

# **Ancient History Sourcebook: The Reports of the Magicians & Astrologers of Nineveh & Babylon, c. 2500 - 670 BCE**

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## **I. When the Moon Appears on the First Day of the Month.**

WHEN the Moon appears on the first day, there will be silence, the land will be satisfied. When the day is long according to its calculation, there will be a long reign. From Bullutu.

When the Moon appears on the first day, there will be silence, the land will be satisfied. This is for Nisan and ishri (?). When the Moon is regularly full, the crops of the land will prosper, the king will go to pre-eminence.

May Ashur, Shamash, Nabu, and Marduk, day after day, month after month, year after year, grant happiness, health, joy, and exultation, a secure throne forever, for long days and many years to the king, my lord! From Nabu-iqbi.

Two or three times during these days we have looked for Mars, but could not see it. If the king, my lord, should say, "Is it an omen that it is invisible?" it is not. From Ishtar-shum-eresh.

## **II. Omens From the Horns of the Moon.**

When the Moon's horns face equally, there will be a secure dwelling for the land. When at the Moon's appearance (its horns) are pointed, the king wherever his face is set will rule the land, (or) wherever he presses on will overcome. From Irasshi-ilu, the king's servant, the greater.

When at the Moon's appearance its right horn is long and its left horn is short, the king's hand will conquer a land other than this. When the Moon at its appearance is very large, an eclipse will take place. When the Moon at its appearance is very bright, the crops of the land will prosper. When the day is long according to its calculation, there will be a long reign. The thirtieth day completed the month. In Elul an eclipse of Elam. From Nergal-etir.

When the Moon appears on the first of Kislev, the King of Akkad, wherever he goes, will ravage the land; (or) the King of Akkad, wherever his face is set,

will rule the land. (On the fourteenth day the Moon was seen with the Sun.) There will be an overthrowing of fortresses and downfall of garrisons; there will be obedience and good-will in the land. As for the rest, the king (will see?) their good luck.

May the king soon hear a happy report and greeting! From Asharidu.

Concerning Mercury, of which the king, my lord, sent me, yesterday Ishtar-shum-eresh in the palace proclaimed its going forth to Nabu-ahi-eriba. The omens in the festival day came, they have all been observed and seen, they have passed off. From Balasi.

### **III. When the Moon Appears on the Twenty-Eighth Day.**

When the Moon at its appearance appears on the twenty-eighth day as the first day, it is evil for Aharru. When the Moon appears on the twenty-eighth day, it is lucky for Akkad, unlucky for Aharru. From the Chief Physician.

### **IV. When the Moon Appears on the Thirtieth Day.**

When the Moon appears on the thirtieth of Nisan, Subartu Ahlamu will devour: a foreign tongue will gain the ascendancy in Aharru. (We are Subartu.) When the Moon appears on the thirtieth day, there will be cold in the land.

The Moon appeared without the Sun on the fourteenth of Tebet; the Moon completes the day in Shebat. On the fourteenth it appears without the Sun; the Moon completes the day in Adar. On the fourteenth it appears without the Sun; the Moon will complete the day in Nisan. From Nabu-ahi-eriba.

When the Moon appears on the thirtieth of Sivan, the abundance of Aharru Ahlamu will devour. When the Moon appears on the thirtieth day, there will be cold, (or) there will be the clamour of the enemy in the land. When the Moon at its appearance appears low, the enemy will seize on the land. When the Moon at its appearance appears low, the submission of a far country will come to the king (or) a messenger will come. From Irasshi-ilu, the king's servant.

When the Moon appears on the thirtieth of Ab, there will be a devastation of Akkad. Let not the all-powerful king leave me; it is I who daily beg of the king for my hunger; and now to brick-work he has set me, saying, "Make bricks." Let not the king, my lord, leave me and I shall not die. From Tabia.

## **V. Various Omens From the Moon.**

When the Moon disappears, evil will befall the land. When the Moon disappears out of its reckoning, an eclipse will take place. (The Moon disappeared on the twenty-fourth day.) When a halo surrounds the Sun on the day of the Moon's disappearance, an eclipse of the left side of the Moon will take place.

In Kislev a watch was kept for the eclipse, the halo surrounding the Sun and the disappearance of the Moon (being the causes of the watch for an eclipse in Kislev) having been observed. May the king, my lord, know, and may he rest happy! From Irasshi-ilu, the king's servant (the greater).

## **VI. Omens From Halos.**

Last night a halo surrounded the Moon, and Jupiter and Scorpio stood within it. When a halo surrounds the Moon and Jupiter stands within it, the King of Akkad will be besieged. When a halo surrounds the Moon and Jupiter stands within it, there will be a slaughter of cattle and beasts of the field. (Marduk is Umunpauddu at its appearance; when it has risen for two (or four?) hours it becomes Sagnigar; when it stands in the meridian it becomes Nibiru.) When a halo surrounds the Moon and Scorpio stands in it, it will cause men to marry princesses, (or) lions will die, and the traffic of the land will be hindered. From Nabu-mushesi.

When a halo surrounds the Moon, and Regulus stands within it, women will bear male children. From Nergal-etir.

When a halo surrounds the Moon and a planet stands within it, robbers will rage. (Saturn stood within the halo of the Moon.) When Jupiter draws near to Taurus, the good fortune of the land passes away, (or) the generation of cattle and sheep is not prosperous. (Jupiter has entered Taurus: let the king, my lord, keep himself from the storm-wind.) When Mars reaches the path of the Sun there will be a famine of cattle, there will be want. (Mars reached Saturn.) When a planet and Mars stand facing one another, there will be an invasion of the enemy. When Mars, its rising is dark \_\_\_\_\_, its light like \_\_\_\_\_.

When the greater halo surrounds the Moon, that land will be enlarged, destructions will surround men. When it surrounds and Cancer stands within it, the King of Akkad will prolong life. When Regulus stands within it, women will bear male children. When the greater halo surrounds the moon and is thin, there will be a giving of years to the king. (A great halo has

surrounded it, and has remained for many nights and is uninterrupted.) From Shapiku, of Borsippa.

## **VII. When the Moon and Sun are Seen with One Another.**

### *(1) On the Twelfth Day.*

When the Moon appears out of its expected time, the market will be low. (It was seen with the Sun on the twelfth.) When the Moon and Sun are seen with one another out of their expected time, a strong enemy will overcome the land; the King of Akkad will accomplish the defeat of his foe.

### *(2) On the Fourteenth Day.*

When the Moon reaches the Sun and with it fades out of sight, its horns being dim, there will be truth in the land, and the son will speak the truth with his father. (On the fourteenth the Moon was seen with the Sun.) When the Moon and the Sun are invisible, the king will increase wisdom; the king of the land, the foundation of his throne will be secure. (On the fourteenth day the Moon was seen with the Sun.) When the Moon and Sun are seen with one another on the fourteenth, there will be silence, the land will be satisfied; the gods intend Akkad for happiness. Joy in the heart of the people. The cattle of Akkad will lie down securely in the pasture-places. When a dark halo surrounds the Moon, it gathers clouds; that month will bring rain. When its horns are dim, a flood will come. (On the fourteenth the Moon was seen with the Sun). About the people concerning whom I sent to the king my lord, the king does not say, "Why?" but has said, "Let them bring them hither." Now the king knows I hold no land in Assyria: I, what is my family to them, or what my life? Who is my god, who is my lord, to whom and how are my eyes turned? Now let my lord, the king, for whose life I pray Shamash, send it unto Ahisha, by royal authority, and let his messenger bring the people: let the governor of Babylon cause him to leave. Let Nabu-etir-napshati, my son, the king's servant, come, that with me he may visit the king.

On the fourteenth the Moon and Sun were seen with one another. Last night a halo surrounded the Moon, Saturn stood within it near the Moon.

They shall bring in that tablet of the Day of Bel which we have written for the king, my lord, to see, and they shall give us the Akkadian tablet of the king. They shall inclose three "stars" therein on the front, and shall direct the officer that whoever opens the document shall close it in his presence.

When the Moon stops in its course the market will be low. On the fifteenth it was seen with the Sun. Last night a halo surrounded the Moon, and Virgo and

Spica stood within it. When a halo surrounds the Moon, and Spica (Pan) stands within it, brigands will be rampant, and there will be much robbery in the land. When a "river" surrounds the Moon, there will be great rains and showers. A-edin stood within the halo of the Moon. From Nabu-iqisha, of Borsippa.

*(3) On the Fifteenth Day.*

When Jupiter goes with Venus, the prayer of the land will reach the heart of the gods. Marduk and Sarpanit will hear the prayer of their people, and will have mercy on my people. Let them send me an ass, that it may ease my feet. From Nergal-etir.

*(4) On the Sixteenth Day.*

When the Moon and Sun are seen with one another on the sixteenth day, king to king will send hostility. The king will be besieged in his palace for the space of a month. The feet of the enemy will be against the land; the enemy will march triumphantly in his land. When the Moon on the fourteenth or fifteenth of Tammuz is not seen with the Sun, the king will be besieged in his palace. When it is seen on the sixteenth day, it is lucky for Subartu, evil for Akkad and Aharru. From Akkullanu.

### **VIII. Omens from the Sun.**

When the Sun stands in the place of the Moon, the king of the land will be secure on his throne. When the Sun stands above or below the Moon, the foundation of the throne will be secure; the king will stand in his justice. When the Sun and Moon are invisible, the king of the land will increase wisdom. (Last night Saturn drew near to the Moon. Saturn is the star of the Sun. This is its interpretation; it is lucky for the king. The Sun is the king's star.)

### **IX. Omens from Stars.**

When the Moon occults Jupiter, that year a king will die, (or) an eclipse of the Moon and Sun will take place. A great king will die. When Jupiter enters the midst of the Moon, there will be want in Aharru. The King of Elam will be slain with the sword: in Subarti \_\_\_\_\_ (?) will revolt. When Jupiter enters the midst of the Moon, the market of the land will be low. When Jupiter goes out from behind the Moon, there will be hostility in the land.

After two hours of the night had passed, a great star shone from north to south. Its omens are propitious for the king's desire. The King of Akkad will accomplish his mission. From Asharidu (the greater), the king's servant.

Venus is appearing at sunset in the Tropic of Cancer: this is its interpretation. When Venus appears in Sivar; there will be a slaughter of the enemy. When Venus appears in the Tropic of Cancer the King of Akkad will have no rival. Five or Six days ago it reached Cancer. This is its interpretation. When Venus approaches Cancer there will be obedience and welfare in the land: the gods will have mercy on the land. Empty \_\_\_\_\_ (?) will be full and the crops of the land will prosper; the sick in the land will recover. Pregnant women will perfect their offspring. The great gods will show favor to the sanctuaries of the land, the houses of the great gods will be renewed. From Shumai.

When Venus in Kislev from the first to the thirtieth day disappears at sunrise, there will be famine of corn and straw in the land. The lord of kings has spoken thus: "Why have you not (observed?) the month, and sent the lucky and unlucky?" The prince of the kingdom has been neglected, has not been obeyed. May the lord of kings when his face is favourable lift up my head that I may make my decisions and tell the king, my lord! From Asharidu.

When Mercury is seen in Iyyar, a flood will come and benefit the fields and meadow lands. When Jupiter reaches Mars (Mulmul), it will rain. On the fourteenth the Moon and Sun were not seen with one another: on fifteenth god was seen with god. The King of Subarti will have no rival. (I have heard from my father.) From Bel-ahi-eribi.

Mercury is visible with Mars at sunset; it is ascending to Shugi. There will be rains and floods. When Jupiter appears at the beginning of the year, in that year its crops will prosper. From Nadinu.

## **XII. Omens from Storms.**

When a storm comes upon the land, the crops will be increased the market will be steady. When a storm prevails in the land, the "reign" of the land will rule great power. When a storm bursts in Sebat, an eclipse of Kasshi will take place. From Asharidu, the king's servant.

## **XIII. Omens from Thunder.**

When it thunders on the day of the Moon's disappearance, the crops will prosper and the market will be steady. When it rains on the day of the

Moon's disappearance, it will bring on the crops and the market will be steady. Long live the lord of kings! From Asharidu.

When it thunders in Ab, the day is dark, heaven rains, lightning lightens, waters will be poured forth in the channels. When it thunders on a cloudless day, there will be darkness (or) famine in the land.

Concerning this sickness the king has not spoken from his heart. The sickness lasts a year: people that are ill recover. Do you grant, O king, my lord, that they pursue the worship of the gods and pray the gods day and night! Does truth ever reach the king and his family? A man should kill a calf without blemish, he should cut it in pieces; he himself should say as follows: "A man that is in full health, his days are short; he is sick, his days are long." From Ishtar-shum-eresh.

When it thunders in Tishri, the day is dark, heaven reigns, the rainbow is divided, lightning lightens, the gods will have mercy on the land. From the Chief Scribe.

When it thunders in Shebat, there will be an invasion of locusts. When it thunders in Shebat, heaven will rain with stones.

#### **XIV. Omens from Earthquakes.**

When the earth quakes in Nisan, the king's land will revolt from him. When the earth quakes during the night, harm will come to the land, or devastation to the land. From Apla.

Last night there was an earthquake. When the earth quakes in Tebet, the king will sit in the city of his foe. When the earth quakes in Tebet, the palace of the prince will be smitten and go to ruins. When the earth quakes in the night, there will be harm to the land (or) devastation to the land. From the Chief Astrologer.

#### **XV. Omens from Eclipses.**

On the fourteenth an eclipse will take place. It is evil for Elam and Aharru, lucky for the king, my lord; let the king, my lord, rest happy. It will be seen without Venus; to the king, my lord, I say, "There will be an eclipse." From Irasshi-ilu, the servant of the king (the greater).

To the king of countries, my lord, thy servant, Bel-usur. May Bel, Nabu, and

Shamash be gracious to the king, my lord! An eclipse has happened, but it was not visible in Asshur; this eclipse passed the city Asshur, wherein the king is dwelling; now there are clouds everywhere, so that whether it did or did not happen we do not know. Let the lord of kings send to Asshur, to all cities, to Babylon, Nippur, Erech, and Borsippa; whatever has been seen in those cities the king will hear for certain. The omens \_\_\_\_\_ the omen for an eclipse happened in Adar and Nisan; I send all to the king, my lord, and they shall make a *nambulbi*-ceremony for the eclipse. Without fail (?) let not the king omit (?) to act rightly. The great gods in the city wherein the king dwells have obscured the heaven and will not show the eclipse; so let the king know that this eclipse is not directed against the king, my lord, or his country. Let the king rejoice!

(When) it thunders in Nisan, grain (?) will be diminished.

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