

Stars, Cities, and Predictions

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The tablet BM 47494 (= 81-11-3, 199) is part of the 81-11-3 collection of the BM and was acquired by purchase.¹ According to the circumstances, it most likely comes from Babylon. This is supported by the name of the scribe, Šemaʿja, descendant of Eṭiru. He is mentioned in other tablets of the same collection and lived in the Achaemenid period, during the reign of an Artaxerxes.² Unfortunately, the date once written at the end of the tablet is now broken.

The tablet is damaged in several places, but its contents can be established to a large extent. There is ruling (done before writing) all over the tablet, but between rev. 16 and 17, 18 and 19, 20 and 21, and 22 and 23, lines seem to separate sections; there is also a line before the colophon.

1 *Transliteration*

- 1 DIŠ MUL.ʿMUL xʿ ŠÁRʿkiʿ
- 2 DIŠ mulGU₄.AN.NA EN.LÍ[L]ʿkiʿ xʿ ŠEŠ.UNUG^{ki} nin da la
ta de-e-ri u ʿx xʿ kiʿ
- 3 DIŠ mulSIPA.ZI.AN.NA UD.[KI]B.NUN^{ki} u La-ár-siʿkiʿ
- 4 DIŠ múlŠU.GI EN^{ki} u NUN^{ki}
- 5 DIŠ múl[MAŠ].TAB.BA.GAL.GAL GÚ.DU₈.A^{ki} u ŠEŠ.
UNUG^{ki}
- 6 DIŠ mú[lALL]A UD.KIB.NUN^{ki} Dil-bat^{ki} u Gír-su^{ki}
MURUB₄meš UD.KIB.NUN^{ki} IGI^{meš} MIN MIN

¹ I thank the Trustees of the British Museum for permission to publish this tablet.

² [Finkel 1988, 154].

- 7 DIŠ SAG.DU m^{ul}UR.A UNUG^{ki} GABA-su TIN.TIR^{ki} ĠİR
EN.LÍL^{ki}
- 8 DIŠ m^{ul}AB.SÍN ʿKUR ʾ NIM.MA^{k[i]}
- 9 DIŠ m^{ul}RÍN KUR URI^{ki}
- 10 DIŠ m^{ul}ĠÍR.TAB Dil-mun u Bar-ʿsipa^{ki ʾ}
- 11 DIŠ m^{ul}Pa-bil-sag TIN.TIR^{ki} AMAR.DA^{ki} u ʿKUR NIM.
MA^{ki}
- 12 DIŠ m^{ul}SUHUR MÁŠ KUR Su-bar-tú^{ki}
- 13 DIŠ MÚL.GU.LA E EN UŠ ʿx x ʾ A RA ʿx ʾ [x x x x] ba[?] az zu
- 14 DIŠ KUN^{meš} TIN.TIR^{ki} [x] ʿx ʾ ni[?] KUR
- 15 DIŠ m^{ul} lúHUN.GÁ ʿx ʾ^{ki}
- 16 DIŠ šá in-nam-ma-ru šá-ru-ru na-šú-ú u NI BAD ʿx ʾ [x N]E
RU bu-ú
- 17 ana ZI KÚR ina ŠÀ m^{ul}AL.LUL m^{ul}UR.GU.LA u
[mu]^lĠÍR.TAB
- 18 ana SU.KÚ ina ŠÀ m^{ul}AB.SÍN [mu]^lAŠ.IKU m^{ul} ġišR[ÍN u
MU]L.GU.LA
- 19 ana BE^{meš} ina ŠÀ ʿMUL ʾ.MUL m^{ul}GU₄.AN.NA u
mu^l[SI]PA.ZI.AN.NA
- 20 ana BURU₁₄ ina ŠÀ MUL.GU.LA m^{ul}AB.SÍN m^{ul}AŠ.IKU
[KU]N^{meš}
- 21 ana MÍ^{meš} Û.TU ina ŠÀ m^{ul}ĠÍR.TAB m^{ul}SUHUR MÁŠ
mu^l[x x] u m^{ul} dA-ʿnu-ni ʾ-t[um]
- 22 ana bu-lim ina ŠÀ m^{ul}SUHUR MÁŠ m^{ul}AL.LUL u
mu^l[GU₄.A]N.ʿNA ʾ
- 23 ana KILAM ina ŠÀ m^{ul}AL.LUL m^{ul} ġišRÍN m^{ul}SUHUR
MÁŠ m^{ul}AŠ.IKU

- 24 ana še-im ina ŠÀ^{mul}AŠ.IKU^{mul} AB.SÍN u MUL.GU.LA
- 25 ana ZÚ.LUM.MA ina ŠÀ^{mul} gišRÍN^{mul} lúHUN.GÁ [u
mu]lŠU.GI
- 26 ana ŠE.GIŠ.Ì ina ŠÀ^{mul}GÍR.TAB u [mu]l^rÁ? mušen?
- 27 ana SÍG^{hi-a} ina ŠÀ^{mul} lúHUN.GÁ^{mul} gišRÍN^{mul} u
[mu]lSIPA.ZI.AN.NA
- 28 ana A.AN A.KAL ina ŠÀ^{mul}KU₆ MUL.GU.LA u MUL.MUL
- 29 ana ZI IM ina ŠÀ^{mul}MAŠ.MAŠ^{mul}Pa-b[il-sag^{mul}AL.L]UL^{mul}
UR.GU.LA
- 30 mul^rSIM.MAH^{mul} A-nu-ni-tum MUL.MUL [u] mul lúHUN.
GÁ
- 31 ana ZI me-ḫe-[e UD.D]È?.RA.RA ri-iḫ-ṣu ina ŠÀ MUL.MUL
u mul lúHUN.GÁ
- 32 ana GIG^{meš} ina ŠÀ^{mul}SUHUR MÁŠ^{mul} A-nu-ni-tum u
[m]ul lúHUN.GÁ
- 33 [ana x] ^rx^r [x ina ŠÀ^{mul}]SIPA.ZI.AN.NA mulŠU.GI [u
m]ulAŠ.IKU
- 34 [] LUGAL
- 35 [ana x (x)] AN[?] ina Š[À] is[?] l]e[?]-e
- 36 [ana x x] NIM ina ŠÀ^rmul[] ^rx^r
- 37 [ana x x x] ^rx^r ina ŠÁ^{mul}SUHUR [MÁŠ ...]
- 38 [ana ...] ina ŠÀ^{mul}Pa-bil-sa[g ...]

Rev.

1 [mul lúHUN.GÁ?] mulUR.GU.LA u mul[Pa-bi]l-sag

2 [...] KILAM šá K[UR UR]I^{ki}

- 3 [BE-ma ^{mul}Sag-me]-gar ina ŠÀ GUB-ma KUR₄ KI.LAM ina-pu-^ṽuš^ṽ BE-ma SIG LAL-ti
- 4 [BE-ma ^{mul}Dele-bat[?]] ina ŠÀ KUR₄ KI.LAM ina-pu-uš [BE]-ma SIG KI.LAM LAL-ti
- 5 [BE-ma ^dS]in ina ŠÀ ÍR KI.LAM LAL-ti
- 6 [BE-ma ^d][UDU^ṽ].[TIL.SA]G.UŠ ú-lu ^dŠal-bat-a-nu ina ŠÀ KUR₄ [KI.]LAM LAL-ti
- 7 ^ṽBE^ṽ-m[a] ina[?] [itu^ṽB]ÁR itu^ṽIZI itu^ṽGAN UD-11+[x-KAM x] ^ṽx^ṽ GAR-an
- 8 ^ṽdSin^ṽ ina IGI ^dUTU GUB^{meš}-zu [KI.LAM] LAL-ti
- 9 BE-ma UD-13-KAM.TA.ÀM GUB^{meš}-zu [KI.LA]M LAL-ti
- 10 BE-ma UD-14-KAM.TA.ÀM GUB^{meš}-z[u KI.LA]M ina-pu-uš
- 11 BE-ma ^{mul}KAK.SI.SÁ ina ŠÀ KUR₄ [KI.]LAM ina-pu-uš[!] : ZI KÚR
- 12 BE-ma ^{mul}Sag-me-gar un-nu-tu KI.LAM [ina[?] MU[?]] BI LAL-al
- 13 BE-ma ^{mul}Dele-bat un-nu-tu KI.LAM LAL-al
- 14 BE-ma ^{mul}Šal-bat-a-nu ú-lu ^dSAG.U[Š] ^ṽx^ṽ [(x) K]I.LAM LAL-al
- 15 ^ṽBE-ma^ṽ ^dSin ina IGI.LAL-šú un-nu-tu [K]I.LAM LAL-al
- 16 BE-ma ^dSin ina IGI ^dUTU NA-su NU IGI ^ṽKI^ṽ. [LAM] LAL-al
- 17 DIŠ ^{mul}GU₄.AN.NA ^{mul}AB.SÍN u ^{mu}[SUHUR MÁŠ]
- 18 3 KI^{meš} a-n[a KUR] ^ṽNIM[?] ^ṽ[MA^{ki}]
- 19 DIŠ ^{mul}MAŠ.TAB.BA.GAL^{!?}.GAL ^{mul}Zi-ba-an-n[a u M]UL.GU.^ṽLA^ṽ
- 20 3 KI^{meš} a-na [K]UR Mar-tu^{ki}
- 21 DIŠ ^{mul}AL.LUL ^ṽmul^ṽGÍR.TAB^ṽ u ^{mul}AŠ.IKU

- 22 3 KI^{meš} [a-na KU]R SU^{ki}
- 23 DIŠ ina KI šá <... > ^dSag-me-gar ʿKUR₄? xʿ LU[GAL?] ʿx
x xʿ [x x x] ʿxʿ SUMUN-bar BALA-šú GÍD.DA
- 24 DIŠ ina KI šá KUR NIM.MA^{ki} KI.MIN ina KI šá KUR Ma[r-
tu^{ki} KI.MIN ina KI šá KUR] URI^{ki} KI.MIN
- 25 DIŠ ^dŠal-bat-a-nu ina KI šá KUR URI^{ki} ʿx xʿ [x x x] AŠ.TE
DIB-bat
- 26 DIŠ ^{mul}KAK.SI.SÁ ina KI šá KUR URI^{ki} ʿxʿ [x] ʿLUGAL?ʿ
HI.GAR-ma AŠ.TE DIB-bat
- 27 DIŠ ^{mul}Dele-bat ina KI šá KUR URI^{ki} ʿx xʿ ú?-lu ʿDUMU?
LUGAL?ʿ AŠ.TE DIB-bat
- 28 DIŠ ^dUDU.TIL.SAG.UŠ ina KI šá KUR URI^{ki} AŠ.TE MAN
KUR ZÀH
- 29 DIŠ ^dUTU AN.KU₁₀ GAR ERÍN^{meš} LUGAL ÚŠ^{meš}
- 30 DIŠ ^dSin AN.K[U₁₀ GAR] KUR BI uš-tál-pat

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- 31 GIM SUMUN-šú SAR-ma IGI.TAB pa-liḫ ^dAG li-šá-qir
- 32 ʃu[p]-pi IŠe-ma-ia A I_{E4}-ṭi-rù ituIZI UD.28?.KAM
(rest of colophon on edge broken)

2 Translation

- 1 |³ The Stars: Keš?
- 2 | The Bull of Heaven: Nippur, ..., Ur, ..., Der? and ...
- 3 | The True Shepherd of Anu: Sippar and Larsa
- 4 | The Old Man: ... and Eridu

³ In the translation, I represent the vertical wedge (transliterated DIŠ) by | when it introduces a new item, but translate it by 'if' in protases of omens. The translations of star names are the literal ones used in [Hunger & Pingree 1989].

- 5 | The Great Twins: Kutha and Ur
- 6 | The Crab: Sippar, Dilbat and Girsu; the middle: Sippar; the front part: dto. (i.e. Dilbat), dto. (i.e. Girsu)
- 7 | The Head of the Lion: Uruk; its breast: Babylon; the foot: Nippur
- 8 | The Furrow: Elam
- 9 | The Scales: the land of Akkad
- 10 | The Scorpion: Dilmun and Borsippa
- 11 | Pabilsag: Babylon, Marad and Elam
- 12 | The Goat-Fish: Subartu
- 13 | The Great One: ...
- 14 | The Tails: Babylon ... of the land[?].
- 15 | The Hired Man: ...
- 16 | which is seen, carries radiance and keeps entering[?]...
- 17 For an attack of an enemy: within the Crab, the Lion and the Scorpion
- 18 For famine: within the Furrow, the Field, the Scales, and the Great One
- 19 For deaths: within the Stars, the Bull of Heaven, and the True Shepherd of Anu
- 20 For harvest: within the Great One, the Furrow, the Field, the Tails
- 21 For women giving birth: within the Scorpion, the Goat-Fish, [...], and Anunitu
- 22 For cattle: within the Goat-Fish, the Crab, and the Bull of Heaven
- 23 For business: within the Crab, the Scales, the Goat-Fish, the Field

- 24 For barley: within the Field, the Furrow, and the Great One
- 25 For dates: within the Scales, the Hired Man, [and] the Old Man
- 26 For sesame: within the Scorpion and the Eagle[?]
- 27 For wool: within the Hired Man, the Scales, and the True Shepherd of Anu
- 28 For rain and flood: within the Fish, the Great One, and the Stars
- 29 For rising of wind: within the Twins, Pabilsag, the Crab, the Lion,
- 30 the Swallow, Anunitu, the Stars, [and] the Hired Man
- 31 For rising of storm, [devast]ation by Adad[?], destruction: within the Stars and the Hired Man
- 32 For sick people: within the Goat-Fish, Anunitu, and the Hired Man
- 33 [For ...: with]in the True Shepherd of Anu, the Old Man, [and] the Field
- 34 [...] the King
- 35 [For ...] ...: within [...] ...
- 36 [For ...] ...: within [...the Jaw of the] Bull[?]
- 37 [For ...] within the Goat-[Fish ...]
- 38 [For ...] within Pabilsag [...]

Rev.

- 1 [The Hired Man[?],] the Lion, and Pabilsag
- 2 [*concern*] the business (lit., equivalent) of the land of Akkad.
- 3 [If Jupi]ter stands therein and is bright: business will prosper; if it is faint, (business) will decrease.

- 4 [If Venus] is bright therein: business will prosper; if it is faint: business will decrease.
- 5 [If the M]oon is eclipsed therein: business will decrease.
- 6 [If Sat]urn or Mars is bright therein: business will decrease.
- 7 If [in] month I, month V, month IX, day 1[2[?], there] is [an eclipse, (and)]
- 8 the Moon[?] stands each time in front of the Sun: [business] will decrease.
- 9 If it stands there on each 13th day: [busi]ness will decrease.
- 10 If it stands there on each 14th day: [busi]ness will prosper.
- 11 If the 'Arrow' is bright therein: business will prosper; attack of an enemy.
- 12 If Jupiter is faint: business in that [year[?]] will be rare.
- 13 If Venus is faint: business will be rare.
- 14 If Mars or Saturn is [...:] business will be rare.
- 15 If the Moon at its appearance is faint: business will be rare.
- 16 If the Moon's NA in front of the Sun is not visible: business will be rare.
- 17 | The Bull of Heaven, the Furrow, and the [Goat-Fish:]
- 18 3 areas for [Elam.]
- 19 | The Great Twins, the Scales, [and] the Great One:
- 20 3 areas for the Westland.
- 21 | The Crab, the Scorpion, and the Field:
- 22 3 areas [for] Subartu.
- 23 If in the area of <...>, Jupiter is bright[?] ...: the king ... [...] will live to old age, his reign will become long.

- 24 If in the area of Elam: *dto.*; in the area of the Westland: [*dto.*; in the area of the land of] Akkad: *dto.*
- 25 If Mars ... in the area of the land of Akkad: [...] will seize the throne.
- 26 If the 'Arrow' (...) in the area of the land of Akkad: ... will revolt against the king[?] and seize the throne.
- 27 If Venus in the area of the land of Akkad: ... or[?] the king's son will seize the throne.
- 28 If Saturn in the area of the land of Akkad: the throne will change, the land will disappear.
- 29 If the Sun makes an eclipse: the troops of the king will die.
- 30 If the Moon [makes] an eclipse: this land will be overthrown.

31 According to its original written and collated. Whoever reveres Nabû shall hold (the tablet) in esteem.

32 Tablet of Šema:ja, descendant of Eṭiru. Month V, day 28[?],
(rest broken)

3 Notes to the text

1: Unfortunately, I am uncertain how to read the first city name. The tablet MNB 1849⁴ lists constellations along the ecliptic (not strictly in their sequence in the sky), combining them with cities (and rivers) which are affected by omens from a lunar eclipse occurring in these constellations. For MUL.MUL (and ŠU.GI), it lists Dēr, Nippur (written *Dur-an-ki*), and Ur. None of them can I find in the signs of this name. R. Biggs suggests that the signs resemble Kēš. This city is long abandoned at the time of the tablet, but so are others listed here, like Girsu in line 6. The scribe may have had difficulty in writing the unusual city name.

⁴ Partly published in [Weidner 1963, 118].

2: Not surprisingly, the Bull of Heaven is correlated to the same cities Ur, Dēr and Nippur as are the Pleiades in MNB 1849:39. — *de-e-ri* could be the city of Dēr (this syllabic writing is attested in Neo-Babylonian); but the determinative KI is lacking. Separated by *u* ‘and’, there probably follows another city name, now illegible. The signs *nin da la ta* before *de-e-ri* may be a part of the Bull of Heaven; compare the parts of the Crab in line 6, or those of the Lion in line 7. I do not understand *nin da la ta*, however.

3: The True Shepherd of Anu is correlated to Sippar and Larsa also in MNB 1849:40.

4: I could not find EN^{ki} anywhere else, and can only suggest that it is an error for EN.LÍL^{ki}; Nippur, although written *Duran-ki*, happens to be connected with the constellation ŠU.GI in MNB 1849:38.

5: Cutha occurs with the Twins in MNB 1849:41.

6: For the Crab, MNB 1849:49 lists Sippar.

10: MNB 1849:42 agrees with the present tablet in assigning Tilmun and Borsippa to the Scorpion.

11: Babylon is combined with Pabilsag in MNB 1849:43.

13: Since I do not understand this line, I am not sure whether there is a geographical name in it at all.

14: The end of the line could be an epithet of Babylon rather than another city name since it does not end in KI.

16: This line may be a kind of summary of the first section. Something not mentioned, probably the constellations listed before, is said to become visible (*innammuru*) and become bright (*šarūru našû*). The last part of the line should therefore also mention an observable phenomenon. A possible restoration ^{‘i’} [te-n]e-ru-bu-ú (from *erēbu* ‘to enter’) would presuppose an unusual writing with long *-u* at the end. Also, I do not know how to understand NI BAD before it. The last four signs of the line could also be read *izi-šub-bu-ú* ‘stroke of lightning’, but that does not fit the first part of the line.

17ff.: I could not detect any pattern in the distribution of the constellations. Most of them are near the ecliptic, but the Eagle (line 26) and the Fish (line 28) are not.

29: The Crab is listed ‘for the rising of wind’ also in [Reiner & Pingree 1981, 40] (III 7).

31: If the restoration [UD.D]È.RA.RA is correct, it is to be read *riḫiṣti Adad* ‘devastation by Adad’ (see CAD s.v. *riḫiṣtu*); this is somewhat strange immediately before *riḫṣu*.

35: A possible restoration of the fragmentary signs at the end of the line could be [is l]ê, the Jaw of the Bull (= Aldebaran), although this does not occur elsewhere in this section.

Rev.

1: Restoration of the Hired Man (or an equivalent for the first sign in the zodiac) is based on the assumption that the three constellations listed form a triplicity, i.e. they are four zodiacal signs apart. The months I, V, and IX, corresponding to the constellations of line 1, are mentioned in line r. 7, and the remaining three triplicities of zodiacal constellations in lines r. 17–22. The correlations between months (or the zodiacal constellations corresponding to them) and countries are the same as those in the ‘Great Star List’;⁵ they are also stated in [Virolleaud 1908–12, 2nd. Suppl., 118:19–20].

2: in the beginning of the line, words have to be restored to express that astronomical events in the three constellations listed in line r. 1 give omens for prices, and thereby for business (see CAD s.v. *maḫīru*) in Babylonia.

3: Restoration in the beginning of the line according to the writing of Jupiter in line r. 12.

4: I restore Venus because the apodosis is favorable.

5: ‘Weeping’ is an expression for an eclipse of the moon: the eclipse reports use ÍR for the duration of the maximal phase of an eclipse.⁶

6: The beginning is barely legible and could be restored slightly differently; Saturn is written both ^dSAG.UŠ and ^dUDU.TIL.SAG.UŠ on this tablet.

7: In view of lines r. 9 and 10, the day number is probably to be restored as 12. At the end of the line, the traces of signs before GAR-*an* do not look like AN.KU₁₀, but an eclipse is most likely meant here.

8: GUB^{meš} can be understood not only as plural, but also as expressing the iterative stem; the interpretation as an iterative is

⁵ [Koch-Westenholz 1995, 202:274–7].

⁶ For a summary, see [Sachs & Hunger 1988, 24]; an edition of the eclipse reports by P. J. Huber is in preparation.

justified by the occurrence of the phenomenon in three different months. The complement *-zu*, however, indicates a plural; the singular would end in *-iz*. I nevertheless assume a singular and take *-zu* to be an error; a similar confusion between singular and plural occurs in r. 12f., see below.

11: Here and in line r. 26, KAK.SI.SÁ 'Arrow' must mean Mercury, because this planet would otherwise be missing from the planets mentioned here; also, the omen presupposes that the 'Arrow' can be seen in different constellations, and therefore cannot be a fixed star. For other instances of this use of the star name, see CAD s.v. *šukūdu* mng. 2a.

12f.: *unnutu* here (and in line r. 15) looks like a plural; but the context requires a singular so that it is necessary to consider the ending *-u* as erroneous. Similar laxness can be found (looking at astronomical texts only) in [Hunger 1976], no. 94:23–25.

14: One expects the verb referring to Mars and Saturn to mean something like 'to be bright', since the apodosis is unfavorable; this suggests that the two malefic planets were exerting their influence.

16: NA is here the time between sunrise and moonset after full moon, when the moon sets for the first time after sunrise. For this and other time intervals observed by the Babylonians, see [Sachs 1948, 273].

23–28: Damages in the middle of these lines cause many uncertainties. After KI *šá* in line 23, the name of a country seems to be missing: in the following lines, the expression KI *šá* is always followed by a country name. — In line 23, the verb of the protasis, to be expected after Sag-me-gar, is probably *ba·il* 'is bright'; but I do not understand the sign following it. In line 25 and line 26, the traces after KUR URI^{ki} are different. Although I cannot read them, it seems to me more likely that they contained not any more the verb of the protasis but already the subject of the apodosis. In line 27, there seems to be no verb expressly written in the protasis, if in the apodosis *ūlu* 'or' is read correctly; a noun has to precede *ūlu*, and there is not enough space for both such a noun beginning the apodosis, and a verb ending the protasis. There is certainly no verb in the protasis of line 28; of course, it may have been omitted inadvertently by the scribe.

Note that the section of lines 23–30 considers all of the seven

planets (Moon and Sun included). Their sequence is interrupted by line 24, which states that what was said in the preceding line is valid for other countries too. One would expect that the text started with Akkad, and in line 24 listed Elam, Amurru and Subartu, as it did in the preceding section of the reverse (see lines 2, 18, 20, and 22). Unfortunately, line 24 has, on the contrary, the countries Elam, Amurru and Akkad. The country missing from line 23 would therefore be Subartu. It is however very unlikely that a Babylonian text would begin with Subartu, which is equivalent to Assyria. The choice of countries in line 24 remains therefore unexplained.

4 *Discussion*

This tablet contains a first part about the correlation of constellations with geographical units (mostly cities), and then several sections concerning the use of constellations for purposes of prediction.

Section 1: The geographical part extends from line 1 to 16. For fifteen constellations situated more or less along the ecliptic, and in some cases for parts of these constellations, a city or country is listed. Similar correlations can be found in MNB 1849, a text published in [Weidner 1963, 118]; parallels are given in the Notes above. In Weidner's text, a lunar eclipse occurring in the constellations listed gives an omen for a particular city. Line 16 of the tablet edited here may contain a similar statement, but I do not understand it completely.

There is no obvious regularity in the choice of cities and countries.⁷ Several of them occur more than once: Nippur in 2 and 7, Ur in 2 and 5, Sippar in 3 and 6, Elam in 8 and 11, Babylon in 7, 11 and 14.

Section 2: Lines 17 to 38 list a number of topics frequent in predictions, and give for each topic the constellations which are pertinent to predictions on this topic. The text literally says 'inside of' a constellation; it means that ominous events, like first and last visibilities of planets, that occur within the constellation will concern the topic 'for' which the constellation is listed. This section is reminiscent of 'Tablet 50' of *Enūma Anu Enlil*, where

⁷ The same was observed by E. Weidner for MNB 1849.

constellations are said to be 'for' (*ana*) a certain event on earth.⁸ However, there is almost no parallel to be found between the two texts.

E. Reiner pointed out to me that some of the constellations in this section could be connected by association to the events listed. For example, for 'harvest' (and for 'barley' and 'famine'), the Field and the Furrow are given; for 'business', the Scales are among the constellations. Similarly, Crab, Lion, and Scorpion can be seen as 'enemies', and so they are associated with an 'attack of an enemy'.

Section 3: Rev. 1 to 16 concern business possibilities in the land of Akkad (= Babylonia), for which the three constellations listed in line 1 are particularly relevant. They are arranged in triplicity, i.e. four zodiacal signs apart from each other. Depending on which celestial body is bright or dim in these constellations, the equivalent (of what can be bought with one shekel of silver) is predicted to be high or low.⁹

Section 4: Rev. 17 to 22 assign again three constellations each to a particular country, again grouped in triplicities. While for Akkad explicit omens were listed in the preceding section, the other countries are treated here in a summary fashion.

Section 5: Rev. 23 to 30 derive predictions of a general type, in formulaic expressions identical to those of the traditional omen series, from a phenomenon of the planets in the (celestial) area associated with Babylonia. Unfortunately, the reading of this phenomenon shown by the planets is uncertain.

The arrangement of constellation names in triplicities (r. 1 and 17–22) presupposes the existence of 12 constellations of equal extension, as in the zodiac; elsewhere in the tablet, more than 12 names are used. Section 1, while proceeding in order of what would be rising longitude in the sky, has 15 names, sometimes mentioning parts of constellations. Section 2 uses the same names, but also additional ones which did not occur in Section 1. Section 4, which contains the triplicities, implies 12 zodiacal constellations of more or less equal size. These differences probably follow from the different sources used in compilation of the tablet.

⁸ [Reiner & Pingree 1981, 28–51].

⁹ Similar predictions of equivalents, depending on the brightness and position of planets, are given in [Hunger 1976] no. 94. That text does not arrange the constellations in triplicities, however.

This tablet provides one more instance of an ad-hoc compilation of astral lore by a particular scribe of the Late period;¹⁰ as such, it may be of interest to our friend who pays attention also to seemingly lowly texts.

Bibliography

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¹⁰ A similar tablet is [Thureau-Dangin 1922] no. 11. Note however that Šema'ja is probably not the one who composed this tablet, because he states in the colophon that he copied the text from another tablet.

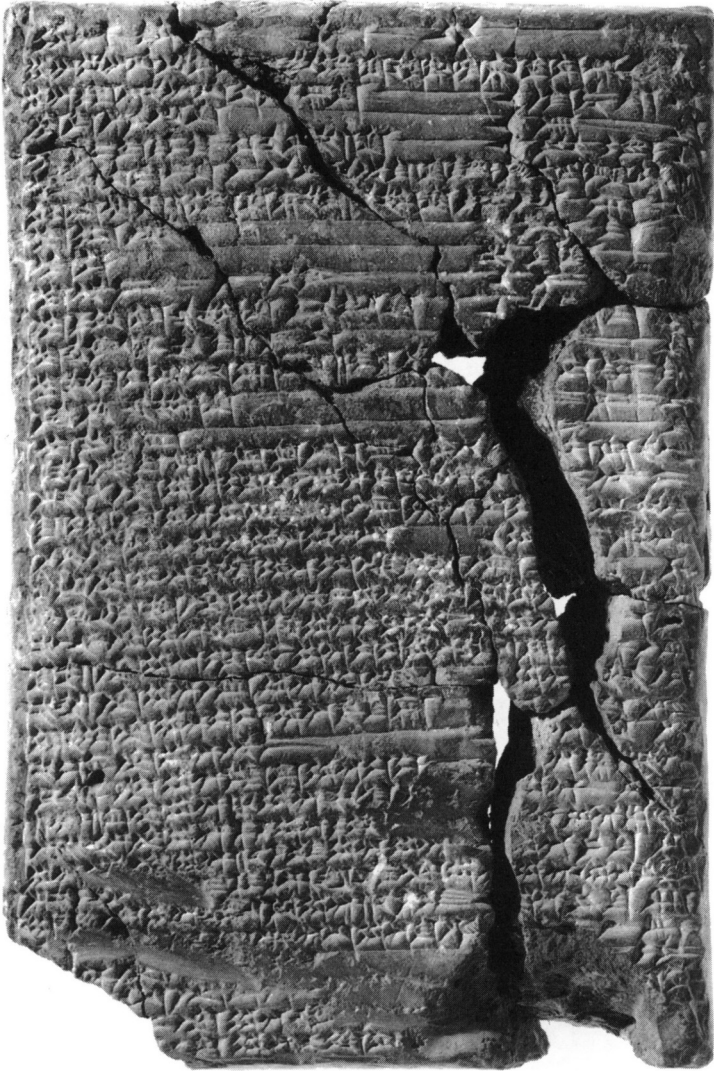


Plate 1: BM 47494 Obverse (courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum)

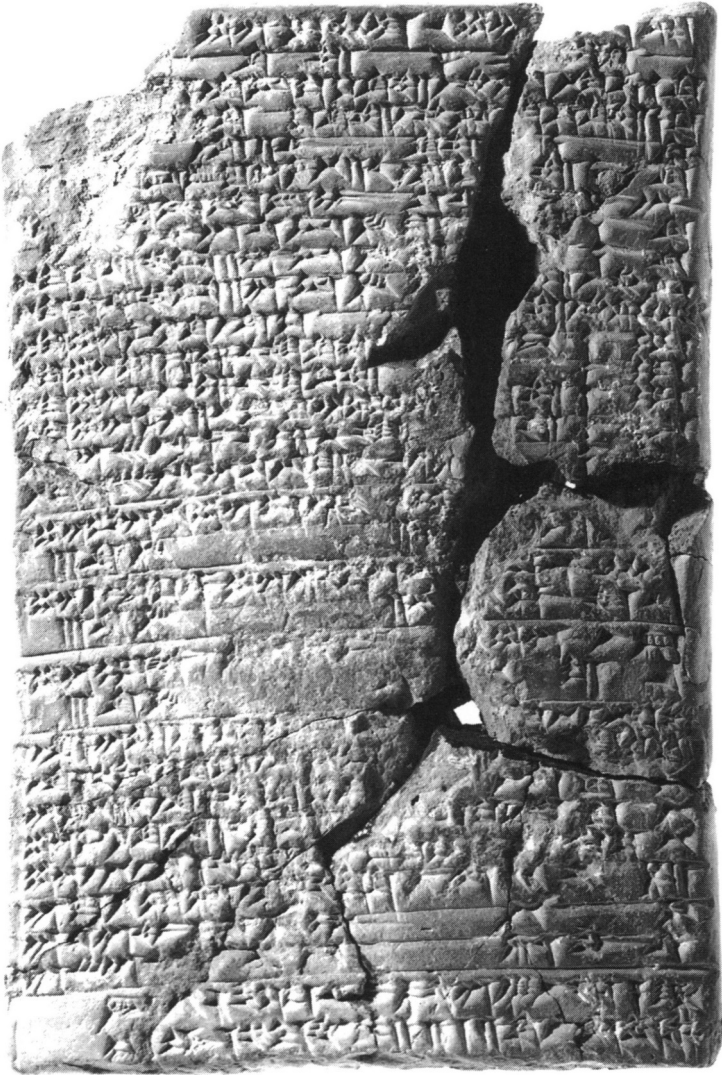


Plate 2: BM 47494 Reverse (courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum)