not again any more out of his land: for the king of Babylon had taken from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt. Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. And his mother's name was Nehushta, the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done. At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it. And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign. And he carried out thence 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 which Solomon king*

*of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said. And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land. And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, those carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. And all the men of might, even seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths a thousand, all that were strong and apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon. And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah his father's brother king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah. Zedekiah was twenty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah (2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 24:1-18).”*

The Babylonians, most especially King Nebuchadnezzar, had a habit of taking the skilled and knowledgeable citizens of a conquered nation back to Babylon as a fortune of war. Their belief was that the knowledge and skill of these nations was just as valuable to Babylon as the gold and silver that they sacked. Though the number of Judean captives taken to Babylon in many opinions is but an estimate, the fact remains that thousands of skilled and talented individuals were uprooted from Jerusalem and taken to Babylon. It is estimated that after Jehoiakim was killed over 3,000 captives were taken back to Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar placed Jehoiakim's eight-year-old son, Jehoiachin, on the Judean throne. Jehoiachin's reign was short lived. Only three and one-half months after he was placed on the tributary throne, Nebuchadnezzar rethought his decision. Fearing that Jehoiachin might someday revolt against him, Nebuchadnezzar returned to Jerusalem and removed Jehoiachin from the throne. He took Jehoiachin, his mother, his court and over 10,000 educated and skilled Hebrews captive into Babylon. It is estimated that 13,832 Hebrew captives in all were taken to Babylon. Of these captives, Ezekiel was numbered. As the Book of Kings records, the young Hebrew King's wicked uncle Mattaniah, who was renamed Zedekiah by the Babylonians, was placed on the tributary Judean throne as nothing more than a puppet King.

Zedekiah was a wicked man who had no allegiance to the God of Israel nor the Babylonians. His desires were selfish and base. Only a few years after Nebuchadnezzar left, we find that Zedekiah was seeking ways to break free from the Babylonian grip and establish himself as the clear and sole ruler of Judah.

In the year 594 BC, Jerusalem hosted a conference which was a bold and defiant move toward their eventual destruction. The conference has come to be known as the Anti-Babylonian conference. United in their desire to break free from the Babylonians, the countries of Egypt, Syria, Tyre, Judah, and others met to strategize their move toward independence.

Nine years after Babylon's last invasion of Jerusalem, came the great and final siege of the city by the Babylonians. It would seem the Babylonian appointed puppet King of Jerusalem, King Zedekiah, stopped paying tribute to the Babylonians and began to pull away from the Babylonian state. Zedekiah was part of the Anti-Babylonian



congress held in Jerusalem just a few years prior, and obviously felt he could manage a breakaway from the Empire. Shortly thereafter, *“in the ninth year of”* Zedekiah’s *“reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month,”* approximately January 15, 588 BC, *“Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it: and they built forts against it round about”* (2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 25:1).

The Babylonian troops were not met by the Hebrews with open arms, in fact the Hebrews barricaded themselves in the city and prepared themselves to defend the Holy City. The Jewish Historian Flavius Josephus wrote of the siege and said, *“Now the king of Babylon was very intent and earnest upon the siege of Jerusalem; and he erected towers upon great banks of earth, and from them repelled those that stood upon the walls: he also made a great number of such banks round about the whole city, the height of which was equal to those walls. However, those that were within bore the siege with courage and alacrity, for they were not discouraged, either by famine or by the pestilential distemper, but were of cheerful minds in the prosecution of the war, although those miseries within oppressed them also; and they did not suffer themselves to be terrified, either by contrivances of the enemy, or by their engines of war, but contrived still different engines to oppose all the other withal, till indeed there seemed to be an entire struggle between the Babylonians and the people of Jerusalem, who had the greater sagacity and skill; the former party supposing they should be thereby too hard for the other, for the destruction of the city; the latter placing their hopes of deliverance in nothing else but in persevering in such inventions, in opposition to the other, as might demonstrate the enemy’s engines were useless to them; and this siege they endured for eighteen months, until they were destroyed by the famine, and by the darts which the enemy threw at them from the towers”* (The complete works of Josephus, Translated by William Whiston A.M., Kregel Publications, page 219-220, Antiquities of the Jews, Chapter 8, verse 1).

Apparently a huge compliment of Babylonian warriors surrounded Jerusalem and dug in for a long stand off. Since Jerusalem was a very well protected city with high walls and natural protections in the geography, the Babylonians chose to encamp the city rather than try to over run it. The Babylonians pitched tents, built great hills of earth and towers around Jerusalem, and cut off all incoming and outgoing travel to the city. They mounted large catapults and stationed archers to prevent an offensive by the Hebrews as well as any possible exit. This strategy caused a severe *“famine”* to *“prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land”* (2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 25:3).

The famine in Jerusalem was so great that it is said that mothers ate their children for survival, and the people used their own feces for fuel. The conditions in Jerusalem were horrendous. The city had a great stench, and the people were dying in the streets of starvation.

When the city was on the brink of self-destruction, the Babylonians broke through the city wall by night and stormed the city. It was then that Jerusalem’s *“men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between two walls, which is by the king’s garden: (now the Chaldees were against the city round about:) and the king went the way toward the plain. And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered from him. So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgement upon him. And they*

*slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon” (2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 25:4-7).*

It was “*the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon” (2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 25:8)* that the Babylonians took Jerusalem. Using our calendar, the date would be placed on August 12, 587 BC. The siege lasted approximately 574 days, or roughly 18 months.

After the city fell the Babylonians “*burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house” (2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 25:9).* The Babylonians then broke down the rest of the great wall around Jerusalem and carried away anything of worth to Babylon. Even the great “*pillars of brass that were in the house of the LORD, and the bases, and the brazen sea that was in the house of the LORD, did the Chaldees break in pieces, and carried the brass of them to Babylon. And the pots, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered, took they. And the firepans, and the bowls, and such things as were of gold, in gold, and of silver, in silver, the captain of the guard took away” (2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 25:13-15).*

In typical Babylonian tradition, the Babylonians took all of the remaining skilled and educated Hebrews captive to Babylon. This left the destroyed and burned city of Jerusalem desolate. The remaining Hebrews lived in small communities outside the city in tents and debris for several years after the Babylonians left. Jerusalem would not be inhabited or rebuilt in any real scale for years to come. The Babylonians even returned to the ruined city in 582 BC to take an additional 745 captives to feed the intense Babylonian building program.

The wise, educated and skilled manpower from the Hebrew state as well as many other conquered states were forced to help build the Great Babylonian Empire. Nebuchadnezzar devoted much of his reign and resources to the building and beautifying of Babylonia, with special emphasis on the capital city, Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar was responsible for the construction of two of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, “**The Hanging Gardens of Babylon**” and “**the Great Walls of Babylon**”.



As history goes, Nebuchadnezzar had a wife, or concubine, named Amyitis who was raised in Media and longed for the beautiful mountainous terrain of her homeland. Since the city of Babylon was essentially flat, Nebuchadnezzar had the Hanging Gardens built. The Hanging Gardens are described by the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus as he wrote, “*The approach to the Garden sloped like a hillside and the several parts of the structure rose from one another tier on tier...*

*On all this, the earth had been piled... and was thickly planted with trees of every kind that, by their great size and other charm, gave pleasure to the beholder... The water machines raised the water in great abundance from the river, although no one outside could see it” (Source.....).* Nebuchadnezzar actually built a lush mountain for his wife to wake up to each day. The Hanging Gardens were not the end to the amazing

architectural feat accomplished by Nebuchadnezzar. More of Babylon's beauty can be read about in "**Appendix C – The City of Babylon the Great**"

Though the actual date is not known, sometime just before or after the destruction of Jerusalem the Babylonians invaded the country of Tyre. Tyre was a wealthy country off the Mediterranean that had been evaded by large Empires of the past such as Assyria. Not only would Tyre be a prize that would send a message of Babylonia's great strength, but it was a very valuable trading port that would increase the economical strength of the Empire.

The Babylonian siege on Tyre was probably the most taxing military effort in Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Most feel the siege started in 588 BC and lasted for 13 long years until Tyres fell to the Babylonians in 575 BC. The country was said to have fallen but the main governing body of Tyrians and their army retreated to a Tyrian island off the Tyrian coast. Nebuchadnezzar never saw the fall of the highly fortified island. The Tyrians lived safely on the island until finally Alexander the Greek brought down the island decades later.

The Tyrian Island was so fortified that ships had little to no hope of overcoming its defenses, while the ocean provided a natural defense from ground troops. Since the island was relatively close to shore, Alexander finally had his troop take all of the bricks and debris from the Tyrian ruins on the main land and cast them into the ocean. He did this until a land way was made for his troops to march on and subsequently over through the island.

One of the most questioned events that is said to have occurred during Nebuchadnezzar's reign was a supposed seven years of insanity that attacked the king. Many feel Nebuchadnezzar was infected with a nerve condition that lasted for seven years of the king's life. This insanity is said to have occurred from approximately 579 BC to 572 BC, though these dates are at best speculative.

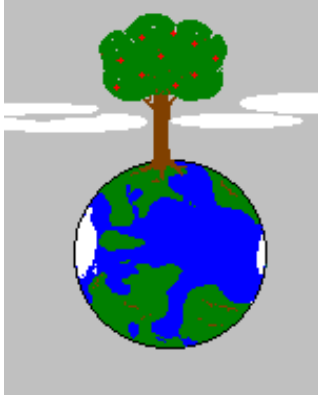
The story of the king's insanity stems from the Book of Daniel. In the fourth chapter of Daniel, we find what appears to be a proclamation from King Nebuchadnezzar "*unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth*" (Daniel 4:1). In this great proclamation, the great King proclaims the might and grandeur of the Hebrew God, the God of Ezekiel, and the God of Daniel. The proclamation is thought to have been made by Nebuchadnezzar after the seven-year period of insanity.

The King goes on to relate an experience that he had. He says, "*I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace: I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me*" (Daniel 4:4-5).

The King was accustomed to receiving dreams from the great God of Daniel, but as he had in the past, he turned to his magicians and soothsayers to interpret the dream. The wise men of his court were told the dream, but having no insight into the realm of heaven they came up empty handed. "*But at the last Daniel came in before*" Nebuchadnezzar, "*whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of*" Nebuchadnezzar's "*god,*" (Bel was another name for Marduk, the patron god of Babylon), "*and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods: and before him I told the dream, saying, 'O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the*

*holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof”* (Daniel 4:8-9).

King Nebuchadnezzar then proceeded to tell Daniel the dream he received of God. He said, *“Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof*



*to the end of all the earth: The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven; He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches:*

*Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth: Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him: and let seven times pass over him. This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men”* (Daniel 4:12-17).



After the relating of the dream by King Nebuchadnezzar to Daniel, the King pleaded to know the meaning or the message that was being sent to him of God. The King, no doubt from past experience, knew that only a prophet of God would be able to give him the interpretation that he so dearly wanted. As testimony to this the King says, *“all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee”* (Daniel 4:18).

Daniel, no doubt knowing the king's temper and anger *“was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him”* (Daniel 4:19). Seeing Daniel's concern and silence, the King assured him that he could speak freely. Daniel prefaced his interpretation to the King by saying that the dream and the interpretation thereof would please the King's enemies.

Daniel proceeds to interpret the dream by saying,

*“The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; Whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto*

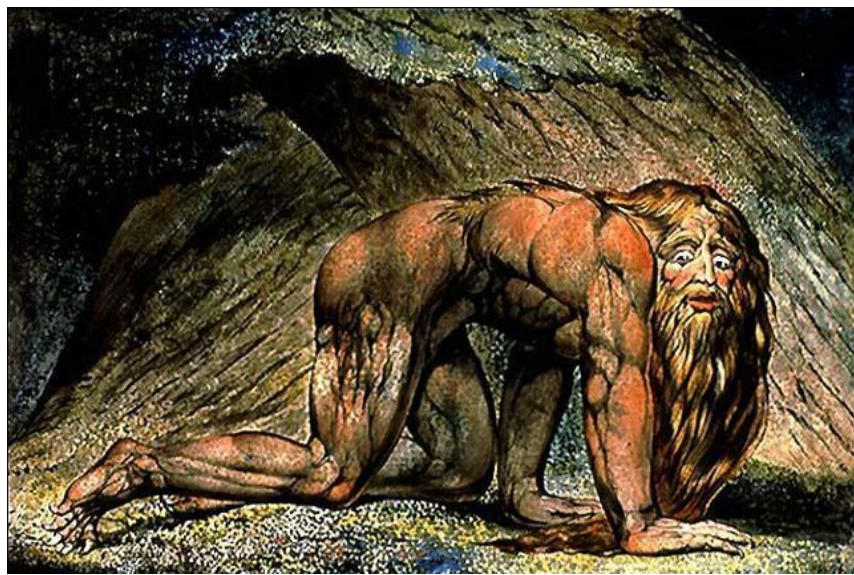


heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth. And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him; This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king: That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule. Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity” (Daniel 4:20-27).

King Nebuchadnezzar was no doubt shaken by the prophet’s interpretation. It would appear that he spent much time questioning and toiling over the devastating prophesy. Apparently some time after the interpretation he was walking in his palace, no doubt marveling over his great Empire, and questioning the words of the prophet. The

King said, ***“Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?”*** (Daniel 4:30). In

reply, a voice from heaven spoke to Nebuchadnezzar saying, ***“O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from***



**Painting of the Cursed Nebuchadnezzar  
By William Blake, 1757-1827 AD**

***men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will”*** (Daniel 4:31-32).

Immediately after the voice of heaven spoke, the prophecy was fulfilled upon the King. ***“He was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with***



*the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws (Daniel 4:33)."*

The accounting in Daniel goes further to say that after a set time Nebuchadnezzar lifted his eyes to see the plague taken from him and his stature restored. The wrath of God had effectively humbled Nebuchadnezzar as it says that he praised and honored the God of Heaven for the remainder of his days. He also wrote this proclamation to his people that they might know the power of the God of Daniel. To his people and us King Nebuchadnezzar leaves some closing advise, *"Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgement: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase"* (Daniel 4:37). It would appear that the God of Israel had successfully shown Nebuchadnezzar his prideful ways and helped him realize that he was nothing without the God of Israel.

Much of King Nebuchadnezzar's later years are unknown. For reasons unknown, we have virtually no ancient texts that record the time period from 587 BC to 562 BC.

The great King Nebuchadnezzar died in the year 562 BC. It is said that he died in the first days of October of causes that are unknown, though we have no reason to believe that they were anything but natural. Some experts place his death somewhat earlier in the year, but no earlier than August and September.

It is interesting that even though Nebuchadnezzar appears to be a renowned and popular king, there is no evidence of a burial in ancient text. This, of course, is probably due to records being lost or destroyed over time. Most feel that his death would have resulted into a great and magnificent burial ceremony and an elaborate gravesite. Though we have no way of knowing at this time, it is speculated that he might have been buried in Uruk since it was a Chaldean custom to be buried in the area where your tribe originated. Other speculation has brought about the theory that he was buried near the Royal Citadel (Nebuchadnezzar's Palace), with his grave overlooking the Great River Euphrates and the fabulous hanging gardens.

A later tradition says that Nebuchadnezzar's son, Evil-Marduk, dug up Nebuchadnezzar's corpse sometime after his burial and disposed of it in a less than respectful fashion. This act was supposedly instigated by the Judean King Jehoiachin who had gained influence with Evil-Marduk. The Judean King was supposedly seeking revenge for Nebuchadnezzar's treatment of his people in the past. Again, this story is far from reliable; however, not entirely unbelievable. The Bible actually gives some limited support to the story. In the Book of Kings we read, *"it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, that Evilmerodach king of Babylon in the year that he began to reign did lift up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah out of prison; And he spake kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon; And changed his prison garments: and he did eat bread continually before him all the days of his life. And his allowance was a continual allowance given him of the king, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life"* (2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 25:28-30).

Nebuchadnezzar's death really was the beginning of the end for the Empire that his father Nabopolassar had started.

In the end, who was the man named Nebuchadnezzar II? What was he like? We don't know much about Nebuchadnezzar's personality other than that what we can

deduce from the few historical texts that we have relating to the events in the pasts that he was involved in. From these few stories the following assumptions can be drawn;

- ☞ Nebuchadnezzar appears to be a teachable man. The Lord and His prophet were able to change Nebuchadnezzar's thinking and actions on many occasions.
- ☞ Nebuchadnezzar appears to have been a skilled city planner. Much of Babylon's beauty and splendor was brought about at his hands.
- ☞ Nebuchadnezzar was a skilled military leader. His military wit and skill expanded the Neo-Babylonian Empire beyond that of the great Assyrian Empire that he preceded.
- ☞ Nebuchadnezzar was a lawgiver and enforcer of justice even if the results didn't please him, which shows great signs of his commitment to justice.
- ☞ Nebuchadnezzar was generally liked by his citizens.
- ☞ Nebuchadnezzar was dreaded by his enemies.
- ☞ Nebuchadnezzar was very religious. He was devoted to deity, unfortunately they were merely idols.
- ☞ Nebuchadnezzar appears to have loved his wife, Amyitis.
- ☞ Nebuchadnezzar was persistent and relentless.
- ☞ Nebuchadnezzar understood the importance of trade, resources, economy and business. This was evident in his efforts to build roads for trade, and strategically placing commerce points.
- ☞ Nebuchadnezzar relied heavily on soothsayers, astrologers, wise men and counselors. He even utilized captured kings and officials as counselors.
- ☞ Nebuchadnezzar appears to have had a kind and just side. At the same time, he had a cruel and merciless side.

## Chronological Table for King Nebuchadnezzar II

Babylonian Event	Year	Date
Phraortes, King of Medes, Attacks Assyria	639 BC	
Phraortes dies in Battle	639 BC	
Cyaxares is made King of Medes	639 BC	
Nebuchadnezzar's birth	630 BC	approximated year
Assyrian King Ashurbanipal dies	627 BC	
Kandalanu, the Assyrian appointed Governor of Babylon dies	627 BC	
Ashur-etil-ilani ascends the Assyrian throne	627 BC	
Sin-shar-ishkun, a son of King Ashurbanipal, proclaims himself King of Babylonia	627 BC	
Sin-shum-lishir, an Assyrian General revolts and retakes Babylon	627 BC	
Sin-shum-lishir is ousted by Sin-shar-ishkun's forces shortly after the revolt	627 BC	
City riots and street battles take place throughout Babylon	626 BC	
It is thought that Ashur-etil-ilani appoints Nabopolassar a Governor of Babylon	626 BC	
Nabopolassar liberates the City of Babylon and claims it for himself	626 BC	November 22/23
Sin-shar-ishkun and his forces flee to Ninevah	626 BC	
Sin-shar-ishkun start Assyrian civil war against Ashur-etil-ilani for the throne	626 BC	
Ashur-etil-ilani killed in battle near Nippur, Sin-shar-ishkun becomes Assyrian King	623 BC	
Sin-shar-ishkun declares war on Nabopolassar	623 BC	
Nebuchadnezzar present, as a youth, when his father started to build the Etemenanki	620 BC	
Ten Tribes leave Assyria to the North	626-12 BC	? between these years ?
Babylonian and the Medians battle Assyria at various locations	623-12 BC	
Nabopolassar besieges Assur but fails	616 BC	April/May
Nabopolassar forms an alliance with the Elamites	616 BC	
Medes invades Assyria and takes Arrapha	615 BC	
Medes takes Assur	614 BC	
The Median King, Cyaxares, meets Nabopolassar and forms an alliance	614 BC	
Sin-shar-ishkun is killed in battle	612 BC	July/August
Ninevah, Assur, and Nimrod fall to the Neo-Babylonian and Median Alliance	612 BC	
Nabopolassar defeats Assyria and establishes the Babylonian Empire	612 BC	
A man named Ashur-uballit assumes the title of Assyrian King and flees to Harran	612 BC	
Egyptians arrive to support the Assyrians who were falling to the Babylonians	611-10 BC	
Babylonian and Median forces march against Assyrian forces at Harran	610 BC	
Harran falls and, with most of the Assyrians fleeing, is never to be heard from again	610 BC	
Nabopolassar is involved in field operations in Harran	610 BC	
With Assyria gone, Egypt takes Syria, Palestine, Israel and the land up to Carcemish	609 BC	
Babylonia takes Riblah from Egypt, it becomes Babylonian Military Headquarters	609 BC	
Nebuchadnezzar was designated as the Crown Prince in Babylonian Writings	607 BC	
Nebuchadnezzar was called up to command his own army	607 BC	
Nebuchadnezzar marches against the mountainous areas, probably east of the Tigris	607 BC	
After Nabopolassar's return to Babylon, The Egyptians laid siege to Kimuhu	606 BC	February
Nabopolassar sends Nebuchadnezzar to besieges Jerusalem, Exiles are taken	606 BC	
Nebuchadnezzar has taken control of all the Babylonian armies	605 BC	
Nebuchadnezzar battles Pharaoh Necho and the Egyptians at Carchemish	605 BC	between 12-16, Aug.
Nebuchadnezzar's Father, Nabopolassar, dies leaving Babylonia to him	605 BC	Mid August
Nebuchadnezzar returns to Babylon to take the Babylonian Throne	605 BC	September 7 <sup>th</sup>

## Chronological Table, Continued

Babylonian Event	Year	Date
Nebuchadnezzar ascends the Throne	605 BC	September 18 or 24
Babylonia besieges Ashkelon	604 BC	
The King of Ashkelon, Aga, is captured in Kislev and taken prisoner to Babylon	604 BC	Nov./Dec.
Daniel and his three friends refuse to eat food from Nebuchadnezzar's Table	603 BC	
Nebuchadnezzar erects a golden statue of himself in Babylon	603 BC	
Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to worship Nebuchadnezzar's Statue	603 BC	
Nebuchadnezzar has the dream of the Rock cut out of the Mountain without hands	603 BC	
Babylonia and Egypt clash resulting in a stalemate with heavy casualties	601 BC	
Nebuchadnezzar eases off his military offenses to refurbish his military	600 BC	Late
Pharaoh Necho dies	600 BC	
Psammetichus II is installed as Pharaoh of Egypt	600 BC	
Psammetichus II launches a failed attack to reclaim Syria from the Babylonians	600 BC	
Nebuchadnezzar has re-built his military and raids central and southern Syria	599 BC	October
Nebuchadnezzar's troops leave Syria to destroy the Arabs of Qedar in the desert	599 BC	
Jehoiakim is killed	598 BC	December 6/7
Nebuchadnezzar sends troops to besiege Jerusalem, Exiles are taken	598 BC	
Zedekiah is placed as a puppet King in Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar	597 BC	March 15/16
Babylon marches against Elam	596/595BC	
Rebellion in Kislev	595/594BC	December/January
Anti-Babylonian congress held in Jerusalem, many countries attended	594 BC*	
Nebuchadnezzar gathers troops in Hattu as a sign of force to the Egyptians	594/593BC	
Nebuchadnezzar is stationed at Riblah	588 BC	
Babylonia besieges Tyre	588 BC*	
Pharaoh Psammetichus II dies	588 BC	
Apries is installed as Pharaoh	588 BC	
Pharaoh Apries captures Gaza	588 BC	
Pharaoh Apries attacks Tyre and Sidon but fails to capture them	588 BC	
Nebuchadnezzar sends troops to besiege Jerusalem	588 BC	January 15
Nebuchadnezzar's troops break through the north wall in Jerusalem	587 BC	August 5
Nebuchadnezzar's army captures Jerusalem and destroys the city	587 BC	August 12*
Nebuzaradan returns to Jerusalem for an additional 745 exiles	582 BC	
Nebuchadnezzar finished the hanging gardens	582 BC	
Nebuchadnezzar dreams of the "Large Tree"	579 BC	Date speculated
Nebuchadnezzar is thought to have started his seven years of madness	579 BC	Date/Event speculated
Tyre falls to the Babylonians	575 BC*	
Nebuchadnezzar's sanity returns	572 BC	Date/Event speculated
Nebuchadnezzar's New Palace, the Southern Citadel is finished	570 BC	
Nebuchadnezzar visits fallen Tyre	564 BC	
Nebuchadnezzar Dies	562 BC	Early October
Evil-Marduk succeeds Nebuchadnezzar as King	562 BC	
Evil-Marduk releases Jehoiachin from Babylonian prison	560 BC	March 24 <sup>th</sup>
Neriglissar succeeds Evil-Marduk on the Throne after he Assassinate him	560 BC	August
Cyrus Conquers Babylonia	539 BC	
Babylonia is disbanded and Babylon is ransacked	539 BC	

\* approximated date, but not speculated