

## THE FIRST AND THIRD YEARS OF BELSHAZZAR (DAN 7:1; 8:1)

GERHARD F. HASEL  
Andrews University

In 1885 George Rawlinson declared that "the date of the association [of Belshazzar with Nabonidus] was at the latest 540 B.C., Nabonidus' fifteenth year, since the third year of Belshazzar is mentioned in Daniel 8:1."<sup>1</sup> The view that Dan 7, dated to the first year of Belshazzar (vs. 1), and Dan 8, dated to his third year (vs. 1), were written close to the fall of Babylon was and still is widespread. Rawlinson's influence on commentators is known,<sup>2</sup> but others held similar views before him.<sup>3</sup> The interpretation that the first and third years of Belshazzar fall respectively two years before and in the year of the fall of Babylon or shortly before is preserved almost to the present in Daniel commentaries.<sup>4</sup> These works do not take into account the extraordinary influx of cuneiform data that is now available on this

<sup>1</sup> G. Rawlinson, *The Seven Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World* (New York, 1885), p. 610, n. 202.

<sup>2</sup> Uriah Smith, *Daniel and Revelation*, 2d ed. (Nashville, Tenn., 1944), p. 44, quotes Rawlinson. His comments on Dan 8:1 (p. 149) reveal that he dates the third year of Belshazzar in the year of the fall of Babylon. S. N. Haskell, *The Story of Daniel the Prophet* (South Lancaster, Mass., 1908), p. 102, dates the first year of Dan 7:1 to 540 B.C. and the third year of Belshazzar of Dan 8:1 two years later (p. 119).

<sup>3</sup> O. Zöckler, "The Book of the Prophet Daniel," *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, ed. J. P. Lange (1st ed. in 1876; with reprint at Grand Rapids, Mich., 1960), 13: 171; and others.

<sup>4</sup> According to A. C. Gaebelein, *The Prophet Daniel* (New York, 1911), p. 94, Dan 8:1 reveals that "it was the year when the feast of blasphemy was held and Babylon fell." E. J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1949), p. 165, states, "At any rate, this vision [ch. 8] occurred shortly before the events of the fatal night of ch. 5." H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (Minneapolis, Minn., 1949), p. 165; suggests, "In any event, in point of time the matter revealed in our chapter [8] seems to have occurred but a short time before that revealed in chapter five, for Belshazzar's reign seems to have been rather short." G. R. King, *Daniel: A Detailed Explanation of the Book* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1966), p. 124; declares, "In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar' . . . means that it was just before Babylon fell."

matter since the early 1880's. In the middle 1950's some commentaries reflect the changed situation,<sup>5</sup> but uncertainty as to the dates of Belshazzar's kingship is nonetheless reflected to the present.<sup>6</sup> The widely accepted date of 553/52 B.C., the third regnal year of Nabonidus, as the year of the installation of Belshazzar to kingship is based primarily on the suggestion of R. P. Dougherty made in 1929.<sup>7</sup> But shortly thereafter F. W. König challenged Dougherty's interpretation,<sup>8</sup> and the debate has not yet come to an end.<sup>9</sup>

In view of this set of circumstances it seems useful (a) to provide a survey of the relevant cuneiform finds, and (b) to discuss the chronological data for Nabonidus as they relate to the kingship of his crown prince Belshazzar. This investigation is intended to reveal the commencement of Belshazzar's kingship and thus determine his first and third years (Dan 7:1, 8:1).

### 1. *The Cuneiform Data*

The earliest existing discovery of a cuneiform record relevant to this study was published by T. G. Pinches in 1882 and is now

<sup>5</sup> G. M. Price, *The Greatest of the Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif., 1955), p. 159, reflects the information gathered by R. P. Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar* (New Haven, Conn., 1929), to whom he refers (pp. 44-45, 134) in this statement: "The third year of Belshazzar . . . [is] 550 or 547, since Belshazzar had become king in the winter of 553/2 or in the winter of 550/549 B.C." *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C., 1955), 4: 808, states that kingship was conferred on Belshazzar "in 553/52 B.C., or shortly thereafter" and seems also to reflect Dougherty's conclusions.

<sup>6</sup> B. H. Hall, "The Book of Daniel," *The Wesleyan Bible Commentary*, ed. C. W. Carter (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1969), 3: 534.

<sup>7</sup> *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, pp. 134-135, 193.

<sup>8</sup> F. W. König, "Naboned und Kuraš," *AfO* 7 (1931/32): 178-181.

<sup>9</sup> J. Lewy, "The Late Assyro-Babylonian Cult of the Moon and Its Culmination at the Time of Nabonidus," *HUCA* 19 (1946): 405-489, whose view of the Sin cult is refuted by E. Dhorme, "La mère de Nabonide," *Recueil E. Dhorme* (Paris, 1951), pp. 330-338; A. Parrot, *Babylon and the Old Testament* (London, 1958), pp. 118-121; C. J. Gadd, "The Harran Inscriptions of Nabonidus," *Anatolian Studies* 8 (1958): 35-92; W. Röllig, "Erwägungen zu neuen Stelen König Nabonids," *ZA* 56 (1964): 218-260; H. Tadmor, "The Inscriptions of Nabonaid: Historical Arrangement," *Studies in Honor of Benno Landsberger* (Chicago, 1965), pp. 351-363; W. G. Lambert, "A New Source for the Reign of Nabonidus," *AfO* 22 (1968/9): 1-8.

usually called the "Nabonidus Chronicle."<sup>10</sup> It contains a year-by-year account, sometimes fragmentary, of the seventeen-year reign of Nabonidus<sup>11</sup> and reveals that Nabonidus was in Tema in his seventh year, 549/548 B.C. In 1916 Pinches published another text in which Nabonidus and Belshazzar held a "regal position," although he stated that "we have yet to learn what was Belshazzar's exact position in Babylon."<sup>12</sup> Eight years later that question was cleared up with the publication by Sidney Smith of the so-called "Verse Account of Nabonidus."<sup>13</sup> The well-known stanza from the second column, lines 16-23, of this Verse Account states that Nabonidus "entrusted the 'Camp' to his oldest son, the first born [Belshazzar], the troops everywhere in the country he ordered under his (command). He let everything go, entrusted the kingship to him, and, himself, . . . he turned towards Tema (deep) in the west."<sup>14</sup> This text settled all doubts about a kingship for Belshazzar. The known cuneiform material was brought together in 1929 in the classic monograph *Nabonidus and Belshazzar* by Dougherty.

A discovery of great importance for the whole reign of Nabonidus and the kingship of Belshazzar was made in 1957 when stelae with inscriptions of Nabonidus came to light in the walls of an old mosque in Harran. They were published in the following year by C. J. Gadd.<sup>15</sup> The Harran stelae provide much-needed information regarding the length of Nabonidus' stay in Tema and aid in solving the puzzle regarding the time

<sup>10</sup> *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 7 (1882): pp. 139-156. Later editions are found in S. Smith, *Babylonian Historical Texts, Relating to the Downfall of Babylon* (London, 1924), pp. 98-123; *ANET*, pp. 305-307, and the most recent publication is A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (Locust Valley, N.Y., 1975), pp. 104-111.

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of the nature of this chronicle, see W. H. Shea, "An Unrecognized Vassal King of Babylon in the Early Achaemenid Period," *AUSS* 10 (1972): 95-111.

<sup>12</sup> *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 38 (1916): 30.

<sup>13</sup> Smith, pp. 83-91; A. L. Oppenheim in *ANET*, pp. 312b-315a.

<sup>14</sup> *ANET*, p. 313b.

<sup>15</sup> Gadd, pp. 35-92; more recent studies and publications are by M. L.

when Belshazzar was entrusted with "kingship." Other discoveries during the last fifty years have aided considerably in providing chronological data for the Neo-Babylonian and Persian empires in general.<sup>16</sup> These documents contain the primary data for the beginning and end of the kingship of Belshazzar in Babylon during his father's sojourn in Tema.

## 2. Chronological Information from The Primary Data

Various cuneiform documents reveal that Nabonidus began his reign in 556 B.C., which was reckoned as his accession year,<sup>17</sup> and not in 555 B.C.<sup>18</sup> In his seventeenth year, in the middle of October, 539, Babylon fell to the combined forces of the Medes and Persians, as the Nabonidus Chronicle states.<sup>19</sup>

A variety of suggestions have been made regarding the length of time of the coregency of Nabonidus and Belshazzar. As already noted, we know from the Verse Account that Nabonidus "entrusted kingship to him [Belshazzar]."<sup>20</sup> Further, we know from "two legal documents dated to the twelfth [544/543] and thirteenth years [543/542] of Nabonidus, which record oaths sworn by the life of Nabonidus, the king, and of Bēl-šar-ušur, the crown prince, for which there is no parallel in cuneiform

Moran, "Notes on the New Nabonidus Inscriptions," *Or*, n.s., 28 (1959): 130-140; W. Röllig, pp. 218-260; *ANET Supplement*, pp. 560-563.

<sup>16</sup> See esp. R. A. Parker and W. H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.-A.D. 45*, 2d ed. (Providence, R.I., 1956); D. J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of the Chaldean Kings (626-556 B.C.) in the British Museum* (London, 1956).

<sup>17</sup> Parker and Dubberstein, p. 11.

<sup>18</sup> The chronology of Smith, pp. 107-170, of the first years of Nabonidus' reign is obsolete because he assumed that Nabonidus began to rule in 555 B.C.

<sup>19</sup> Grayson, p. 109: "In the month of Tishri . . . On the sixteenth day Ugbaru, governor of the Gutu and the army of Cyrus II entered Babylon without battle" (cf. *ANET*, p. 306). Parker and Dubberstein, p. 11, suggests that the 16th of Tishri, the day on which Babylon fell, was Oct. 13; J. C. Whitcomb, *Darius the Mede* (Philadelphia, 1963), p. 22, suggests Oct. 12; D. J. Wiseman, "Babylonia," *New Bible Dictionary: Revised* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1965), p. 123, suggests Oct. 16.

<sup>20</sup> *ANET*, p. 313b.

literature,<sup>21</sup> that Belshazzar probably functioned as king in Babylon as early as 544/543. This line of evidence indicates that there is no basis for the old view that Dan 8 came near the fall of Babylon—a view which was customary before the cuneiform data came to light and which has been widely accepted to the present.

The Nabonidus Chronicle revealed for the first time something of the lengthy sojourn of Nabonidus in the Arabian oasis town of Tema. It begins the year-by-year account of Nabonidus for the seventh, ninth, tenth, and eleventh years with the words “the king (was) in Tema while the prince [Belshazzar], his officials, (and) his army (were) in Akkad.”<sup>22</sup> “Akkad” is the eastern half of the Babylonian empire, namely, Mesopotamia, as compared to “Hatti,” the western part.<sup>23</sup>

Scholars have been in disagreement on how long Nabonidus stayed at Tema, or when he went there,<sup>24</sup> but the question of the length of Nabonidus’ stay in Tema was totally cleared up in 1958 with the publication of the Harran stelae. In these stelae it is revealed that he stayed for “ten years” in Tema: “. . . ten years I went about amongst them, (and) to my city Babylon I went not in.”<sup>25</sup> It is also explained, “(After)<sup>26</sup> ten years arrived the appointed time,<sup>27</sup> and when “fulfilled was the year, [then] came the appointed time [when] . . . from the city of Tema [Sin let me return], . . . Babylon, my seal of lordship, [I entered]. . . .”<sup>28</sup> It is today beyond dispute that Nabonidus was in Tema for an entire decade and that then he returned to Babylon. He was

<sup>21</sup> A. L. Oppenheim, “Belshazzar,” *IDB*, 1: 379-380; Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>22</sup> *ANET*, p. 306a.

<sup>23</sup> M. Liverani, in *Peoples of OT Times*, ed. D. J. Wiseman (London, 1973), p. 122.

<sup>24</sup> Seven years were suggested by Lewy, p. 435; eight years by B. Meissner, *Könige Babylonians und Assyriens* (Leipzig, 1926), p. 280; and F. Weissbach, in *RLA*, 1: 383. Cf. R. Dussaud, “Sur le chemin de Suse et de Babylone,” *Mélanges Franz Cumont* (Paris, 1936), pp. 143-150.

<sup>25</sup> Nabonidus H 2, col. 1, lines 26-27; Gadd, pp. 58-59; Röllig, p. 224.

<sup>26</sup> With Röllig, p. 225. Gadd, p. 61, reads “(in) ten years. . . .”

<sup>27</sup> Nabonidus H 2, col. 2, line 11; Gadd, pp. 60-61; Röllig, p. 225.

<sup>28</sup> Nabonidus H 2, col. 3, lines 4-6; Gadd, pp. 62-63; Röllig, pp. 225-226.

taken prisoner after the fall of the city<sup>29</sup> and was made vassal ruler over the distant land of Carmania.<sup>30</sup>

The cuneiform texts provide data that have a bearing on the time when Nabonidus entrusted Belshazzar with kingship. The "Verse Account" reports,

After he had obtained what he desired, a work of utter deceit,  
 Had built (this) abomination, a work of unholiness  
 When the third year was about to begin  
 He entrusted the 'Camp' to his oldest (son), the firstborn,  
 The troops everywhere in the country he ordered under his (command).  
 He let (everything) go, entrusted kingship to him  
 And, himself, he started out for a long journey,  
 The (military) forces of Akkad marching with him;  
 He turned towards Tema (deep) in the west.<sup>31</sup>

The crucial phrase "when the third year was about to begin"<sup>32</sup> has been applied in different ways as regards the early reign of Nabonidus. It is generally agreed, however, that it is linked directly to the departure of Nabonidus to Tema and the building of the Sin temple Eḫulḫul in Harran,<sup>33</sup> and thus with the kingship of Belshazzar.

### 3. Interpretations of the Chronological Data

Suggestions differ greatly regarding the departure of Nabonidus to Tema—after the building of the Temple Eḫulḫul had been started or finished. Sidney Smith assumed that the restoration of

<sup>29</sup> Smith, p. 44, holds that Nabonidus fled in a southwesterly direction after the fall of Sippar, but finding the road blocked by Arabs, he returned to Babylon, which in the meantime had fallen; and there he was taken a Persian prisoner. Dhorme, "Cyrus le Grand," *Recueil E. Dhorme* (Paris, 1951), pp. 372-373, holds that Nabonidus was overtaken on the way to Borsippa and made a prisoner but was released by Cyrus; in this, Dhorme is followed by Parrot, pp. 120-121.

<sup>30</sup> According to Berossus as quoted by Josephus, *Contra Apionem*, 1: 20-21; cf. Smith, pp. 34-35; Parrot, p. 121, n. 2.

<sup>31</sup> *ANET*, p. 313b; cf. Tadmor, p. 354.

<sup>32</sup> This is the translation of the phrase *šalulti šatti ina kašādi* by A. L. Oppenheim, *ANET*, p. 313b. Tadmor renders this crucial phrase "on the advent of the third year" (p. 353).

<sup>33</sup> It may be argued that the phrase with the "third year" refers also to the events mentioned subsequent to the phrase itself.

Eḫulḫul began in the first year of Nabonidus and that it was finished in his "third year," in which he began his Arabian campaign.<sup>34</sup> Dougherty followed Smith's lead by equating the "third year" of the Verse Account with the events which the Nabonidus Chronicle assigns to the "third year" of Nabonidus' reign.<sup>35</sup> This interpretation has found considerable following, especially in view of an interpretation of the "Dream Text" in the Sippar Cylinder which states that the dream came "in the very first year (*rēš šarrūtiya*) of my [Nabonidus'] everlasting rule,"<sup>36</sup> and that Nabonidus, immediately upon the defeat of Astyages in the "third year,"<sup>37</sup> restored Eḫulḫul and Harran.

However, the deduction that Nabonidus finished the building of Eḫulḫul in his third year (553/552), in which year he also moved to Tema, has serious chronological problems: (1) The Nabonidus Chronicle dates the defeat of Astyages by Cyrus, not to the third year but to the "sixth year" of Nabonidus (550/549).<sup>38</sup> (2) The phrase "first year" (*rēš šarrūti*), which has been assumed to be the accession year of Nabonidus (556/555), can in this instance only refer to the early years of the king's reign.<sup>39</sup> This new interpretation of *rēš šarrūti* as suggested by H. Tadmor removes the chronological problem in the cuneiform data, and thus it eliminates the chronological problem posed by Smith's dating of events, which dating is no longer defensible. The Nabonidus Chronicle informs us that Nabonidus conducted military expeditions for the first three years of his reign against Que in Asia Minor (year 1), Hamath in Syria (year 2), and Adummu in Arabia (year 3);<sup>40</sup> but nothing is stated about any attention to Harran

<sup>34</sup> Smith, pp. 77, 108.

<sup>35</sup> *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, p. 107.

<sup>36</sup> A. L. Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East* (Chicago, 1956), p. 250, no. 12. Published also by S. Langdon, *Die neubabylonischen Königsschriften, VAB 4* (Leipzig, 1912), pp. 218-219.

<sup>37</sup> So in the "Dream Text" of the Sippar Cylinder; cf. Oppenheim, *Dreams*, p. 250, no. 12.

<sup>38</sup> *ANET*, p. 305b; Grayson, p. 107.

<sup>39</sup> Tadmor, pp. 352-353.

<sup>40</sup> *ANET*, p. 305b. See J. Lindsey, "The Babylonian Kings and Edom, 605-

and/or Eḥulḥul. Accordingly, the suggestion that the restoration of Eḥulḥul should be dated after the end of the Syrian campaigns, i.e. the fourth year (552/551) of Nabonidus,<sup>41</sup> fits the chronological and historical data in the Nabonidus Chronicle, the "Verse Account," and the Sippar Cylinder.

The identification of the "third year" in the "Verse Account" with the third regnal year of Nabonidus is no longer a sound assumption. Contextually, the "third year" of this text appears to refer to the period of time that had elapsed since the restoration of Eḥulḥul had been started. It is also the year in which Nabonidus turned against Arabian Tema. This campaign was apparently different from the Syrian-Arabian campaign in his "third year," mentioned in the Nabonidus Chronicle, because the campaign in his third regnal year (553/552) was not against Arabian Tema but against the "country of Amurru"—a campaign in the course of which he came to the oasis of Adumatu.<sup>42</sup> Thus, the "third year" of the "Verse Account" appears to fall in the sixth regnal year of Nabonidus (550/549).

The chronological schemes of J. Lewy<sup>43</sup> and of Tadmor<sup>44</sup> present a different interpretation of the data. Aside from considering the fourth year (552/551) to be the year of Nabonidus' departure to Tema and thus the year when the kingship of Belshazzar began, they have little in common. Lewy argues that the restoration of Eḥulḥul was started in the second year of Nabonidus (554/553) and that the temple was finished in the fourth year (552/551), in which Nabonidus departed for Tema.<sup>45</sup>

550 B.C.," *PEQ* 108 (1976): 32-36; W. G. Lambert, "A New Source for the Reign of Nabonidus," *AfO* 22 (1968/9): 1-8.

<sup>41</sup> König, p. 179. K. Galling, *Studien zur Geschichte Israels im persischen Zeitalter* (Tübingen, 1964), pp. 11-17, thinks that the restoration of Eḥulḥul began in the third to fifth years of Nabonidus and was finished while Nabonidus was at Tema.

<sup>42</sup> Lewy, p. 428, n. 132, and p. 438.

<sup>43</sup> Lewy, pp. 428-429.

<sup>44</sup> Tadmor, pp. 356, 363.

<sup>45</sup> Lewy, pp. 434-439.

His identification of the "third year" with the fourth regnal year (in which the temple was supposedly completed) is historically quite difficult. There is no documentary evidence in support of this identification. The military endeavors that occupied Nabonidus in his second and third regnal years appear to rule out entirely that there was time and opportunity during those years for the building effort described in the Sippar Cylinder.<sup>46</sup>

Tadmor claims also that Nabonidus' stay in Tema is "apparently counted from year 4."<sup>47</sup> He offers no particular historical or chronological data to support his scheme. Interestingly, he suggests that phrase "third year" is a "literary device that is used in the Sippar Cylinder, meaning 'and it came to pass', that is, one cycle of events has come to an end and a new one is about to begin."<sup>48</sup> In contrast to his suggestion that the expression "first year" (*rēš šarrūti*) in the same document should be understood as referring to the early years of the king's reign, he is unable to offer any literary or historical support for a non-literal meaning of "third year." He himself admits that all chronological difficulties can be solved without the novel suggestion regarding the expression "third year."<sup>49</sup> It seems, therefore, safer to consider the "third year" of the "Dream Text" of the Sippar Cylinder, which is the year in which Cyrus defeated Astyages according to the same text, as the sixth year of Nabonidus (550/549)—the year of the defeat of Astyages by Cyrus according to the Nabonidus Chronicle. This synchronism fits the available chronological data of the currently available cuneiform texts.

The argument presented so far seems to make certain that Nabonidus' extended ten-year stay in Tema cannot have begun before the king's fourth regnal year (552/551) nor after his sixth regnal year (550/549 B.C.). The weight of evidence appears to suggest that Nabonidus turned to Tema in his sixth year for

<sup>46</sup> See also the objections of Tadmor, p. 354.

<sup>47</sup> Tadmor, p. 356, n. 31.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 355.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 353.

the following reasons: (1) He was already in Tema in the seventh year (549/548), as the Nabonidus' Chronicle states. (2) The "third year" of the Verse Account refers to the rebuilding of the temple Eḫulḫul, which is also the year of the king's departure to Tema when Belshazzar is entrusted with kingship. The synchronism of the "third year" in the Sippar Cylinder and the "third year" of the Verse Account with the sixth regnal year of Nabonidus (550/549) has the internal support from currently known primary sources of cuneiform literature. In both the Sippar Cylinder and the Verse Account the "third year" is linked with the rebuilding of the temple Eḫulḫul at Harran. The restoration of Eḫulḫul was apparently begun in the fourth year of Nabonidus (552/551), a conclusion supported by the information of the Nabonidus Chronicle<sup>50</sup> and by other cuneiform data<sup>51</sup> according to which the fourth regnal year is the first year that was not occupied with military campaigns. The "third year" of the Sippar Cylinder is also the year in which Astyages was defeated by Cyrus,<sup>52</sup> and this victory of Cyrus is dated to the sixth regnal year of Nabonidus (550/549) in the Nabonidus Chronicle.<sup>53</sup> In the Verse Account, a "third year" refers to the time after which the rebuilding of Eḫulḫul had been started, when Belshazzar<sup>54</sup> was entrusted with kingship and when Nabonidus went to Tema.<sup>55</sup> By combining the information of the Nabonidus Chronicle with that of the Sippar Cylinder and the Verse Account, one is led to conclude that the year in which Nabonidus moved to Tema and entrusted Belshazzar with kingship was his sixth regnal year (550/549).

<sup>50</sup> *ANET*, p. 305b; Grayson, pp. 106-107.

<sup>51</sup> See W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Babylonian Literary Texts* (London, 1965), No. 48; cf. J. N. Strassmaier, "Inscription of Nebuchadnezzar, Son of Nin-eb-nadin-šum," *Hebraica* 9 (1892): 4-5.

<sup>52</sup> See above, n. 36.

<sup>53</sup> *ANET*, p. 305b; Grayson, p. 106.

<sup>54</sup> *ANET*, 313b, "the oldest (son)." Cf. J. N. Strassmaier, *Inschriften von Nabonidus* (Leipzig, 1889), No. 50, line 13: "ṁdBel-šar-ušur mar šarri" = "Belshazzar, son of the king."

<sup>55</sup> *ANET*, p. 313b.

The chronological scheme outlined in the preceding paragraph fits perfectly the remainder of the information of the Nabonidus Chronicle, which records that in his seventh year (549/548) Nabonidus was in Tema,<sup>56</sup> and likewise in his ninth, tenth, and eleventh years. Unfortunately, the text is then incomplete until the seventeenth year, which is the last year of Nabonidus' reign. While prior to 1958 scholars had to guess the total length of Nabonidus' sojourn in Tema, the publication of the Harran stelae has cleared up this question with the information that Nabonidus stayed there for ten years.<sup>57</sup> After ten years in Tema,<sup>58</sup> Nabonidus returned to "Babylon, my seal of lordship."<sup>59</sup> The exact day for this departure to Babylon is provided. One of the Harran inscriptions pinpoints it to the 17th of Tashritu,<sup>60</sup> which is in our reckoning exactly one day less than a year before the fall of Babylon on the 16th of Tashritu, 539 B.C.<sup>61</sup> This would mean in our reckoning that Nabonidus left Tema on Tashritu 17 in his sixteenth regnal year, or October 25, 540 B.C.<sup>62</sup>

This departure date dovetails with the report that the New Year's festival of the year 539 (regarding which the Nabonidus Chronicle informs us in detail<sup>63</sup>) was celebrated again in Babylon for the first time in many years. The information of Xenophon regarding the Arabian campaign of Cyrus before the latter turned against Babylon also fits into this picture.<sup>64</sup> Further corroboration is furnished by information from Berossus to the effect that in the seventeenth year of Nabonidus' reign, Cyrus hastened to Baby-

<sup>56</sup> *ANET*, p. 306a: "Seventh year: The king (i.e. Nabonidus, stayed) in Tema; the crown prince [Belshazzar], his officials and his army (were) in Akkad."

<sup>57</sup> See above, n. 25.

<sup>58</sup> See above, n. 26 and n. 27.

<sup>59</sup> Nabonidus H 2, col. 3, line 6; Gadd, pp. 62-63; Röllig, pp. 225-226.

<sup>60</sup> H 2 A, col. 2, line 13; Gadd, pp. 60-61; Röllig, p. 225.

<sup>61</sup> *ANET*, p. 306b; Grayson, p. 109.

<sup>62</sup> Based on the table provided by Parker and Dubberstein, p. 27. Cf. Röllig, p. 244.

<sup>63</sup> *ANET*, p. 306b; cf. Smith, pp. 102-103; Grayson, p. 109.

<sup>64</sup> Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, 7:4.16.

lonia after "all the rest of Asia" (of which Arabia was a part) had been conquered.<sup>65</sup> The Cyrus Cylinder supports Xenophon and Berossus with the information that "all the kings of the West land living in tents, brought their heavy tributes and kissed my [Cyrus'] feet in Babylon."<sup>66</sup> Thus, the data derived from Greek and cuneiform sources regarding the events of the last year of Nabonidus' reign and Cyrus' Arabian conquest before the latter entered Babylon corroborate the suggestion of the return of Nabonidus from Tema barely a year before the end of his reign (and the end, also, of the kingship of his son Belshazzar).

The suggestion that the extended stay of Nabonidus at Tema began in his sixth regnal year (550-549) has been supported first by König,<sup>67</sup> and more recently by W. Röllig.<sup>68</sup> Some of König's remarks need to be qualified because he had no knowledge of the Harran stelae and their information regarding the building of Eḫulḫul and the length of Nabonidus' stay in Tema. Tadmor objected to König's suggestion that Nabonidus departed in his sixth regnal year to Tema because "the evidence collected by Dougherty makes it clear that by the end of the fifth year Nabunaid was in Tema and that Belshazzar was in charge of the administration."<sup>69</sup> The only evidence in support of this claim is Tadmor's inference "from certain economic documents, [that] Nabunaid departed to Teima not later than his fifth year."<sup>70</sup> The two texts upon which this inference is based hardly support the conclusions drawn from them. A brief receipt records the fact that on Elul 29 of the fifth year of Nabonidus (Oct. 9, 551) Belshazzar paid one mina of silver as tithe to the temple of Êanna in Erech.<sup>71</sup> Such tithe-paying was done by Nabonidus himself in

<sup>65</sup> Josephus, *Contra Apionem*, 1:20.

<sup>66</sup> ANET, p. 316a; cf. F. W. Winnett and W. L. Reed, *Ancient Records from North Arabia* (Toronto, 1970), pp. 99-103.

<sup>67</sup> König, pp. 179-180.

<sup>68</sup> Röllig, pp. 243-245, 257-260.

<sup>69</sup> Tadmor, p. 354.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 352.

<sup>71</sup> Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, p. 87.

his accession year at another temple in Sippar.<sup>72</sup> This text does not claim, however, that Nabonidus was in Tema nor that Belshazzar had been entrusted with kingship. According to our suggested chronology, Nabonidus would have been in Harran to restore the temple Eḫulḫul; and Belshazzar in this year took care of the needs of a Babylonian sanctuary. The inference that the latter already functioned with the authority of the kingship does not follow.

The other text is the brief Goucher tablet which reports that fifty shekels of silver and flour were given to Nabû-mušêtiq-urra who had been sent to "the land of Tema."<sup>73</sup> This provision was handed to him after he had returned from "the land of Tema" on Adar 5 of the fifth year of Nabonidus (March 11, 550). This text states neither that Belshazzar was in charge of the administration, nor that Nabonidus was either in Tema or in the oasis of Tema. The inference that Belshazzar was in charge of the administration of Babylon and that Nabonidus was in Tema has just as little support as the inference for Nebuchadnezzar's stay in Tema which one could draw from a text dated to the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar stating that a certain amount of provision was given to a man from Tema.<sup>74</sup>

Thus, these texts from Nabonidus' fifth year merely claim that there was traffic between the land of Tema and its oasis and Babylonia. This may be no surprise, because such traffic is known also from the time of Nebuchadnezzar. Tadmor's objection to the departure of Nabonidus to Tema in his sixth regnal year is not sustained by the data in the cuneiform records.

These texts, plus one more known from the fifth year of Nabonidus which speaks of Belshazzar's delivery of provisions to Nabû-ushallim,<sup>75</sup> are not a proof that he already functioned

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 87, n. 293; cf. Strassmaier, *Inschriften des Nabonidus*, No. 2, 1-6.

<sup>73</sup> R. P. Dougherty, *Archives from Erech I* (New Haven, 1923), No. 294: 6-7. Cf. *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, p. 116.

<sup>74</sup> Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, p. 117.

<sup>75</sup> Dougherty, *Archives from Erech I*, No. 405:1-7; *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, p. 100.

with kingship in that year.<sup>76</sup> But they do indicate that he had a certain association with Nabonidus and an exalted position<sup>77</sup> by the fifth year of Nabonidus, a situation which finally led to his being entrusted with kingship in the year in which Nabonidus went to Tema, as the Verse Account states.<sup>78</sup> This was the sixth year of Nabonidus (550/549), a time when Belshazzar was engaged in a most important legal action.<sup>79</sup> This "whole document is meaningless if Nabonidus was present in Babylon at the time."<sup>80</sup> "If he had been, it would not have been appropriate for Belshazzar to give attention to the settlement of the problem."<sup>81</sup>

Thus, the extant cuneiform data lead to the conclusion that kingship was entrusted to Belshazzar in the sixth year (550/549) of the reign of Nabonidus, who returned from his ten-year stay in Tema on Tashritu 17 of his sixteenth year (Oct. 25, 540 B.C.).<sup>82</sup>

#### 4. Identification of Belshazzar's First and Third Years

The discussion of the chronological data of the cuneiform sources in the previous section has indicated that Belshazzar received "kingship" (*šarrútim*)<sup>83</sup> at the time when Nabonidus left for Tema, i.e. in the sixth regnal year, 550/549 B.C. It seems, therefore, safe to assume that this was the "first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon" (Dan 7:1).<sup>84</sup> This means that the book of Daniel has a very long period of time between the events described in Dan 2 and those of Dan 7. Dan 2 is dated to the

<sup>76</sup> This is an inference drawn by Lewy, p. 434, n. 145.

<sup>77</sup> Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, p. 101.

<sup>78</sup> *ANET*, p. 313b.

<sup>79</sup> Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, pp. 125-129.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136. Cf. Röllig, p. 244, n. 70.

<sup>82</sup> Smith, pp. 102-103, had already suggested that Nabonidus returned in the latter part of his reign. Parrot, pp. 116-118, believed that Nabonidus returned in his seventeenth year, i.e. 539 B.C. This guess was very good if one considers that he wrote before the Harran stelae had come to light. It has been pointed out above that Tashritu 17 must have been in the sixteenth year. Recent cuneiform data bring about greater precision.

<sup>83</sup> *ANET*, p. 313b.

<sup>84</sup> There is no need to reckon with an accession year of Belshazzar because he was never sole ruler over Babylon.

“second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar” (vs. 1), which is best considered as his second regnal year, i.e. 603 B.C.,<sup>85</sup> and Dan 7 is dated to 550/549 B.C. The time span of fifty-three years bridges the vision of Dan 2 and the vision of Dan 7 which “is a reminiscent replica of that of the Image in c. 2.”<sup>86</sup> This indicates that a long period of time can elapse between two closely related visions.

The “third year of the reign of king Belshazzar” (Dan 8:1) is accordingly to be dated two years after Belshazzar was entrusted with kingship, i.e. 548/547 B.C. The time span between Dan 7 and Dan 8 according to the dating of the visions in the book of Daniel is only two years, a relatively short time compared to the time between Dan 2 and Dan 7, two chapters that are closely related in content. A relatively short time elapsed also between Dan 8 and Dan 9, the latter of which is apparently dated in the year of the fall of Babylon, 539 B.C. The time span between chaps. 8 and 9 consists of only nine years, a relatively short period compared to the more than fifty years between chaps. 2 and 7.

On the basis of the discussion presented in this essay and the resulting chronological conclusions, a number of widely held views must be set aside. The claim that the third year of Belshazzar was the year in which the “feast of blasphemy was held and Babylon fell”<sup>87</sup> or that “this vision [ch. 8] occurred shortly before the events of the fatal night of ch. 5”<sup>88</sup> and similar ones are in need of revision. The positions that “these dates [Dan 7:1; 8:1] have no significance,”<sup>89</sup> or appear to be gratuitous,

<sup>85</sup> It is no longer necessary to explain the difficulty between Dan 2:1 and 1:1, 18 through textual emendation (H. Ewald, A. Kamphausen, J. D. Prince, K. Marti, and J. Jahn) or double reckoning (C. B. Michaelis, G. Behrmann). The practice of inclusive reckoning, together with the recognition of the Babylonian usage of the king's accession year as not being counted, removes all difficulties.

<sup>86</sup> J. A. Montgomery, *The Book of Daniel* (Edinburgh, 1927), p. 283.

<sup>87</sup> Gaebelein, p. 94.

<sup>88</sup> Young, p. 165.

<sup>89</sup> N. W. Porteous, *Daniel: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, 1965), p. 102.

unless there was a tradition of a three years' reign of that monarch,<sup>90</sup> also need to be revised. J. A. Montgomery rightly noted in 1927 that "the Bible story is correct as to the rank of kingship given to Belshazzar."<sup>91</sup> New cuneiform data suggest that Belshazzar functioned with full kingship from 550/549 B.C. to the end of the Neo-Babylonian empire.

In short, the book of Daniel dates chaps. 7 and 8 to 550/549 and 548/547 B.C. respectively, or about eleven and nine years before the fateful night in which Belshazzar lost his life (Dan 5:30) and when Babylon fell (middle of October, 539). Accordingly, the book's own chronology dates these chapters a number of years before chaps. 5 and 9.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Montgomery, p. 325.

<sup>91</sup> Montgomery, p. 67, against O. Plöger, *Das Buch Daniel* (Gütersloh, 1965), p. 107, writes that "historically he has never been an independent king but merely substituted for his father during his lengthy time of absence." Is there any claim anywhere that Belshazzar was ever an "independent king"?