

BEL(TE)SHAZZAR MEETS BELSHAZZAR

WILLIAM H. SHEA
The Biblical Research Institute
Washington, DC 20012

I appreciate Lester L. Grabbe's interest in and response to my previously published article on Nabonidus and Belshazzar.¹ His observations on this subject are welcome, and he takes issue with my presentation at four points of major and minor significance: (1) the death date of Belshazzar, (2) The Hebrew view of the coregency dates in Dan 7:1 and 8:1, (3) the offer to Daniel to become the third ruler in the kingdom, and (4) the identity of the queen mother in the narrative of Dan 5. These issues are discussed in this order.

1. *The Issues*

The Date of Belshazzar's Death

Of Grabbe's four criticisms of my previous study, this is the only one of major significance in terms of evaluating the accuracy of Dan 5 as a historical document. Grabbe maintains that Belshazzar did not die the night that Babylon fell to the Persians, as Dan 5 would indicate. If Grabbe is right concerning this, then the account in Dan 5 is wrong; and if Dan 5 is correct, then Grabbe is wrong. The matter is that straightforward.

In order to advance and support a proposal such as Grabbe's, the obligation rests upon the one proposing it to produce some other, independent, source material to support the case—preferably a primary source or sources, though any credible secondary sources would be admissible. But Grabbe has not produced any such material to indicate that Belshazzar did not die on the night that the book of Daniel indicates.

The nature of the argument produced by Grabbe is, therefore, an argument from silence. If that is the kind of argument that is

¹William H. Shea, "Nabonidus, Belshazzar, and the Book of Daniel: An Update," *AUSS* 20 (1982):133-149.

really going to be used as evidence to indicate when Belshazzar died, then we are going to have to confer immortality upon him, for there is no source extant at all which refers to Belshazzar's death other than the book of Daniel. I for one would have welcomed some new source shedding light upon this episode, but it has not yet been forthcoming. Nor has any reason yet been shown as to why the testimony of Dan 5 on this point should not be taken as accurate. As I pointed out in my previous study, the writer of Dan 5 put his veracity on the line when he pointed out who was and who was not in the palace the night the city of Babylon fell and what happened to the major personage who was there.

But the picture is not quite so neutral as the foregoing remarks might suggest, for we do have testimony also from the Greek historians on certain important aspects of the matter. Xenophon is particularly important, for he indicates that there was a banquet in progress in Babylon the night the city fell, and that a king was killed in the city when that happened (*Cyropaedia* 7.5.26-30). Herodotus corroborates the point about the banquet, but does not mention the death of a king (*Histories* 1.193). Thus we are not dealing with only two poles around this story—the biblical and the cuneiform—as I discussed in my previous study. It actually is a three-cornered picture, with the Greek historians joining in with those two other sources.

Once again, the nature of this relationship among the sources is harmonious and complementary. Daniel, Xenophon, and Herodotus all indicate that a banquet was in progress the night that the city fell to the Persians; Daniel and Xenophon indicate that a king died there that night; and Daniel supplies the name of that king. The cuneiform Nabonidus Chronicle, in turn, complements Daniel's testimony by indicating why the other king, Nabonidus, was not in the city that night. Except for a footnote reference to Xenophon (n. 13), Grabbe has not challenged the accuracy of the Greek historians nor of the Babylonian Chronicle on these points, so it remains questionable as to just why Dan 5 should be challenged.

Hebrew Dates for the Babylonian Coregency

The matter of the Hebrew dates for a Babylonian coregency between Nabonidus and Belshazzar is a point of considerably less importance, for it is clear, whatever one does with them, that Dan 7:1 and 8:1 indicate that the writer was aware of the coregency

arrangement in effect between Nabonidus and Belshazzar. Grabbe does not dispute that there was such an arrangement in effect, he simply does not like my political evaluation of the nature of the arrangement. Let me simply review in brief the points that I made in support of my proposal. First, it is clear from the cuneiform sources that some sort of a regency arrangement existed between these two individuals for a period of ten years. Second, the eastern Babylonians did not ordinarily employ the political relationship of coregency, while the western kings of Judah did so, according to the best chronological reconstruction for the dates of their reigns.² Third, the Jews in Babylonian exile continued to date according to their own native Judahite system, as witnessed by all of the dates in Ezekiel and also the dates found in Neh 1 and 2. These three propositions still add up to support the reasonableness of the proposal which I advanced in this regard, and Grabbe has not provided any evidence to weaken these supports for that proposal.

If Grabbe does not accept my own theory about how this coregency operated, he now has another alternative to consider—the one which has recently been proposed by A. R. Millard on the basis of Millard's work with the bilingual (Aramaic-Akkadian) inscription from Tell Fekheriyah.³ In the Assyrian version of this text the principal person involved is referred to only as a "governor," while in the Aramaic part of the text he is referred to as "king" (*mlk*). Millard's explanation is as follows:

Each inscription was aimed at a different audience, the Assyrian version to the overlords, and the Aramaic version to the local people. What to the Assyrian-speaking overlords was the governor was to the local Aramaic-speaking population the equivalent of king. . . . In the light of the Babylonian sources and of the new texts of this statue, it may have been considered quite in order for such unofficial records as the Book of Daniel to call

²For the classical presentation of coregencies in the chronology of the Hebrew kings, see Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, MI, 1965). Thiele's proposal on this point continues to gain ever more widespread acceptance. For the most recent example of this—the utilization of coregencies to solve the difficulties in Israelite chronology for the period of the kings—see N. Na²aman, "Historical and Chronological Notes on the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah in the Eighth Century B.C.," *VT* 31 (1986):71-90.

³A. R. Millard and P. Bordreuil, "A Statue from Syria with Assyrian and Aramaic Inscriptions," *BA* 45 (1982):135-141.

Belshazzar “king.” He acted as king, his father’s agent, although he may not have been legally king.⁴

The Third Position in the Kingdom Offered to Daniel

I still stand behind the position which I advocated in my previous article concerning the position that Daniel was offered according to the record of Dan 5—namely, that Daniel really was offered the position of “third” importance in the kingdom, coming behind only Nabonidus and Belshazzar in this regard. I would have hoped that Grabbe would have discussed the linguistic merits of this case pro and con, but he has not.

Aside from the linguistic factor, however, there is also the context of the situation in which Daniel is depicted. In Babylon a *šalšu* officer was a “third”-rank official. In terms of the story told in Daniel, this would be a rather minor appointment made for a very important service to the king—mediation on his behalf in the realm of the gods. One would expect that Daniel would have been rewarded in a manner commensurate with the task which he performed for the king. The third position in the kingdom would have been considerably more appropriate a reward for such a service than his appointment to the rank of *šalšu* officer.

It might also be noted that Millard, in his recent discussion of the subject of Belshazzar in Daniel and history, has also held to the interpretation that what was offered to Daniel was the position of “third” ruler in the kingdom, not the position of a “third”-rank official in the Babylonian government. “If Belshazzar was king, why couldn’t Daniel become second to him, as Joseph had become second to Pharaoh in Egypt (Gen 41:40,44)? The answer may be that Belshazzar was himself the second ruler in the kingdom. If Belshazzar’s father, Nabonidus, was actually king, then Belshazzar was second to him. Thus Belshazzar could offer only third place to Daniel.”⁵

The Identity of the Queen Mother in Dan 5

Grabbe exaggerates the importance which I attach to the identity of the queen mother in the story. In actuality, this point is

⁴A. R. Millard, “Daniel and Belshazzar in History,” *BARev* 11 (1985):77.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 78.

quite peripheral and insignificant to the central subject matter in my article. If Grabbe has a better candidate for this individual's identification, then so much the better.

2. *A More Central Issue*

I am somewhat disappointed that Grabbe has not undertaken an evaluation of the more important and central matter in my previous study, i.e., how well Dan 5 and the Nabonidus Chronicle concur in terms of identifying who was and who was not in the palace the night the city of Babylon fell to the Persians. How did the writer of Dan 5 know that Belshazzar, a very obscure figure historically, was present in the palace that night, while Nabonidus, the far better-known figure historically, was not?

The Nabonidus Chronicle, a text essentially contemporary with these events, gives a clear explanation of who was where and why. Among extant ancient sources, only Dan 5 ranks alongside the Chronicle in terms of accurate knowledge of these events in this detail. The most ready explanation for this accuracy is that the information has come down to us through the words of a contemporary or first-hand witness to them, which is what Dan 5 depicts Daniel as being.

Before we turn to consider some new primary sources which bear upon this episode, the general relationship of theology to history may be noted as a fitting conclusion to this section of the study. Grabbe sees Dan 5 as "unhistorical theologizing," thus cutting the narrative's theological point loose from any concrete historical mooring. Aside from the issue of historicity that has already been addressed, I prefer to see a more directly integrated and complementary relationship between theology and history. Obviously, the theological point which the writer has made in Dan 5 carries more validity if the event serving as the basis for that theological point actually did happen. A broad parallel may be drawn here with the event and theology of the Exodus. The OT view of God as the Redeemer and Deliverer of Israel would have considerably less validity if Israel did not actually leave Egypt in Mosaic times. It might also be noted in passing that Grabbe has taken a rather unkind cut at OT theologians, ancient and modern, through his pejorative use of the term "theologizing."

3. *Illumination Through Further Ancient Texts*

Since Grabbe has not introduced any new primary sources into this discussion, I would like to introduce two. One of these was published more than half a century ago and the other was published a quarter of a century ago. They both mention a "Belshazzar," but in quite a different context from any of the references to Nabonidus' son in Dan 5, 7:1, and 8:1. The unusual nature of these two texts requires that a number of preliminary points need to be made in order to evaluate their potential significance for the book of Daniel.

Distribution of the Name "Beltshazzar" in the Book of Daniel

Upon arrival in Babylon, Daniel and his three friends were given Babylonian names (Dan 1:7). These names occur occasionally thereafter throughout the rest of the book up to Dan 10:1, where the last mention of Daniel's own Babylonian name is given. In general, these Babylonian names occur mainly in narratives where direct dialogue or direct interaction with Babylonian officials or Babylonian kings is involved. The names of Daniel's three friends, for example, occur thirteen times in the narrative of Dan 3. In eight of these instances they are either quoted from Nebuchadnezzar or described in terms of his actions towards the persons bearing the names. In two more instances the actions or words of Babylonian officials employ these names. In only three cases does the use of the names involve words or actions for which the Hebrews themselves were responsible, and these are naturally found in the context of the other ten Babylonian uses in the chapter.

This usage may be contrasted with the use in Dan 2 of the Hebrew names of the same individuals. When Daniel came home to have prayer with his friends about the king's dream, their Hebrew names are employed (2:17). However, at the end of the chapter, in the account of Nebuchadnezzar's appointing Daniel's three colleagues to their offices, their Babylonian names are again used (2:49).

The same pattern also holds true with respect to the use of Daniel's own Hebrew and Babylonian names. The Hebrew name of Daniel occurs 72 times in the book, while his Babylonian name of Beltshazzar occurs only 10 times. The following is the pattern of these occurrences:

Chapter	Hebrew, "Daniel"	Babylonian, "Belteshazzar"
	Occurrences	Occurrences
1	10	1
2	17	1
4	2	6
5	6	1
6	20	0
7	4	0
8	3	0
9	2	0
10	5	1
12	3	0

With the exception of the first and the last references to Belteshazzar, all occurrences of the use of this name can be explained in terms of the principle of direct dialogue with a Babylonian. An official uses this name in Dan 2:26, Nebuchadnezzar himself uses it in Dan 4, and Belshazzar's queen or queen mother uses it in Dan 5. Dan 1:7 explains how Daniel came to bear this name, and the occurrence in 10:1 forms an *inclusio* around the book as a whole, in combination with that initial reference in 1:7.

Thus, the principle involved in the book of Daniel for both Daniel and his three friends is that there is a distinct inclination to use their Hebrew names, except where strictly required by a Babylonian setting or by direct dialogue with a Babylonian personage. The writer of the book appears to have had a personal aversion to the use of their Babylonian names unless it was absolutely necessary for the narrative in context.

The use of Daniel's Babylonian name occurs most frequently in Dan 4 because Daniel was involved there in a personal dialogue with Nebuchadnezzar about the contents of the king's second prophetic dream. The name of Belteshazzar comes quite naturally from Nebuchadnezzar's lips. The case in Dan 5, however, is quite different. In this narrative, Daniel's Hebrew name is used six times, but his Babylonian name is used only once. It is especially striking that Belshazzar himself never takes Daniel's Babylonian name upon his lips. It is the queen mother who mentions it the one time it occurs (5:12). This stands in direct contrast with the preceding chapter, where Nebuchadnezzar took the name of Belteshazzar upon his lips quite freely (4:8, 9, 18, 19 [three times]).

In Dan 5 it appears to be Belshazzar, rather than Daniel, who had an aversion to the use of the name Belteshazzar. Why so? One possible answer stems from the simple observation that the two names look very much alike. I would like to suggest that they did not just look alike, but that they were actually the same. If the Hebrew wise man who stood before Belshazzar bore the same name as the king himself, it would have been natural for the king to have been reticent to have used his own name for him.

The Nature of the Babylonian Name "Belteshazzar"

A study of the name "Belteshazzar" can be approached through two main avenues: (a) by paralleling it with what happened to the Babylonian names of Daniel's three friends, and (b) on the basis of an analysis of the name itself. In the first of these approaches, we find that it is the Babylonian name of Daniel's friend Azariah, Abed-Nego, which appears to provide the best parallel for what may have happened in the case of the name Belteshazzar. In an earlier study on Dan 3 I examined the names of Daniel's friends.⁶ The Babylonian names of Shadrach and Meshach are difficult to analyze, but the name of Abed-Nego submits to analysis quite readily. Abed or *'ebed* is the West-Semitic word for "servant," which can be translated into Old Babylonian as *wardum* and into Neo-Babylonian as *ardu*. The latter is the word found in the Babylonian "Servant-of-X" type of name in the sixth century B.C.

In this "Servant-of-X" kind of name, the word for "servant" was followed by the name of a god. Thus Nego should be the name of a Babylonian god, but no such god is known in the Neo-Babylonian pantheon. Once it is recognized, however, that a slight shift has taken place in the way a Babylonian god's name was written here, as compared with its normal form, the *gimmel* in the name Nego can be corrected to a *beth* (the preceding letter in the alphabet), yielding the well-known god name of Nebo/Nabu. The reason for this slight shift appears to have been a deliberate

⁶William H. Shea, "Daniel 3: Extra-Biblical Texts and the Convocation on the Plain of Dura," *AUSS* 20 (1982):29-51. See especially pp. 46-50 for the treatment of the names of the three Hebrews. This is not meant to suggest, incidentally, that there were no other persons named Ardi-Nabu in Neo-Babylonian times. On the contrary, the name probably was fairly popular in that period. For some examples, see R. H. Sack, *Amel-Marduk 562-560 B.C.* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1972), p. 128, s.v. "Arad-Nabu."

attempt to corrupt the name of the Babylonian god found in Azariah's Babylonian name. The use of a Babylonian god's name for a Hebrew worshipper of Yahweh appears to have been unacceptable to the writer of Daniel, and hence this minor corruption was introduced into the name.

If this was done in the case of the name of Abed-Nego, then one might suspect that it may have happened in the case of Daniel's Babylonian name too. Thus this name requires a closer scrutiny. When the name Belteshazzar is examined in detail, one can readily see that something is wrong with it. The latter two elements in that name, *šar-ušur*, "protect the king," are the same as those found in the name of Belshazzar, and there is no problem with them. The problem in the name of Belteshazzar has to do with the divine element that precedes the final two elements. More specifically, the problem here has to do with the last consonant in this purported divine name. If it were Bel, that would be quite acceptable as the use of a common epithet meaning "lord" for Marduk, the city and national god of Babylon. Or if it had been written *blt* for Belit, that would also be acceptable as an epithet commonly used for goddesses. But neither of these is the way in which this divine element occurs here.

This element in the name of Belteshazzar in the book of Daniel was written with a *ṭeth*: thus, *blṭ*. No god is known by this name, nor do we have any evidence of it as a title from Neo-Babylonian times. Thus something is definitely wrong with this name. It could have been written with the verb *balaṭu*, and that would have been acceptable Babylonian,⁷ but then it would not have contained a divine element.

A divine element is mandatory here, according to Dan 4:8, where Nebuchadnezzar refers to Daniel as "he who was named Belteshazzar after the name of my god." While the name of the god Nabu is contained within Nebuchadnezzar's own name, the particular god to whom the king was especially devoted appears to have been Marduk, according to the evidence of his inscriptions. For instance, the Istanbul Prism, which was discussed in my earlier

⁷As a noun, the Akkadian word *balaṭu* refers to such things as "life, vigor, good health." As a verb, it can mean actions like "to get well, recover, be vigorous, in full health, stay alive, escape, heal, provide with food, keep alive." In personal names, it is used to predicate actions of the gods who are named in those personal names. *The Assyrian Dictionary*, ed. A. L. Oppenheim, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1965), 2:46-63.

study on Dan 3, spends three columns of its text on Nebuchadnezzar's devotion to Marduk, and only two columns on the long list of kings and officials whom he appointed or confirmed.⁸

For Daniel to have been named according to the name of Nebuchadnezzar's god Marduk, he could very well have been named with the divine element of Bel, but this does not fit at all with any name or verbal element based upon the root *blt*. Again, we can only conclude that there is something definitely wrong with Daniel's Babylonian name of Belteshazzar, and it looks very much as if it is a corruption of "Belshazzar," the same name as that borne by the son of Nabonidus at the end of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. What appears to have happened is that a perfectly good Babylonian god name, Bel (-Marduk), has been contaminated by the insertion of a nonsense letter, just as the name of Nabu in Abed-Nabu was corrupted by moving the second letter in the divine name one letter further along in the alphabet. The two names have undergone a similar distortion.

Two Special Belshazzar Texts

This analysis of Daniel's Babylonian name would not be particularly helpful unless there were some new texts to examine for a connection with it. Two such texts are now available. The first of these, in the Yale Babylonian Collection (YBC 3765) and published by R. P. Dougherty in 1929,⁹ is the earliest tablet dated to the accession year of the reign of Neriglissar, the second king in succession from Nebuchadnezzar. The other tablet, in the Archaeological Museum of Florence (no. 135) and published by K. Oberhuber in 1960,¹⁰ is dated toward the end of the reign of Amel-Marduk, Nebuchadnezzar's son and immediate successor. Hence, the more recently published tablet is the one of earlier date.

The Tablet from Neriglissar's Reign. The Yale tablet from Neriglissar's reign is a rather ordinary document. Dougherty has translated the body of the text as follows:

⁸E. Unger, *Babylon, die heilige Stadt nach der Beschreibung der Babylonier* (Berlin, 1931), pp. 282-294. Cf. also *ANET*, pp. 307-308.

⁹R. P. Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, Yale Oriental Series, vol. 15 (New Haven, CT, 1929), pp. 67-70.

¹⁰K. Oberhuber, *Sumerische und Akkadische Keilschriftdenkmäler des Archäologischen Museums zu Florenz*, Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Kulturwissenschaft, Supplement 8 (Innsbruck, 1960), p. 95, no. 135.

(As to) one mina (and) seventeen shekels of silver, which are in one shekel pieces, belonging to Belshazzar (Bel-šar-ušur), the chief officer of the king (*amelšaqu šarri*), (charged) against Rimut, the son of Enlil-kidinnu, the silver which is from Nergal-danu, the son of Mukin-zer, for the road, whatsoever he shall gain upon it, half of the profit he shall share with Nergal-danu.¹¹

Dougherty's description of the economic transaction involved is that it relates "to money belonging to Belshazzar, the chief officer of the king. The money was at the disposal of Nergal-danu, who lent it to Rimut in order that the latter might engage in some profitable enterprise, with the stipulation that half of the gain should be paid to the former."¹²

The transaction recorded is not particularly significant for us here, but the presence of the name of Belshazzar and his identification by office are important items for us to notice. Since this Belshazzar is not identified by patronym, as the other two individuals in the text are, Dougherty notes that "there is, therefore, no registered proof, from the documents now at our disposal, that the Belshazzar who was a chief officer of the king in the time of Neriglissar was the son of Nabonidus and hence the Biblical Belshazzar."¹³ He goes on to propose, however, that "the facts are strongly in favor of such an identification" and that such a conclusion is "extremely probable."

I would suggest that this identification is not nearly so secure as Dougherty held. As far as the career of Nabonidus' Belshazzar is concerned, it appears somewhat out of place. When his father became king, he in turn became the crown prince. Then when his father left for Tema in Arabia, he became regent of the city and country of Babylon. This course follows a natural development, but to find him as a high officer of a king two reigns before his father came to the throne (the reigns of Neriglissar and Labashi-Marduk) may be promoting him before his time. (As we shall see in discussing the second tablet, this Belshazzar had been in favor during the reign of Neriglissar's predecessor, Amel-Marduk.) At the very least, one would have expected the father, Nabonidus, to have been promoted to such a post before the son, Belshazzar. The social

¹¹Dougherty, pp. 57-68.

¹²Ibid., p. 68.

¹³Ibid.

and political affiliations of those earlier settings were different, as is witnessed to by the fact that both Amel-Marduk and Labashi-Marduk died by assassination. There is a very good possibility, therefore, that the Belshazzar who was *šaqu šarri* during the accession year of Neriglissar was not the Belshazzar who was promoted by his own father when the latter became king.

The Tablet from Amel-Marduk's Reign. The second tablet which mentions this same Belshazzar comes, as we have already noticed, from late in the reign of Amel-Marduk. The name of the month in its dateline is damaged, but since the year is Amel-Marduk's second regnal year, the tablet must date sometime between April and August of 560 B.C.

Once again, this Belshazzar is identified only by his title, and it corresponds to the post which he still held at the very beginning of the reign of Neriglissar—namely, *šaqu šarri*. In his review of the publication of the Florence tablets, J. Brinkman referred to this tablet as containing the earliest known reference to the son of Nabonidus.¹⁴ From the observations made above concerning the Yale tablet published by Dougherty, it can be seen that this further, even earlier, exceptional tablet can also be taken as having reference to another Belshazzar who was not the son of Nabonidus.

The Historical Setting

On the basis of the two texts discussed above, it is thus probable that another Belshazzar besides the son of Nabonidus can be identified as a resident in Babylonia during the first half of the sixth century B.C. This individual occupied the important post of *šaqu šarri* in the second year of Amel-Marduk. Amel-Marduk came to the throne in October of 562 B.C., when his father Nebuchadnezzar died. He was assassinated by his brother-in-law Neriglissar in August of 560 B.C. Amel-Marduk is known as Evil-Merodach in the Bible, and 2 Kgs 25:27 indicates that he was especially kind to Jehoiachin, the exiled king of Judah. On XII/27 of the 37th year of Jehoiachin's captivity—probably April 2, 561 B.C.¹⁵—the exiled

¹⁴J. Brinkman, "Neo-Babylonian Tablets in the Florence Museum," *JNES* 25 (1966):202-209. See especially pp. 202-203 for a discussion of this tablet.

¹⁵This date is that of Thiele, p. 172. It is interesting to note in this connection that not only could Jehoiachin's release have been influenced by the Babylonian custom of *mišarum*, but it could also have been influenced by the Hebrew custom of

Hebrew monarch was released from house-arrest by Amel-Marduk, who then elevated him and honored him above all of the other kings who were captive in Babylon.

In my earlier study on Dan 3, I suggested a reason for this kind attitude towards the king of Judah.¹⁶ It may well have resulted from the influence which Abed-Nego had upon Amel-Marduk, while working as the latter's secretary during the years that Amel-Marduk was crown prince. This was the post to which Nebuchadnezzar assigned a man named Ardi-Nabu, according to the Istanbul Prism. Given the translation of the word for "servant" in this name, and given the alteration in its divine name proposed above, the Babylonian name of Ardi-Nabu can be equated directly with the name of Abed-Nego in Daniel. If these two names are equivalent, then this person who served the crown prince could well have been Daniel's friend.

Abed-Nego/Ardi-Nabu was not just an exiled Judahite, he was also a faithful Yahwist. This was already apparent from his part in the episode described in Dan 3. Given the strength of character that he demonstrated on that occasion, it would have been natural for him to have exercised a beneficial influence upon Amel-Marduk while serving him. If the faithful service that Ardi-Nabu/Abed-Nego rendered to Amel-Marduk contributed to a helpful outcome in the case of Jehoiachin, it would not have been surprising that Amel-Marduk might have been interested in having other Judahites serve in his administration. Daniel had previously held a high position in the government of his father, Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 2:48). Thus, Daniel would have been a logical candidate for such an appointment.

It is in this context that we find a Belshazzar who came to be the *šaqu šarri* of Amel-Marduk in the second year of his reign. The name "Belteshazzar," which is the form in which Daniel's Babylonian name was written in the book of Daniel, probably was derived from an original "Belshazzar." It underwent the modification described above because of Daniel's distaste for the name of the

the sabbatical year and the release of the slaves at that time, for 562/561 fall-to-fall was a sabbatical year according to its alignment with the post-exilic sabbatical years that are known from Greco-Roman sources. For such dates and tables, see Ben Zion Wacholder, "The Calendar of Sabbatical Cycles During the Second Temple and Early Rabbinic Period," *HUCA* 44 (1973):153-196.

¹⁶See my article mentioned above in n. 6.

Babylonian god in the personal name assigned to him. For the Babylonian public, however, Daniel carried the same name of "Belshazzar" as did the person who rose to this important position under Amel-Marduk. Since Amel-Marduk already had another Judahite in his service (Ardi-Nabu/Abed-Nego), and since he had expressed favor on behalf of the captive king of Judah (Jehoiachin), it is reasonable to suggest that Daniel, another Judahite, be identified as the Belshazzar elevated to this high post.

The second of the two texts discussed above which mentions this Belshazzar is, as we have observed, the earliest of the texts dated to the accession year of Neriglissar, the successor of Amel-Marduk. This Belshazzar is then heard of no more after that. Since the transition between these two kings took place by assassination, it is unlikely that the latter would have retained for very long the high officials of the former. It is probable, therefore, that Belshazzar was removed from office early in Neriglissar's reign.

From this proposal to identify Belshazzar, the *šaqu šarri* of Amel-Marduk, with Bel(te)shazzar of the book of Daniel, it can be seen that Daniel probably occupied, albeit briefly, yet another political post in the Neo-Babylonian government that is not reported in the book of Daniel.

Conclusion

To interpret the symbolic prophecies in the apocalyptic sections of Daniel correctly, their symbols need to be analyzed and decoded. A similar task must be carried out when an analysis of the Babylonian names given to Daniel and his three friends is undertaken. The principle that appears to have operated here is that the writer found it unacceptable to use the names for Babylonian gods in the personal names of the exiles from Judah who worshipped Yahweh. When he came to write them down in his scroll, therefore, he tampered with those Babylonian divine elements, altering them in ways ever so slight, but still sufficiently significant to change their content and meaning.

In analyzing these names from that point of view, we can see that the name of the god Nabu/Nebo in Abed-Nego was altered simply by shifting one letter in it. The name of Bel in Belshazzar was also altered simply by adding one letter to it—a letter which turned the name into a word having no connection with any Babylonian god. The author of the book was free to do this when

he wrote his own literary composition. When he participated in the public life of Babylon as a civil servant, however, it was necessary that his original and unmodified Babylonian name be used in the cuneiform records written about his activities.

This principle of alteration of the divine element in the Babylonian names given to the four Hebrew exiles in Daniel opens up a new avenue through which to identify these persons as they functioned in the Babylonian society of their time. In a previous study, I identified Abed-Nego as serving in the capacity of secretary to the crown prince Amel-Marduk. Now, in this study, I have added the proposal that Daniel himself can be identified as serving the same individual in an official capacity after Amel-Marduk became king.

Moreover, the historical developments which were in progress when the two afore-mentioned extra-biblical occurrences of the name Belshazzar were written down in their respective cuneiform sources provide a brief juncture in Neo Babylonian history in which conditions were favorable for the appointment of a Judahite like Daniel to the post mentioned with this name—i.e., Amel-Marduk's *šaqu šarri*. The proposal of this study is, thus, that two extrabiblical references to Daniel by his original Babylonian name of Belshazzar have now been found in cuneiform sources that date to 560 B.C. These may therefore be taken as contemporary references to the biblical Daniel while he was personally active in Babylon.