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**Statement of belief: *“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”* (John 17:17 KJV)**

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**ASTRONOMICAL**

**DIARIES AND RELATED TEXTS**

**FROM BABYLONIA**

BY THE LATE

ABRAHAM J.SACHS

COMPLETED AND EDITED BY

HERMANN HUNGER

Volume I

Diaries from ~~652~~ 654 B.C. to 262 B.C.

(1988)

[All links, footnotes, and edits by ToL©2014]

**No. -651**

[referencing the astronomical events of -653 / -652 ( =654/653 BCE )]

Upper edge

1. [At the command of . . . . ] Bel may it be well.

Col.i

1. [Month ~~I~~ V, . . . .,] the moon became visible in a cloud: it was bright’ and high.
2. [Beginn]ing of the night, overcast. Night of the 1st, the river level rose. The 1st, the sun was surrounded by a halo. Night
3. of the 2nd, (and) the 2nd, overcast. The south wind blew. The 3rd, very overcast. In the afternoon it rained.
4. Night of the 4th, (and) the 4th, it rained. The 6th, middle part of the day, the sun was surrounded by a halo.
5. It was split towards the east. The 7th, the moon was surrounded by a halo. The river level rose.
6. Night of the 12th, overcast. The 12th, the 13th, the 14th, overcast. The 14th,**[[1]](#footnote-1)** [one god was seen with the other](file:///I:\$\My%20Websites\TreeOfLife.lan.io\NTCh\-653_08_24_BabylonIraq_OneGodSeenWithAnother.jpg)**[[2]](#footnote-2)**.
7. The river level receded. ~~Mercury’s last~~ [The Moon’s last evening appearance in the east behind Pisces](file:///I:\$\My%20Websites\TreeOfLife.lan.io\NTCh\-653_08_23_BabylonIraq_OneGodSeenWithAnother-LastTimePriorToOpposition.jpg)**[[3]](#footnote-3)**,
8. and Saturn’s ~~last~~ [subsequent appearance behind Pisces](file:///I:\$\My%20Websites\TreeOfLife.lan.io\NTCh\-653_08_23_BabylonIraq_SaturnInPisces.jpg)[[4]](#footnote-4); I did not watch because the days were overcast.
9. The 17th, in the morning,**[[5]](#footnote-5)** overcast. Thunder, gusty south wind, rain, small (hail)-stones.
10. [Mars became](I:\\$\\My Websites\\TreeOfLife.lan.io\\NTCh\\-653_08_27_BabylonIraq_MarsInScorpioWithAntares.jpg) ~~[stationary](I:\\$\\My Websites\\TreeOfLife.lan.io\\NTCh\\-653_08_27_BabylonIraq_MarsInScorpioWithAntares.jpg)~~ [located in the area of the Lip of the Scorpion, it came close to the bright star [Antares / ToL©]](I:\\$\\My Websites\\TreeOfLife.lan.io\\NTCh\\-653_08_27_BabylonIraq_MarsInScorpioWithAntares.jpg)
11. [of the Scorpion’s head.](I:\\$\\My Websites\\TreeOfLife.lan.io\\NTCh\\-653_08_27_BabylonIraq_MarsInScorpioWithAntares.jpg) From the 22nd to the 24th, [. . . .]
12. The 25th,**[[6]](#footnote-6)** [Mars was east of the star to the right of the Scorpion](file:///I:\$\My%20Websites\TreeOfLife.lan.io\NTCh\-653_08_27_BabylonIraq_MarsInScorpioWithAntares.jpg) [. . . .]
13. The river level rose. Night of the 20th,**[[7]](#footnote-7)** overcast. Lightning, thun[der, . . . .]
14. a little [. . . .], strong wind. Night of the 21st, rain [. . . .]
15. A little rain, lightning flashed, the south wind [. . . .]
16. 2 cubits in front of the Scales. . . . . [. . . .]
17. to the right of the Scorpion 1’ [. . . .]
18. . . . . The sun set in a cloud. . . . . [. . . .]
19. It rained slowly, the south wind [. . . .]
20. [. . . .] night [. . . .]

(rest of column broken)

Col. ii

1. The north wind blew. The 15th,**[[8]](#footnote-8)** [an eclipse’](file:///I:\$\My%20Websites\TreeOfLife.lan.io\NTCh\-652_01_18_BabylonIraq_LunarEclipse.jpg) [. . . .]
2. first appearance in the Old Man. The river level [. . . .]
3. was placed towards the south. . . . . [. . . .]
4. first part of the night. . . . . [. . . .]
5. . . . . [. . . .]
6. . . . . [. . . .]

(rest of column broken)

Col. iii

1’ of . . . . [. . . .]

2’ in the after[noon . . . .]

3’ . . . . [. . . .]

4’ The north wind blew. [Lunar eclipse](file:///I:\$\My%20Websites\TreeOfLife.lan.io\NTCh\-652_01_18_BabylonIraq_LunarEclipse.jpg)**[[9]](#footnote-9)** . . . . [. . . .]

5’ The 20th'**[[10]](#footnote-10)**, [the moon was surrounded by a halo, (and) ~~Mercury~~ Jupiter [stood] in i[t](file:///I:\$\My%20Websites\TreeOfLife.lan.io\NTCh\-652_01_24_BabylonIraq_JupiterInHaloOfMoon.jpg)**[[11]](#footnote-11)** . . . .]

6’ strong wind. The 21st, . . . . [. . . .]

Col. iv

1’ [. . . .] the star of [. . . .]

2’ [. . . .] . . . . right’ of the moon [. . . .]

3’ [. . . .] . . . . [. . . .]

4’ [. . . .] . . . . [. . . .]

5’ [. . . .] . . . . right of the moon’ . . . . [. . . .]

6’ [. . . .] . . . . thunder. [. . . .]

7’ . . . . The 5th. [Mercury’s first appearance](file:///I:\$\My%20Websites\TreeOfLife.lan.io\NTCh\-652_03_08_BabylonIraq_MercuryAppearingInTheEastI.jpg) [in the east in Pisces](file:///I:\$\My%20Websites\TreeOfLife.lan.io\NTCh\-652_03_08_BabylonIraq_MercuryAppearingInTheEastII.jpg). [. . . .]

8’ . . . . towards the south [. . . .]

9’ . . . . It rained slowly. The 12th, a halo . . . . The river level rose [. . . .]

10’ The troops of Babylonia fought against the troops of Assyria; the troops . . . . [. . . .]

11’ The 13th, the river level rose a little. The 14th, a cloud bank lay to the right of the sun. Night of the 15th, overcast. Three ra[inbows.]

12’ one in the west, one between north and west, and one in the north, were seen. Rain, lightning, thunder. . . . .

13’ clouds’. The 15th,**[[12]](#footnote-12)** [one god was seen with the other](file:///I:\$\My%20Websites\TreeOfLife.lan.io\NTCh\-652_03_18_BabylonIraq_OneGodSeenWithAnother.jpg)**[[13]](#footnote-13)**. Gusty south wind, haze crossed the face of the sky. Night of the 16th,[[14]](#footnote-14) the moon was surrounded by a large halo.

14’ The 16th,**[[15]](#footnote-15)** the sun was surrounded by a halo. The 18th, the sun was surrounded by a . . . halo; the south wind blew. The 19th,**[[16]](#footnote-16)** [Venus](file:///I:\$\My%20Websites\TreeOfLife.lan.io\NTCh\-652_03_21_BabylonIraq_VenusInAriesAtSunsetI.jpg)

15’ [stood in the region of Aries](file:///I:\$\My%20Websites\TreeOfLife.lan.io\NTCh\-652_03_21_BabylonIraq_VenusInAriesAtSunsetII.jpg), [10 fingers](file:///I:\$\My%20Websites\TreeOfLife.lan.io\NTCh\-652_03_21_BabylonIraq_VenusInAriesAtSunsetIV.jpg) [behind](file:///I:\$\My%20Websites\TreeOfLife.lan.io\NTCh\-652_03_21_BabylonIraq_VenusInAriesAtSunsetV.jpg) [Mars](file:///I:\$\My%20Websites\TreeOfLife.lan.io\NTCh\-652_03_21_BabylonIraq_VenusInAriesAtSunsetIII.jpg); [the moon was surrounded by a halo, and](file:///I:\$\My%20Websites\TreeOfLife.lan.io\NTCh\-652_03_21_BabylonIraq_AntaresInHaloOfMoonI.jpg) [α Scorpii stood in it](file:///I:\$\My%20Websites\TreeOfLife.lan.io\NTCh\-652_03_21_BabylonIraq_AntaresInHaloOfMoonII.jpg). The 20th,**[[17]](#footnote-17)** [Mars was 1 finger to the left](file:///I:\$\My%20Websites\TreeOfLife.lan.io\NTCh\-652_03_22_BabylonIraq_MarsOneFingerLeftFromAriesI.jpg)

16’ [of the front’](file:///I:\$\My%20Websites\TreeOfLife.lan.io\NTCh\-652_03_22_BabylonIraq_MarsOneFingerLeftFromAriesII.jpg) [of Aries](file:///I:\$\My%20Websites\TreeOfLife.lan.io\NTCh\-652_03_22_BabylonIraq_MarsOneFingerLeftFromAriesIII.jpg); it came close. [The moon was surrounded by a halo](file:///I:\$\My%20Websites\TreeOfLife.lan.io\NTCh\-652_03_23_BabylonIraq_JupiterInHaloOfMoonI.jpg), [Jupiter stood in it](file:///I:\$\My%20Websites\TreeOfLife.lan.io\NTCh\-652_03_23_BabylonIraq_JupiterInHaloOfMoonII.jpg). The south wind blew.

17’ [. . . .] . . . . The 27th, a rainbow whose brightness was very great stretched in the east.

18’ [. . . . in] Hiritu in the province of Sippar the troops of Babylonia and of Assyria

19’ fou[ght with each] other, and the troops of Babylonia withdrw and were heavily defeated.

20’ [. . . . The no]rth wind blew. The 28th, a little rain. In the afternoon, a very red’ rainbow stretched in the east.

21’ [. . . .] The 27th, the river level rose a little. A rain shower fell. That year little rain . . . . [. . . .]

Calendar

No calendaric information is preserved in this diary.

Comments

i 1: GUR may be an unusual wriing for kur4  = *ba ‘lu* “bright”.

i 5: TAR is said of a halo also in No -567 rev. 15’; its reading here is *paris* “is split. Divided”, see AHw. 831a mng. 7b.

i 6: “one god was seen with the other” refers to sun and moon in opposition.

i 8: NU PAP “I did not watch” unfortunately refers to both planetary statements.

i 12f.: the items listed in these lines are not in chronological order.

iv 16’: The traces at the beginning of the line may be restored to ┌SAG┐.KI “front”.

iv 20’: I cannot read the sign after TIR: *ma-diš* is possible; this is written *ma-a ‘-diš* in iv 17’ and 19’, but *ma-diš* in i 3. DIR’ could be SA5 “red”; although a rainbow usually is multicolored, a (predominantly) red rainbow occurs in ACh Adad 6:5f., quoted by F.X. Kugler, SSB II 104.

iv 21’: The signs KI TU x at the end of the line do not seem to continue the words preceding them; they may be the beginning of the last line of col. iii.

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1. Given that the reckoning of days begins at sunset, we this observation, in all its complexity, identifies the 14th day of this month as beginning at sunset August 23, 564 BCE. I find no viable correlations with any other year, specifically I have double checked the celestial events of 565-560 BCE and my findings are being reported within. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The words “one god was seen with the other” signifies that the astronomical full Moon has been reached. The first time in the months when the Moon is still above the western horizon at the time of first sunrise, the point of perfect opposition has been passed, and thus also the exact point of astronomical full Moon. This is a most important event in the Jewish Rabbinical calendar reckoning, as also in the Babylonian calendar reckoning, because it is easily observable and can be used for pinpointing the adjacent astronomical New Moon, which is not visible unless a lunar eclipse is visible from the location of the observer.

   In the Jewish calendar of antiquity this day defined the 13th day of the month, a secret closely held by the Sanhedrin. Apparently the Babylonian calendar months are chosen so as to make this day the 15th day of the month, but on this occasion, for some reason, it fell on the 14th day. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Likewise, when, in the evening, the full Moon is being seen very close to the horizon at the time of sunset, on knows that the astronomical full Moon is imminent. Correlating this event with another luminary on the sky, or, as here, with the constellation Pisces, is very useful for identifying one similar event from another, making the observation most valuable for chronological dating purposes.

   In this instance there must be a mistranslation, because Mercury is nowhere near Pisces, while most all other events in this record are found to correlate with such calculations as are being done by modern astronomy programs…

   That is, provided the path of Mercury has not been changed since this very first of all extant astronomy clay tablets??? Who knows? [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Here is yet another associated celestial event, the 4th one, being added for precise dating purposes. That is 1) the Earth’s horizon, 2) the Moon, 3) Piscees, and 4) Saturn. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The morning of August 27, 564 BCE. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The first two luminaries becoming visible on the evening sky of Sept 4, 654 BCE were Mars and Antares, the prime luminary within Scorpio. Mars is found to the east relative to Antares of Scorpio to the right and a little below. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The dates provided by the translator seem to indicate that this is a later month, or else the numbers should be 26+ and 27+ respectively. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Unless the Moon has changed its path there was only one lunar eclipse between the 5th lunar month [September] of 654 BCE and between the subsequent 12th lunar month. Given that this eclipse is dated to the 15th of the month, we know that it is a lunar eclipse that is being referenced. (Given the similarities between Col. ii, l.1 and Col. iii, l.4’, I would suggest that one of these columns is a replacement for the other? Or at least I do not find more than one lunar eclipse within months six through twelve of this particular year. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Cf. footnote #8! [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Given that the 20th day of the lunar month follows no more than 6 days after the lunar eclipse of January 18/19, 653 BCE, that is, upon that half of the sky which is opposite from the Sun, and the fact that Mercury is always located in the direction of the Sun, it is not possible to find Mercury within the Moon’s halo. Jupiter, on the other hand, was located close enough to the Moon on this occasion and does seem by far the most likely luminary to be referenced within the Moon’s halo at this time. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Cf. also this [link](file:///I:\$\My%20Websites\TreeOfLife.lan.io\NTCh\-652_01_24_BabylonIraq_JupiterInHaloOfMoonII.jpg)! [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. March 18, 653 BCE: Given 1) that Col. iv is providing only one sequence of monthly dates, that is, from the 5th through the 28th, and 2) the fact that lines 17’, 18’ and 19’ may be identified to the month of Adarru in king Assurbanipal’s 16th year of reign, that is, by means of the Akito Chronicle (BM 86379,) which seem to record the very same fight, it seems safe to conclude 3) that Col. iv is a record of the celestial events of Adarru in Assurbanipal’s 16th year. Given the many astronomical particulars recorded within this month we may safely correlate that 16th year with the year 654/653 BCE, that is, Adarru is the last month in the Babylonian calendar year. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Cf. footnote #2 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. After sunset March 18, 653 BCE. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. The morning of March 19, 653 BCE. Notice the evening record of the same 16th day on the prior line. That is, powerful evidence for the Babylonian calendar reckoning its days from sunset to sunset! [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. After sunset on March 21, 653 BCE. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. After sunset on March 22, 653 BCE. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)