

(I) ["Servant, listen to me."] "Yes, master, yes." ["Quickly, get me] a chariot and hitch it up so that I can drive to the palace." ["Drive, master, drive . . .] . . . will be for you; [. . .] will show favor to you." (5) ["No, servant,] I will not drive to the palace." ["Do not drive], master, do not drive. [. . .] . . . will send you [. . .] and will make you take a [road] that you do not know; he will make you suffer agony [day and] night."

(II) (10) "Servant, [listen] to me." "Yes, master, yes." "Quickly, [get] me water (to wash) my hands and give it to me so that I can dine." "Dine, master, dine. Continual dining expands the mind. [. . .] is his god's food; Shamash accompanies (the one with) washed hands." "No, [servant,] I will not dine." (15) "Do not dine, master, do not dine. To become hungry (and then) to eat, to become thirsty (and then) to drink is best for man."¹

(III) "Servant, listen to me." "Yes, master, yes." "Quickly, get me a chariot and hitch it up so that I can drive to the open country." "Drive, master, drive. A hunter² gets his belly filled. (20) The hunting dogs³ will break the bones (of the prey), the hunter's *falcon* will alight, the fleeting wild ass will get its fill in the [open country]."⁴ "No, servant, I will not [drive] to the open country." "Do not drive, master, do not drive. (25) The hunter's idea changes; the hunting dog's teeth will get broken, the home of the hunter's *falcon* is in the [. . .] of the wall of his house and the habitat of the fleeting wild ass is the steppe."

(IV) "Servant, listen [to me." "Yes, master, yes." (30) "I am going to set up a [household and have] children." "Do have some, [master], do have some. [The man who sets] up a household . . . [. . .] [. . .] . . . a door called 'The Snare.' [. . .] . . . robust, two-thirds a weakling." "[. . .] I will burn, go and return. (35) I shall wait for my adversary (in a legal case)." "So wait, master, wait." "So, so, I will set up a household." "Do not establish a household. One who does this breaks up his father's household."

(V) "Servant, listen to me." "Yes, master, yes." (40) "I will do something dishonest." "So, do, do. Unless you do something dishonest, where will your clothing come from? Who will give you something to fill your belly?" "No, servant, I shall not do anything dishonest." "The man who does something dishonest is either killed or flayed, (45) either has his eyes put out, or is captured, or is imprisoned."

(VI) "Servant, listen to me." "Yes, master, yes." "I am going to make love to a woman." "So make love, master, make love. The man who makes love to a woman forgets

sorrow and worry." "No, servant, I will not make love to a woman." (50) ["Do not] make love, master, do not make love. A woman is a pitfall, a hole, a ditch, a woman is a sharp iron dagger that slits a man's throat."

(VII) "Servant, listen to me." "Yes, master, yes." "Quickly, get me water (to wash) my hands, please, (55) so I can sacrifice to my god." "Sacrifice, master, sacrifice. The mind of the man who sacrifices to his god is at ease. He is making loan upon loan." "No, servant, I will not sacrifice to my god." "Do not sacrifice, master, do not sacrifice. (60) You get your god to follow you about like a dog, whether he wants you to perform rites or (says) 'Do not consult your god,' or anything else."

(VIII) "Servant, listen to me." "Yes, master, yes." "I am going to make loans." "So, make loans, master, [make loans]. The man who makes loans—his grain remains his grain and the interest is in addition." (65) "No, servant, I will not make loans." "Do not make loans, master, do not make loans. Making loans is as [easy] as making love, but repaying them is as hard as bearing a child.⁵ They will use up your loan⁶ and keep complaining about you without stopping and will make you lose your interest as well."

(IX) (70) "Servant, listen to me." "Yes, master, yes." "I will do a good deed for my country." "So do, master, do. The man who does a good deed for his country has his good deeds put in the . . . of Marduk." "No, servant, I will not do a good deed for my country." (75) "Do not do it, master, do not do it. Go up to the ancient ruin heaps and walk around; look at the skulls of the lowly and the great. Which belongs to someone who did evil and which to someone who did good?"

(X) "Servant, listen to me." "Yes, master, yes." "Then what is good?" "To have my neck and yours broken and to be thrown into the river. Who is so tall that he can reach to the heavens? Who is so broad that he can encompass the underworld?" "No, servant, I will kill you and let you go first." "Then (I swear that) my master will not outlive me by even three days."

THE BABYLONIAN THEODICY

Text and translation: Lambert, *BWL*, pp. 63-91. Modern understanding of this poem is due in large measure to the penetrating study of B. Landsberger, *ZA*, XLIII, pp. 32-76.

The Theodicy is an acrostic poem of twenty-seven stanzas of eleven lines each, not all of which are preserved, and takes the form of a dialogue. The acrostic reads: *a-na-ku sa-ag-gi-il-ki-[i-na-am-u]b-bi-ib ma-áš-ma-šu řa-ri-bu řa i-li ú řar-ri*, "I Saggil-kīnam-ubbi, the exorcist, am an adorant of the god and the king."

Sufferer I

O sage [. . .] come, [let] me tell you. (1)
[. . . let] me inform you.

⁵ See *CAD*, sub *alādu*, p. 288.

⁶ Lit.: eat your grain.

¹ See *CAD*, sub *šamú* v.

² See Lambert, *BWL*, p. 324.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Reading *i-řeb-[bi ina EDI]N*. Cf. *CAD*, sub *akḫannu*.

[...] [...] [...] you,
I [...], who suffered greatly, will not cease to reverence you.

Where is the wise man of your caliber?
Where is the scholar who can rival you?
Where is the counsellor to whom I can relate my trouble?
I am finished. Anguish has come upon me.
When I was still a child, fate took my father;
My mother who bore me went to the Land of No Return.
My father and mother left me without anyone to be my guardian. (10)

Friend II

Respected friend, what you say is sad.
Dear friend, you have let your *mind* dwell on evil.
You have made your good sense like that of an incompetent person;
You have changed your beaming face to scowls.
Our fathers do indeed give up and go the way of death.
It is an old saying that they cross the river Hubur.
When you look upon all of mankind
... it is not ... that has made the impoverished first-born rich.

Who prefers as a favorite the rich man? (20)
He who looks to his god has a protective spirit;
The humble man who fears his goddess accumulates wealth.

Sufferer III

My friend, your mind is a spring whose depth has not been found,
The high swell of the sea, which does not subside.
I will ask you a question; listen to what I say.
Pay attention for a moment; hear my words.
My body is ... hunger is my fear;¹
My success has vanished, my *stability* has gone.
My strength is weakened, my prosperity has ended,
Moaning and trouble have darkened my features. (30)
The grain of my fields is far from satisfying [me],
Beer, the people's sustenance,^{1a} is far from *being enough for me*.

Can a life of happiness be assured? I wish I knew how!

Friend IV

What I say is restrained, [...] [...]
But you [...] your reason contrarily.
You make [your ...] diffuse and irrational,
You [turn] your select [...] blind.
As to your persistent unending desire for [...] [...]
[The former] security [...] [is ...] by prayers.
The appeased goddess returns with [...] (40)

¹ Reading *ḥa-a-ti* with von Soden, *AHW*, sub *ḥātu*.

^{1a} Reading *nab-laṭ*. See *AHW*, sub *nablaṭu*.

[...] without setting things aright, takes pity on [...]

Ever seek the [correct standards] of justice.
Your ..., the mighty one, will show kindness,
[...] will grant mercy.

Sufferer V

I have bowed to you, my [comrade], I have taken your

...
[...] ... the utterance of [your ...].
[...] ... come, let me [say something to you].
The onager, the wild ass, who filled itself with ...
Did it pay attention to *the giver of assured* divine oracles?

The savage lion who devoured the choicest meat, (50)
Did it bring its flour offering to appease the goddess's anger?

... the prominent person who has multiplied his wealth,
Did he weigh out precious gold for the goddess Mami?
[Have I] withheld offerings? I have prayed to my god,
I have pronounced the blessing over the goddess's regular sacrifices, ...

Friend VI

O date palm, tree that gives wealth, my precious brother,
Endowed with all wisdom, jewel of [...] [...]
You are as stable as the earth, but the plan of the gods is remote.

Look at the superb wild ass on the [plain];
The arrow will turn to the gorer who trampled down the fields. (60)

Come, consider the lion that you mentioned, the enemy of cattle,

For the deed which the lion did the pit awaits him.
The opulent prominent person who heaps up goods
Will be burned to death by the king before his time.
Would you wish to go the way these have gone?
Rather seek the lasting reward of (your) god!

Sufferer VII

Your mind is the north wind, a pleasant breeze for the people.

Dearest friend, your advice is good.

Just one word would I put before you.

Those who do not seek the god go the way of prosperity, (70)

While those who pray to the goddess become destitute and impoverished.

In my youth I tried to find the will of my god;

With prostration and prayer I sought my goddess.

But I was pulling a yoke in a useless corvée.

My god decreed poverty instead of wealth (for me).

A cripple does better than I, a dullard keeps ahead of me.

The rogue has been promoted, but I have been brought low.

Friend VIII

My just, knowledgeable friend, your thoughts are perverse.

You have now forsaken justice and *blaspheme* against your god's plans.

In your mind you think of disregarding the divine ordinances. (80)

[...] the sound rules of (your) goddess.

The clever plans of the god [are ...] like the center of heaven,

The decrees of the goddess are not ...

... humanity has learned well.^{1b}

Their ideas [...] to mankind;

To grasp the way of a goddess [...]

Their reason is close at hand [...]

... [...]

(stanzas IX-XII lacking or badly damaged)

Sufferer XIII

I will abandon my home [...] (133)

I will desire no property [...]

I will disregard my god's regulations and trample on his rites.

I will slaughter a calf and will ... the food,

I will take the road and go to distant places,

I will dig a well and let loose a flood,

I will roam over the remote open country like a robber.

I will go from house to house to ward off my hunger; (140)

I will search in hunger and roam the streets.

Like a beggar I will [...] inwards [...]

Happiness is far away ... [...]

(stanza XIV badly damaged)

Sufferer XV

The daughter speaks [unjust things]^{1c} to her mother. (159)

The fowler who casts [his net] is fallen. (160)

All in all, which person [has] success?

The many wild creatures which ... [...]

Which among them has [...]?

Should I seek a son and daughter [...]?

May I not lose what I find ... [...]

Friend XVI

Humble and submissive one ... [...]

Your will ever submits [...] precious.

(rest of stanza damaged or missing)

Sufferer XVII

The crown prince is clothed in [rags] (181)

The son of the destitute and naked is clad in [fine garments]

^{1b} See CAD, sub *apātu*.

^{1c} Restoring [*la kii-ta*].

The one who keeps watch over the malt (as it dries) [accumulates] gold.

The one who measures out the red gold must bear the [...]

The one who (normally) eats only vegetables² [eats] the dinner of a noble.

The son of the important and the rich has only a carob to eat.

The rich man is fallen. [His *wealth*] is far away.

(stanzas XVIII and XIX badly damaged)

Friend XX

You have let your cunning mind go astray. (212)

[...] you have scorned wisdom,

[...] you despise what is proper, you profane the ordinances.

[...] ... the carrying-hod is far away from him.

[...] is made into a person of influence,

[...] is called a *savant*;

He is looked after and gets what he wants.

Follow in the way of the god, *observe his rites*,

[...] is considered righteousness. (220)

(stanza XXI badly damaged)

Friend XXII

As for the rogue whose favor you want, (235)

His ... soon vanishes.

The rogue who has acquired wealth [in a manner] which is against the will of the gods

Is persecuted by a murderer's weapon.

Unless you seek the will of the god, what success can you have?

He that bears his god's yoke never lacks food, even though it be sparse. (240)

Seek the favorable breath of the god,

What you have lost in a year you will make up in a moment.

Sufferer XXIII

I have looked around in the world, but things are turned around.

The god does not impede the way of even a demon.

A father tows a boat along the canal,

While his son lies in bed.

The eldest son makes his way like a lion,

The second son is happy to be a mule driver.

The heir goes about along the streets like a *peddler*,

The younger son (has enough) that he can give food to the destitute. (250)

What has it profited me that I have bowed down to my god?

I must bow even to a person who is lower than I,

² Meat was rarely eaten except on the occasion of major festivals, and was probably very rarely eaten by the poor.

The rich and opulent treat me, as a youngest brother,
with contempt.

Friend XXIV

O wise one, O savant, who masters knowledge,
Your heart has become hardened and you accuse the
god wrongly.

The mind of the god, like the center of the heavens, is
remote;

Knowledge of it is very difficult; people cannot know it.
Among all the creatures whom Aruru formed
Why should the oldest offspring be so . . . ?

In the case of a cow, the first calf is a runt, (260)

The later offspring is twice as big.

A first child is born a weakling,

But the second is called a mighty warrior.

Though it is possible to find out what the will of the
god is, people do not know how to do it.

Sufferer XXV

Pay attention, my friend, understand my clever ideas,
Heed my carefully chosen words.

People extol the word of a strong man who has learned
to kill

But bring down the powerless who has done no wrong.

They confirm (the position of) the wicked for whom
what should be an abomination is considered right³

Yet drive off the honest man who heeds the will
of his god. (270)

They fill the [storehouse] of the oppressor with
gold,

But empty the larder of the beggar of its provisions.

They support the powerful, whose . . . is guilt,

But destroy the weak and trample the powerless.

And as for me, an insignificant person, a prominent
person persecutes me.

Friend XXVI

Narru, king of the gods, who created mankind,

And majestic Zulummar, who pinched off the clay for
them,

And goddess Mami, the queen who fashioned them,
Gave twisted speech to the human race.

With lies, and not truth, they endowed them
forever. (280)

Solemnly they speak favorably of a rich man,

"He is a king," they say, "riches should be his,"

But they treat a poor man like a thief,

They have only bad to say of him and plot his murder,
Making him suffer every evil like a criminal, because
he has no . . .

Terrifyingly they bring him to his end, and extinguish
him like glowing coals.

³ Reading *kī[t-tu]* with CAD, sub *anzillu*.

Sufferer XXVII

You are kind, my friend; behold my trouble,

Help me; look on my distress; know it.

I, though humble, wise, and a suppliant,

Have not seen help or aid even for a moment. (290)

I have gone about the square of my city unobtru-
sively,

My voice was not raised, my speech was kept low.

I did not raise my head, but looked at the ground,

I did not worship even as a slave in the company of my
associates.

May the god who has abandoned me give help,

May the goddess who has [forsaken me] show mercy,

The shepherd, the sun of the people, pastures (his flock)
as a god should.

Akkadian Oracles and Prophecies

AN OLD BABYLONIAN ORACLE FROM URUK

Text: UVB, Vol. xviii (1962), plate 28.

This text, found in the palace of Sin-kashid of Uruk (about 1850 B.C.), apparently refers to the revival of Uruk under the Sin-kashid dynasty, and it may be he who is addressed (albeit in the third person) at the beginning and the end of the text. The "I" of the text, who is not identified, does not disclose the means of the goddess's appearance to him, but quite possibly it was in a dream. The text, which has many grammatical inconsistencies, is so poorly preserved at the end that most of the goddess's final speech, obviously the most important, is unintelligible.

The faithful shepherd, whose name is good, whose guardian angel is permanent, entered the temple Eanna—from now on well-being will be before him, vigor behind him. (6) From a day Nanaya² visited me and had me sit down in the doorway of the god Sin, her father: She spoke, saying: (10) "Until I have established a faithful shepherd and³ revived dead Uruk you shall grind the *sutu*-ration of Uruk. Great Uruk will be given to me. Town and temple I will take over (15) when the faithful shepherd has been designated for the land." I spoke saying: "Dead Uruk has revived and the faithful shepherd concerning whom a command came from you (20) has been established . . ." She spoke saying: "When I *re-establish* Uruk . . . , and as for the faithful shepherd . . . , . . . , to me . . . , (25) Sit down, do not move . . . , . . . , keep the . . ." The words which Ishtar said to me—Let my lord pay attention to what I say. Let him retain my words (30) so he may attain the wishes of the god.

¹ For prophecies from Mari see pp. 623-25, 629-31.

² A goddess of love who is probably a form of Ishtar. She is apparently referred to as Ishtar below in line 27.

³ Reading *ā(1)*. The same emendation is made in several other lines.