TAKAYOSHI OSHIMA

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Orientalische Religionen in der Antike
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Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi and the *Babylonian Theodicy*

Mohr Siebeck

Takayoshi Oshima, born 1967; PhD in Assyriology from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel; 2008-10 Alexander-von-Humboldt fellow at the University of Leipzig in Germany; 2010-13 research associate fellow at the Friedrich-Schiller University in Jena (project of the German Research Foundation (DFG)); currently he teaches at the Friedrich-Schiller University.

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To Sabina
הודו לאל השמים כי לעולם חסדו
(Ps. 136: 26)

Foreword

This is a study of the two ancient Babylonian poems known as *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* ('Let Me Praise the Lord of Wisdom') and the *Babylonian Theodicy*. The former is also known as the *Poem of the Righteous Sufferer* or the *Babylonian Job*. The research was carried out between June 2010 and May 2013 with a generous grant from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft.

Because they deal with the suffering of the pious and are thus reminiscent of the Old Testament *Book of Job*, the two poems *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* and the *Babylonian Theodicy* are probably among the Babylonian texts most thoroughly studied not only by Assyriologists but also by scholars from the fields of biblical exegesis, Jewish and Christian theology, and religious studies. In this, they rank alongside the *Atra-ḫasīs Epic*, the *Gilgameš Epic*, and *Enūma Eliš*. This monograph, therefore, is addressed not only to the community of Assyriologists, but also, more generally, to researchers and students of theology, of biblical studies, and of comparative religious studies.

My first serious encounter with *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* and the *Babylonian Theodicy* was about 10 years ago, during my PhD research on Sumero-Akkadian hymns and prayers addressed to the god Marduk. When I was studying the texts dedicated to the god Marduk, I noticed that Sumero-Akkadian hymns and prayers were closely related to this so-called Babylonian wisdom literature. That should not be surprising because these texts were composed on the same principles that the ancient thinkers had maintained throughout the history of ancient Mesopotamia. Similarities between them are also found not only in basic beliefs but also in motifs and phraseology. For me, studying *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* and the *Babylonian Theodicy* was thus a natural extension of my PhD and post-doctoral research. My initial work on *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* and the *Babylonian Theodicy* began in 2006, when I was in London for three months as a short term British Academy fellow. Alongside my main research on Akkadian prayers to Marduk, I gathered information about the manuscripts of these poems belonging to the tablet collections of the British Museum. Given the dozens of materials either as yet unpublished or published after W. G. Lambert's *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*, Oxford 1960, I became strongly aware of the urgent need for new critical editions of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* and the *Babylonian Theodicy*. However, only in 2010, when I was granted the three years research grant from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, I could start working on these Babylonian poems.

First of all, I would like to thank the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft for financially supporting my research project on these ancient poems for three years. Also, I would like to thank the mentor of my research project, Prof. Manfred Krebernik, the director of the Altorientalisches Institut of the Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, for

his generous help in so many matters. Their support enabled me to complete my research project with the publication of this monograph.

For this study, I have copied and collated from the original tablets all the relevant cuneiform manuscripts in the collections of the British Museum in London and the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin. I am very grateful to the Trustees of the British Museum and to Prof. Joachim Marzahn, the Curator of the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin, for their kind permission to collate, copy, and publish the cuneiform tablets in their collections.

I am in debt to many colleagues and friends. In particular, my gratitude is due to: Dr Nils Heeßel, Prof. Hermann Spieckermann, Prof. Edward Greenstein, Prof. Uri Gabbay, Prof. Michael P. Streck, Prof. Simo Parpola, Dr Ulrike Steinert, Prof. Jan Dietrich, the late Dr Bendt Alster, Prof. Manfried Dietrich, Dr Irving L. Finkel, the late Prof. Avigdor Victor Hurowitz, the late Prof. W.G. Lambert, Mr Christopher Walker, Ms Nadine Pavie, and Ms Josephine Schubert. They all gave me helpful suggestions and comments. Particularly, I am grateful to Dr Heeßel, Prof. Gabbay, Prof. Parpola, Prof. Spieckermann, Prof. Greenstein, and Prof. Streck for their critical readings of my earlier manuscripts and helpful comments on various subjects. Dr Gabbay also made his study on the bilingual lamentations from the first millennium available prior to its publication. Moreover, I would like to thank Mr Walker for sharing information about the tablets belonging to the Babylon Collection of the British Museum. My thanks are also due Prof. Jacob Klein for letting me use his unpublished edition of the Sumerian *Man and His God*. This book also owes much to Dr Thomas Riplinger who not only edited my English text but also gave me many constructive and insightful comments. He too is thanked.

All errors of omission or commission remaining in the book are mine alone.

Jena, May 2013 T. Oshima

Addendum to Foreword

After having completed revision of the manuscripts of this monograph, I was informed by Prof. Andrew R. George that he had found many hitherto unpublished pencilled hand copies of new manuscripts of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* and the *Babylonian Theodicy* among the late Prof. W. G. Lambert's *Nachlass*. In November 2013, he kindly sent me a set of photocopies of Lambert's manuscripts. He also informed me that he and his team would ink these hand copies and publish them together with Lambert's other unpublished hand copies of various cuneiform texts. For this reason, in this monograph, I also refer to Lambert Folio numbers for these unpublished copies so that the reader can easily consult the Lambert copies when they have been published by George and his team. These Lambert's copies are very valuable, not only because generally his copies

are very reliable, but also because they often give witness to earlier, and thus better-preserved states of these cuneiform texts. I would like to thank Prof. George for making Lambert's unpublished manuscripts available to me.

During my last meeting with Prof. Lambert at the British Museum in September 2011, as at many previous meetings with him, I asked him about his knowledge of manuscripts of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* and the *Babylonian Theodicy*. In our previous meetings, he used to answer my question by changing the subjects of our conversation. Frankly speaking, I was expecting a similar reaction from him. But this time was different. He asked me to show him the list of the manuscripts I had. After having taken a quick glance at my list, he said: "I have to investigate." He asked whether I would be in the student room on the next scheduled Lambert-Day (i.e. the following Thursday). When I told him that I had to leave London for Germany on the next day, he said: "Then we shall meet next year." That was my last conversation with him. Shortly after our last meeting in September 2011, Prof. Lambert's health condition suddenly deteriorated, and, after two months, he passed away.

Exactly two years have passed since Prof. Lambert's death. There is no way of knowing what he exactly meant when he told me that he would have to investigate. Yet, his unpublished hand copies testify that he had been working very hard on these poems since 1960. By looking at all his carefully drawn hand copies, I can still sense his passion for Babylonian wisdom literature, his eagerness to reconstruct the ancient poems in full. He was truly a giant of twentieth century Assyriology.

Leipzig, November 2013 T. Oshima

Further Addendum to Foreword

I am very grateful to Prof. Angelika Berlejung for inviting me to publish this study of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* and the *Babylonian Theodicy* in the ORA and for her kind support on numerous matters. Also I would like to thank the other series editors and Mohr Siebeck for accepting my book for publication. I would like to thank Prof. Annette Zgoll for her insightful comments, particularly on various aspects of dreams in ancient Mesopotamian thought. In addition, I thank Prof. Yoram Cohen for sending me his *Wisdom from the Late Bronze Age* immediately after its publication.

Leipzig, April 2014 T. Oshima

Conventions

I refer to individual tablets and their divisions, i.e. columns, in the following manner. When referring to a particular verse from an ancient text extending over a series of tablets, I use Roman numerals in uppercase to indicate the ordinal number of the tablet (i.e. chapter/section) within the series. Thus, '*Ludlul* II' means 'the second tablet' or 'Tablet II' of the *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* series. On the other hand, I use a lowercase Roman numeral to indicate the column number on a tablet, e.g. 'MS K iv 24' indicates line 24 in the fourth column of MS K of a particular text. When the first line of an ancient composition has not been preserved, I follow conventional Assyriological practice and assign the number 1' to the first identifiable line.

In connection with references to the titles of ancient Babylonian texts in this monograph, I would like to call attention to one further point. Contrary to the general rule of English style according to which titles of literary texts should ordinarily be preceded by 'the' whenever they are referred to, Assyriologists do not use 'the' before Babylonian titles like *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* and *Enūma Eliš*. Thus, I have followed their usage here and generally omit 'the', unless it is needed to make the sentence more intelligible.

Basically, I follow the abbreviation system of *CAD*. If my abbreviations of certain references differ from these or if they are not listed in *CAD*, I use the abbreviations listed in pp. XIX–XX below.

When I cite an ancient text, I normally present a transliteration followed by a translation. I follow this practice also for ancient lexical lists with the exception of *Malku = Šarru*. For *Malku = Šarru*, I offer transcribed texts following I. Hrůša, *Die akkadische Synonymenliste*, *malku = šarru*, in which the editor offers a composite text in transcription. However, when I cite texts from my own corpus, with the exception of some occasions, in which the Akkadian texts are relevant for the discussion of a particular subject, I present only the English translations. The ancient words cited in this monograph are normally directly followed by their English translations set off simply by commas; however, for the sake of clarity, I sometimes introduce especially longer translations with the abbreviation 'i.e.'. Since this monograph is not a dictionary, I present only those meanings of a term that are relevant to the discussion. Normally, I indicate my translations of ancient words with single quotation marks, e.g. '*translation*', whereas I use double quotation marks, e.g. "*translation*", to indicate translations that have been suggested by other scholars.

As for the texts outside of my own corpus, I have for the most part based my transliterations and translations on the text editions established by other scholars. The references given for these texts refer to the text editions that I used. Yet, the readers are advised to bear in mind that, when alternations are called for, I have occasionally altered the readings of individual signs without calling attention to such changes; essentially,

therefore, the translations of the ancient texts offered in this monograph are my own. As one will see, for the readers' convenience, all the translations of the ancient texts are offered in English, although some of the primal editions included translations in other languages (e.g. German, French).

Although my method of citing ancient texts published elsewhere might at first confuse readers, there are two advantages to my method: 1) As one often finds in the publications of other scholars, I could have referred to the original cuneiform manuscripts by their museum registration numbers or publications of the hand copies of these texts. Yet, particularly for non-Assyriological readers, it is very difficult to appreciate the significance of museum registration numbers or to use hand copies. 2) More importantly, if one wishes to study a text, it is far more effective to refer to a recent text edition (i.e. transliterations and translations with or without concise philological notes) than to struggle with the cuneiform signs in the primal publication, because a text edition of a cuneiform text normally includes not only readings of the signs and their renderings, but also all the relevant information about it (i.e. the museum registration numbers of the cuneiform manuscripts, publications of the hand copies or photographs of these texts, previous publications, further studies, and so forth).

Incidentally, because the current monograph is also intended for the non-Assyriological community, readers are advised to keep in mind that my translations are attempts to convey not only the literal meaning of each phrase, but also an understanding of the general conceptions behind it. Any attempt to translate ancient poetry into English represents a compromise between fidelity to the original text and meeting the demands of readable English. For instance, there are no articles in Sumerian or Akkadian, but English without articles is difficult if not impossible to read, and so I have inserted articles where I felt the context demanded them, but, for the most part, I have not put these additions in parentheses like the other insertions I have made in the text, since doing so would cause other difficulties in reading the text. Similarly, these languages have no punctuation corresponding to our periods and commas, though they do have a sign consisting of two or three so-called '*Winkelhaken*', that functions rather like our colon and they sometimes make use of horizontal dividing lines to mark off verses. Thus the periods and commas that appear in the English translation represent, for the most part, an interpretation of the sense of the text rather than anything contained in the text itself.

Likewise, the translation of individual words or phrases often poses problems, since it is not always possible to distinguish a figurative or idiomatic usage from the literal meaning or to judge which of a variety of English synonyms and quasi-synonyms best fits the term in question. Where I felt it absolutely necessary, I have added comments in parentheses, either citing the literal text in the form '(lit.: ...)' when my 'interpretation' differs significantly from the literal wording, or giving my 'interpretation' in the form '(i.e. ...)' when I have literally translated the original, despite its strangeness, and attempt to suggest its meaning. Nevertheless, I have tried to keep such insertions to a minimum, since they disturb the flow of the text.

As for the proper nouns, I use the orthographies most commonly accepted by the modern scholars following reference books such as *RlA*, although they might not always accurately follow Sumerian and Akkadian grammars.

As for the transliterations of the ancient texts, I have followed the sound values of signs and Sumerograms assigned by R. Labat and F. Malbran-Labat, *Manuel d'épigraphie akkadienne*, Paris 1995. In principle, I present both a composite text for each work in Chapters I–II and a *Partitur* (scores of all available manuscripts) in Chapter IV, even though this might appear redundant in some cases. Incidentally, in order to avoid confusing non-Assyriological readers, I have decided not to distinguish between <*g*> and nasal <*g*> (i.e. *ĝ*) in Sumerian transliterations. There is no dispute about the fact that ancient Sumerians distinguished <*g*> from <*ĝ*>. Akkadian speakers, however, generally did not appreciate the value of <*ĝ*> (nasal *g*). As an example, for the syllable <*ga*>, Assyro-Babylonian scribes used interchangeably both the sign *GA* and the sign *GÁ* despite the difference in their original Sumerian sound values (i.e. *ga* and *ĝa* respectively). In *Syllabary Lexical List* B, II 3 (=MSL 3, p. 132), the orthography di-in-gír (Sm 14) instead of di-gi-ir (VAT 8410) for the sign *AN* (i.e. dingir) = *ilum*, 'god', hints that Akkadian speakers occasionally did recognize a distinction between <*g*> and nasal <*ĝ*>, but this was apparently seldom. Because most of the Sumerian texts cited in this monograph are known only from manuscripts of the Old-Babylonian period or later, even though many of them might have been composed before the Old-Babylonian period when the Sumerian language was still spoken, I have decided not to distinguish between <*g*> and nasal <*ĝ*>. This should cause no problem for well-trained Sumerologists.

The essential unit of poetry in Akkadian (as well as Sumerian) is the poetic line (or verse). As with other literary texts in Akkadian, the beginning and the end of a line on the tablet correspond to the beginning and the end of a verse in the texts of my corpus. Thus, one can expect a pause at the end of each line. For this reason, I often use the word 'line' instead of 'sentence' or 'verse'. Occasionally, however, in Akkadian poetry, two or more lines form a single sentence. Moreover, in Akkadian literary texts, two or four sentences very often form a single stanza (couplet and quatrain). *De facto*, one often finds horizontal ruling lines on the tablets that are drawn either after a set of two lines or after a set of four lines; at first glance, such horizontal lines might seem to set off poetic couplets or quatrains, but many of them were evidently drawn without regard to logical groupings, and there are many cases when these ruling lines do not match the stanzas at all. For this reason, in the composite texts and the translations, I ignore such physical separations marked by ruling lines, but I do insert a blank line to indicate logical partitions.

Further Conventions

In the *transliteration* of the ancient texts:

be-lum še-zu-zu	Texts in *italics* are Akkadian.
DINGIR.MEŠ	Texts in UPPERCASE (CAPITALS) are Sumerograms, while syllables in SMALL CAPITALS are signs marking plurality.
dingir šà-lá-sù	Texts in lowercase but not in italics are Sumerian words or passages.

AN/DINGIR	Slashes indicate alternative possibilities.
LI IM	*ITALIC-CAPITAL* letters indicate signs whose exact readings are not certain.
ma-a[*ḫ-r*]*i-*⌜*ka*⌝	Square brackets and half square brackets are used to indicate the damaged signs.
ŠÀ$^{?}$	A question mark in superscript indicates an insecure reading.
iḫ-te$^{!}$*-ṭam*$^{!}$*-ma*	Exclamation marks in superscript indicate signs which have been collated using the original cuneiform manuscripts.
a-ra-an-<*šu*>	Angle brackets indicate omissions by the ancient scribes.
mu-«*UZ*»*-ḫir*	Double angle brackets indicate a sign erroneously inserted by the ancient scribes, e.g. a dittography.
×	A diagonal cross (saltire) indicates that there are some traces of a sign but that it is beyond recognition due to the damaged state of the tablet.
[×]	The same mark as above but in square brackets indicates high probability for the existence of a sign when the text was complete.
[(×)]	The same mark as above but in both square brackets and parentheses indicates a possible place for an extra sign.
[…]	Ellipsis points mark a lacuna of an uncertain numbers of signs.
[…	Ellipsis with only one square bracket indicates a lacuna of uncertain length at the beginning or the end of a line.
mal-ku*-ut*-ka**	Asterisks indicate signs that have been copied by others but which are no longer visible, probably due to the subsequent deterioration of the tablet.
(error)	Smaller parentheses are used to indicate miscellaneous remarks.

In the *translations* of the ancient texts:

In [yo]ur pre[sence]	Square brackets indicate that the translations of these words are based on a reconstruction of the text.
heart	*Italics* are used to indicate translations significantly differ from their literal meanings; when followed by '?', e.g. *heart*$^{?}$, they indicate insecure decipherments or restorations.
..	Ellipsis points in the translation are used to indicate signs whose readings cannot be established.
(var.: his)/(He is)	Parentheses indicate miscellaneous remarks, such as readings from variants, complements and supplemental information.

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations[1]

AfO B = Archiv für Orientforschung Beiheft
AuOr = Aula Orientalis: *Revista de estudios del Próximo Oriente Antiguo*
BaF = Baghdader Forschungen
CAD = The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago
CDA = BLACK, GEORGE, and POSTGATE eds., *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*
CDOG = Colloquien der deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft
DBH = Dresdner Beiträge zur Hethitologie
FAOS= Freiburger Altorientalische Studien
Foster, *Before the Muses*[3] = FOSTER, *Before the Muses*: *An Anthology of Akkadian Literature*, Third Edition
Fs. Böhl = BEEK *et al*, eds., *Symbolae Biblicae et Mesopotamicae*: *Francisco Mario Theodoro de Liagre Böhl Dedicatae*
Fs. Borger = MAUL ed., *Festschrift für Rykle Borger zu seinem 65. Geburtstag am 24. Mai 1994*: *tikip santakki mala bašmu …*
Fs. Cagni = GRAZIANI ed., *Studi sul vicino oriente antico*: *dedicati alla memoria di Luigi Cagni*
Fs. Deller = MAUER and MAGEN eds., *Ad bene et fideliter seminandum*: *Festgabe für Karlheinz Deller zum 21. Februar 1987*
Fs. Finkelstein = DE JONG ELLIS ed., *Essays of the Ancient Near East in Memory of Jacob Joel Finkelstein*: *Memoirs of the Connecticut Academy of Arts & Sciences*
Fs. Hallo = COHEN *et al.* eds., *The Tablet and the Scroll*: *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William W. Hallo*
Fs. Hruška = VACÍN ed., u_4 du_{11}-ga-ni sá mu-ni-ib-du_{11}: *Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Memory of Blahoslav Hruška*
Fs. Klein = SEFATI *et al.* eds., "*An Experienced Scribe Who Neglects Nothing*": *Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Jacob Klein*
Fs. Lambert = GEORGE and FINKEL eds., *Wisdom, Gods and Literature*: *Studies in Assyriology in Honour of W. G. Lambert*
Fs. Landsberger = GÜTERBOCK and JACOBSEN eds., *Studies in Honor of Benno Landsberger on his Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, *April 21*, *1965*
Fs. Matouš = HRUŠKA and KOMORÓCZY eds., *Festschrift Lubor Matouš*, I and II
Fs. Meek = MCCULLOUGH ed., *The Seed of Wisdom*: *Essays in Honour of T. J. Meek*
Fs. Reiner = ROCHBERG-HALTON ed., *Language, Literature, and History*: *Philological and Historical Studies Presented to Erica Reiner*
Fs. Sjöberg = BEHRENS *et al*. eds., DUMU-E2-DUB-BA-A: *Studies in Honor of Åke W. Sjöberg*
Fs. von Soden = DIETRICH and LORETZ eds., *Vom Alten Orient zum Alten Testament*, *Festschrift für Wolfram Freiherrn von Soden zum 85. Geburtstag am 19. Juni 1993*
Fs. Wilcke = SALLABERGER, VOLK, and ZGOLL eds., *Literatur*, *Politik und Recht in Mesopotamien*: *Festschrift für Claus Wilcke*
Horowitz, *MCG* = HOROWITZ, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*
JCM = Le Journal des Médecines Cunéiformes
KAL = *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur literarischen Inhalts*

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[1] Basically I follow the abbreviation system of *CAD*. When my abbreviations of certain references differ from or are not listed in *CAD*, I use the following abbreviations.

Litke, AN: ^{d}A-NU-UM = LITKE, *A Reconstruction of the Assyro-Babylonian God-Lists*, AN: ^{d}A-NU-UM *and* AN: ANU ŠÁ AMĒLI
Mayer, *UFBG* = MAYER, *Untersuchungen zur Formensprache der babylonischen "Gebetsbeschwörungen"*
Nougayrol, *Ugaritica* 5 = NOUGAYROL, Textes suméro-accadiens des archives et bibliothèques privées d'Ugarit, in Nougayrol, J. and Laroche, E., *et al.*, *Ugaritica* 5: *Nouveaux textes accadiens, hourrites et ugaritiques des archives et bibliothèques privées d'Ugarit commentaires des textes historiques*
RlA = Reallexikon der Assyriologie
SANE = Sources and Monographs on the Ancient Near East
SEL = Studi Epigrafici e Linguistici sul Vicino Oriente antico
Seux, *Hymnes* = SEUX, *Hymnes et prières aux dieux de babylonie et d'assyrie*
TUAT = Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments

Introduction

The main objective of this monograph is a new critical text edition of both *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* ('Let Me Praise the Lord of Wisdom'), known also as the 'Babylonian Job' or 'Poem of the Righteous Sufferer', and the so-called *Babylonian Theodicy*. The monograph consists of six parts: 1) Chapters I–II: introductory sections and editions of these Babylonian poems, i.e. transliterations and translations of composite texts; 2) Chapter III: detailed philological and critical notes on the poems; 3) Chapter IV: *Partitur* – an arrangement of the texts of all the manuscripts known to me in a manner rather like a musical score; 4) Chapter V: critical editions of related texts; 5) a list of bibliography, glossary, and various indexes; and 6) hand copies and photographs of the cuneiform manuscripts.

The introductory sections preceding the transliteration and translation of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* and the *Babylonian Theodicy* include discussion of previous editions, translations, and major studies;[1] of possible dating of the composition; and of its author(s); followed by a literary analysis and discussions of the cultural and/or historical backgrounds, of the main messages, and of special topics.

The composite texts were prepared based on the score-like arrangement of all the known manuscripts, both those previously published and those hitherto unpublished (Chapter IV: *Partitur*). The hand copies of the cuneiform manuscripts whose publication rights were granted to me are found at the end of this monograph. The identifications of many tablets and the readings of some lines from these texts can also be found in the museum catalogues, *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (*CAD*), and other studies of cuneiform texts. In particular, the catalogues of the British Museum Tablet Collections prepared by scholars like W. G. Lambert and E. Leichty,[2] as well as Petra Gesche's study of school tablets from the Neo- and Late-Babylonian periods[3] were very helpful. The identifications of the manuscripts of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* and the *Babylonian Theodicy* belonging to the Babylon Collec-

[1] I make no attempt to list each and every reference to these texts in the enormous mass of secondary literature. For example, I do not give references for every single line from my corpus which is discussed or cited in *CAD*; *AHw*; GRONEBERG, *Syntax* etc. In fact, it would be humanly impossible to trace and mention each single allusion to *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* and the *Babylonian Theodicy* in the secondary literature, which, in addition to Assyrological special literature, includes numerous works of biblical exegesis and theology as well as comparative religious studies.

[2] For the bibliographical references, see under W. G. Lambert and E. Leichty in the List of Bibliography in this volume.

[3] GESCHE, *Schulunterricht*.

tion of the British Museum were given by Ch. Walker.[4] Other manuscripts and joins were made by myself by studying the Geers Copies and examining tablets and tablet fragments in the museums.

Given the relatively short time period granted for my project, I had to concentrate all my efforts on philological work, i.e. establishing the texts and their interpretation, a task rather typical of Assyriology. That means that, despite the striking similarities between these Babylonian poems and the Old Testament *Book of Job*, I regrettably cannot present here either an in-depth comparative literary analysis of these poems nor an in depth discussion of the Babylonian views the divine judgment over humankind and its effects on their *Weltanschauung*. Doing that would require a systematic theo-anthropological approach that would go well beyond the philological framework of this study; thus, I hope to take up these topics in detail in a future publication.[5]

[4] Most of the manuscripts of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* are also found on ANNUS and LENZI, SAACT 7, pp. xli–xlix.

[5] Incidentally, in this monograph, I consciously avoid using the term "wisdom literature" as a term collectively referring to cuneiform texts like *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*, the *Babylonian Theodicy*, or other texts that are customarily labelled with this term by modern scholars. "Wisdom Literature" is originally the terminology referring to a particular group of books in the Old Testament, namely Proverbs, Job, Qohelet, and portions of Psalms. For example, the choice and arrangement of texts in Lambert's *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*, evidently, as in the case of earlier and later studies of similar nature, reflect the biblical wisdom literature, although Lambert himself admits that the term "wisdom literature" is a misnomer, *BWL*, p. 1. As concisely outlined by COHEN, *Wisdom from the Late Bronze Age*, pp. 7–19, this terminology very often creates riddles instead of offering a clear definition of the purpose of the ancient Mesopotamian texts discussed in the present monograph. Instead, therefore, I used "didactic texts" to refer to ancient proverbs and instructions (e.g. the *Counsel of Wisdom*, the *Instruction of Šuruppak*, etc.). I believe that the *Babylonian Theodicy* also belongs to this category. I often use the term "Scripture" following PARPOLA, *LAS* II, p. XXI. Although the ancient scribes faithfully copied older texts for hundreds of years (i.e. they were canonized), the fact that many texts were not widely available even to the ancient Assyro-Babylonian scribal community also justifies the use of this term. Yet, I do not think that the terminology "Wisdom Literature" is entirely a misnomer. Their *raison d'être* was, as Beaulieu points out, to comprehend the will of the gods, "to build a channel that could reach onto the transcendental world of the gods". BEAULIEU in CLIFFORD ed., *Wisdom Literature*, p. 19. That is a loose definition of the biblical "Wisdom Literature". As many modern scholars have observed (e.g., COHEN, *op. cit.*) the cuneiform texts used for that purpose consisted of a wide variety of text genres many of which have no obvious connection to the biblical wisdom texts.

Chapter I

Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi

Introduction

The ancient text known by its incipit *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* ('Let Me Praise the Lord of Wisdom')[1] is a monologue recounting a man's suffering and his miraculous recovery from illness with help of the god Marduk.[2] As is evident from the contents, especially from its epilogue, this lengthy poem was composed for the sake of the narrator himself, a certain Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan, in order to praise the god's saving power and to warn people of potential harsh punishment for sins committed against Marduk or his temple.

Because of similarities in motifs between Tablet II of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* and the Book of Job,[3] modern scholars customarily refer to this Babylonian poem as *The Babylonian Job* or *The Righteous Sufferer*, and they treat it as a part of the corpus of 'wisdom literature'.[4] In Tablet II, like the biblical Job, the narrator of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*

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[1] It is evident from the colophons of this composition's different manuscripts that the ancient scribes used *ludlul bēl nēmeqi* as the 'title' of this poem. Like different books of the Hebrew Bible, in fact, many ancient Sumero-Akkadian canonical texts (e.g. myths, epics, hymns, prayers, incantations, lamentations, lexical lists, omen-series) were commonly referred to by their incipits. Typically this is evident in the ancient lists of such texts. See, e.g., LAMBERT, *JCS* 11, pp. 1–14; *idem*, *JCS* 16, 59–77; GRONEBERG, *JCS* 55, pp. 55–74; GELLER, *Fs. Lambert*, pp. 225–258.

[2] Many scholars from the field of Assyriology and other studies have already conducted studies of varying length and depth regarding the Babylonian deity Marduk. Some examples of recent encyclopaedic or general discussions are: SOMMERFELD, 'Marduk', *RlA* 7, pp. 360–370; BLACK and GREEN, 'Marduk', in *Gods, Demons*, pp. 128–129; ABUSCH, 'Marduk', *DDD*^{2}, pp. 543–549 and OSHIMA, 'Marduk', in LEICK ed., *The Babylonian World*, pp. 348–360.

As I shall discuss below, the poem was initially composed as a thanksgiving-prayer for the sake of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan, who functions as the protagonist or 'narrator'. This means that the poem basically recounts past events. However, as observed by Foster in his study of '*Self-Reference*' in *Ludlul* (= *JAOS* 103, pp. 123ff), the present tense is frequently employed in the poem. Foster analyses the use of the present tense forms as follows (*ibid*., p. 126):

> "The author uses the present to draw the reader into the time of his discourse. Since he uses the present in moments of introspection and in statements about his feelings, or for vivid narration, and, insofar as the present tense and autobiographical narrative are inherently contradictory, one can assign the present tense of the verb particularly self-referential value."

[3] Tablet II was the first section of the poem to be identified, and it was published as early as 1875. The first manuscript of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* K 3972, had already been published by G. Smith as *IVR*[1], pl. 67, no. 2, but Smith believed that it belonged to a lamentation.

[4] Jastrow was the first scholar who offered an in-depth study of the parallelism between *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* and the Book of Job, JASTROW, *JBL* 25, pp. 135–191. Although as early as the 1920's such interpretations of *Ludlul* had been criticized, many scholars have continued to seek better un-

expresses his piety towards the gods and complains that he has not deserved his adversities, namely hostility from his family, friends, colleagues, and even the king, and subsequent severe illnesses, all of which, following traditional Mesopotamian belief,[5] he takes to be divine punishments. Therefore, he appears to question the principle of divine retribution as such. As Lambert had already noted in 1960,[6] as long as the knowledge on this Babylonian poem was restricted to the second Tablet, such modern interpretations expressed in titles like *The Babylonian Job* or *The Righteous Sufferer* might have been justified. However, as more portions of the text have been recovered,[7] it has become evident that, on the whole, the basic schemes of the *Book of Job* and *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* are quite different. As Foster points out, "the author of The Book of Job makes clear that Job's suffering had nothing to do with his righteousness, but was a test of faith".[8] By contrast, despite initial protests of his piety, the protagonist of the Babylonian poem in the end comes to accept his guilt and acknowledges that, unlike the biblical counterpart, his sufferings were indeed deserved punishments for his sins. For this reason, the Babylonian sufferer sees his recovery from illness not as proof of his righteousness but rather as an act of Marduk's mercy for which then he thanks the god in the last section of the poem. Therefore, the modern titles, *The Babylonian Job* and *The Righteous Sufferer*, are in fact misnomers.[9]

In 1960, in his monumental study, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*, pp. 21–62, W. G. Lambert published the most recent comprehensive critical text edition of the entire text of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* (with transliteration, translation, notes to variants, and handcopies of different manuscripts) together with a commentary in pp. 283–302. His edition was based on 29[10] exemplars, most of which had previously been published by other scholars prior to his work.[11] Lambert also published his copies of K 3291, an an-

derstanding of *Ludlul* and the *Book of Job* by comparing the literary motifs in the two works. For an early critique, see LANDSBERGER, *Islamica* 2, pp. 355–372. For the most recent discussion of parallelisms between *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* and the Book of Job, see LUX, *Hiob*, pp. 28–43. For summaries of the major comparative studies between Mesopotamian literature (including *Ludlul*) and the Bible, see also UEHLINGER in KRÜGER *et al*. eds., *Das Buch Hiob*, pp. 110–120; and further references in 137–138, note 138. Note also E. Greenstein's discussion of the multilingualism of the *Book of Job*, among which is Akkadian, in KRÜGER *et al*., *ibid*., pp. 81–96, esp. 88–89 and 94.

[5] For the ancient understanding of retribution, see below.

[6] LAMBERT, *BWL*, p. 27.

[7] For an abstract of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*, see below pp. 9ff.

[8] FOSTER, *Before the Muses*[3], p. 394.

[9] See, e.g., FOSTER, *ibid*; ALBERTZ, *Fs. Deller*, p. 49; SITZLER, *Vorwurf gegen Gott*, p. 231; cf. also, MÜLLER, *Keilschriftliche Parallelen*, pp. 362–363. Albertz and Müller also argue that *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* does not concern the question of 'theodicy'.

[10] Because it is very difficult to relate the sigla assigned by Lambert to the manuscripts to the proper position of their texts within the poem, I have assigned a new set of sigla to the manuscripts. For example, Lambert assigned D and C to K 3323+K 18186+Rm 444+Rm 941 and K 8396 respectively. Yet, as Lambert himself had already suggested, they are really indirect joins. The same holds for BM 32964 (Lambert's MS K) and BM 32214 (Lambert's MS J). In particular, BM 32214 and BM 32694 have now been joined to more fragments to form part of an eight column tablet, BM 32208+32214+32371+32378+ 32449+32659+32694+ four unnumbered fragments. Lambert already knew K 9724 in 1960 but he assumed that it did not belong to the poem.

[11] The works prior to *BWL* are listed on LAMBERT, *BWL*, pp. 27–28.

cient commentary on *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* (henceforth referred to as *Ludlul Commentary*). Since then, his edition has served as the basis of further studies of this poem. Since 1960, however, additional manuscripts of this poem have been identified and published: the most important publications are Wiseman, *AnSt* 30, pp. 101–107; and George and Al-Rawi, *Iraq* 60, pp. 187–206. These two articles offer editions of Tablet I of this lengthy poem, significant portions of which were missing in Lambert's work. Foster's translation of the poem in *Before the Muses*[3], pp. 392–409 incorporates these new publications.[12]

Above and beyond the works of Wiseman and of George and Al-Rawi, various scholars have identified 37 additional new exemplars of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* since Lambert's *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*. The museum registration numbers of these newly identified manuscripts have been announced in the British Museum Tablet Collection catalogues; Gesche, *Schulunterricht*; *CAD*s and elsewhere. These scholarly efforts have made new materials accessible. One fruit of such efforts is A. Annus and A. Lenzi, *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*: *The Standard Babylonian Poem of the Righteous Sufferer*, (SAACT 7), Helsinki 2010 – their work includes a transliteration, a translation and computer-generated cuneiform texts based on their composite text.[13]

Manuscripts of the Poem

We now have 66 tablets and tablet fragments which preserve various portions of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*. The *Ludlul Commentary* further offers additional 15 or 16 lines which have not yet been correlated in the main poem. Based on their scripts, all of these exemplars are dated to the first millennium. Although the oldest datable manuscripts are those from the Library of Aššurbanipal from the seventh century BCE,[14] it is very likely that the poem was composed late in the Kassite period.[15]

The manuscripts of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* were found in different major cities of Assyria (Sultantepe, Assur, Nineveh, Kalah) and Babylonia (Babylon, Sippar and Kiš).[16]

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[12] Von Soden has also provided a translation using Wiseman's text in TUAT III/1, pp. 110–135. His translation, like Foster's, also contains many useful notes that, needless to say, have contributed much to a better understanding of this difficult text.

[13] Note LENZI and ANNUS, *JNES* 70, pp. 181–205, where they publish photographs of BM 32208+. Note also, Lenzi's transliteration of all the manuscripts known to him at http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/cams/ludlul/corpus.

[14] Very interestingly, one finds many parallel phrases between *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* and the royal inscriptions of Esarhaddon and Aššurbanipal. See the philological notes of *Ludlul*, *passim* below. Note also SAA 10, no. 294, a letter sent by Urad-Gula to Aššurbanipal requesting his reinstatement. For this letter, see fn 22 below. These facts probably attest to the poem's popularity among the Assyrian scribes of the seventh century BCE.

[15] For a late second millennium date, more specifically, a late Kassite period, see, e.g., LAMBERT, *BWL* p. 26; VON SODEN, TUAT III/1, p. 112; DALLEY, *BiOr* 52, p. 85; VAN DER TOORN in LAATO and DE MOOR, *Theodicy*, p. 77. Moran also dates this text to the second millennium but later than the other scholars, and he prefers a Second Isin Dynasty date, more specifically during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I, *Most Magic Words*, p. 198. See also, ANNUS and LENZI, SAACT 7, p. xviii. For further discussion of the date of composition, see below.

[16] For the manuscripts of the poem, see pp. 377–379 below.

Moreover, 12 manuscripts are school texts containing excerpts of the poem. This fact clearly suggests the importance of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* in the scribal education in ancient Babylonia.

It has been long assumed that the entire text of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* must have consisted of 480 lines on four tablets, (120 lines on each tablet).[17] However, it is very likely that this poem was significantly longer than previously suspected and that it probably consisted of five tablets with 600 lines in all when it was complete.

With the exception of some very minor lacunae that could easily be reconstructed, the first two chapters, i.e. Tablets I–II, have been recovered almost in entirety from manuscripts of various sizes and conditions. It is also well established that the first two tablets contained 120 lines each. The state of the rest of the poem, however, is not as good as that of the first two tablets. The identification of Tablet III has been secured by its incipit and the catch-line preserved on Tablet II. One of the manuscripts of Tablet III, VAT 9954 (MS III.E), is a half tablet which contains 60 lines in total on its obverse and reverse. This fact speaks in favour of 120 lines as the total length of Tablet III just as with the first two tablets. Yet, as seen in the *Partitur* of Tablet III below, there are still 2 lacunae – 2 lines in the mid section and another 10 lines at the end of the tablet.

Ludlul Commentary rev. 14 and 31 have been identified as Tablet III, line 106 and lines 14–15 of the last tablet of the main poem respectively, but there are still 15 or 16 lines in the *Ludlul Commentary* which have not been correlated.[18] Needless to say, the lacunae of only an estimated 10 lines at the end of Tablet III is not large enough to accommodate these uncorrelated 15 or 16 lines from the *Ludlul Commentary*. Given this, it is evident that there must have been another tablet between Tablet III and the last tablet, so that the latter, which was previously been taken to be Tablet IV, must have been Tablet V. Put simply – *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* must have consisted of five tablets.

There are three fragments which might belong to Tablet IV of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*. The first exemplar is Si 728 (MS IV.B), a small fragment from Sippar written in Neo-Babylonian script. It preserves 11 lines, two of which (Si 728 lines 3' and 7') have been now identified as *Ludlul Commentary* rev. 20 (line f) and rev. 21 (line g) respectively. Although one cannot with certainty eliminate a possibility of coincidence, the fact that this fragment preserves two lines from the *Ludlul Commentary* suggests a high probability that it indeed belongs to the poem. The exact identification of the two other fragments, on the other hand, has not been secured. Following Lambert, *CAD* A/2 implies that BM 123392 (CT 51, no. 219=MS IV.D) belonged to *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*.[19] This fragment preserves 10 lines on one side, while on the second side, only a handful of signs is visible. Because it preserves only a first half of one line paralleling *Ludlul Commentary* rev. 30 (= Section C, 6'''), it can not be determined with certainty whether it belongs to *Ludlul* or not. The third possible candidate is K 9724 (=Lambert, *BWL* pl.

[17] Already in 1906, Jastrow had suggested a possibility that the poem consisted of four tablets (120 lines each, 480 in all), *JBL* 25, p. 146. This theory has not been challenged since then and repeated by the various scholars. E.g., LAMBERT, *BWL* p. 25; LENZI and ANNUS, *JNES* 70, pp. 181ff.

[18] Because the tablet does not preserve *Ludlul Commentary* rev. 26–27, it is impossible to know with certainty how many lines from the main text were cited here, see p. 425 below.

[19] *CAD* A/2, p. 22, *amāru* A, 5, *qātu* b).

17 = MS IV.C). Lambert has asserted that it does not belong to *Ludlul*.[20] Yet, as seen on p. 427 below, at least one sentence is attested on both K 9724 and the *Ludlul Commentary*.[21] Moreover, it seems that line o (*Ludlul Commentary* rev. 29) is in fact line 16' of K 9724, although, because of the poor state of preservation of the tablet fragment, its exact reading cannot be determined.[22]

Because we do not have enough evidence to ground discussion, it is impossible to determine the exact length of Tablet IV. Even if all the three small fragments discussed above (Si 729, BM 123392, and K 9724) do belong to Tablet IV, they represent, at best, only 48 or 49 recovered lines in all (37 lines from the three fragments and additional 11 or 12 lines from the *Ludlul Commentary* which have not been correlated in the main poem). Given these uncollated 11–12 lines in the *Ludlul Commentary* (i.e. 11–12 lines), one may tentatively surmise that Tablet IV, just like Tablets I–III, also comprised 120 lines in total when it was complete.

Apparently, Tablet V also consisted of 120 lines in total. Although, in the present condition, MS V.F (VAT 10538+10650) preserves 39 lines, judging from its length, this exemplar must have had 60 lines in total when it was complete. Because it is another half-tablet from Assur just like VAT 9442 (MS V.E), it is very likely that Tablet V also contained 120 lines. In fact, by combining phrases preserved on 13 tablets and tablet fragments as well as the *Ludlul Commentary*, I have already recovered all 120 completely or partially preserved lines for Tablet V of *Ludlul*. Needless to say, the condition of Tablet V is still mostly very fragmental and there are lines whose reading or rendering has not been established.

On Assur MSs, a section-dividing line is drawn after each 10 lines. Yet, the very last strophe preserved on VAT 10538+10650 consists of only 8 lines. This fact, however, does not mean that Tablet V consisted of 118 lines. A closer examination of this manuscript reveals that the scribe who copied this particular exemplar was not careful or he used an already corrupt original to prepare his copy and omitted several lines (see, e.g., line 72). In fact, he did not even keep the same phrase divisions of lines 119–120 like other manuscripts (i.e. MSs A and V.B) and he wrote them in three lines instead of two. Clearly, when he was about to complete his copying the tablet, he must have realized that he had erroneously omitted several lines, and in order to compensate, he wrote these sentences in 3 lines instead of 2 lines.

How to reconstruct the last chapter (i.e. Tablet V) of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* has long been a matter of discussion mostly because of the poor state of manuscript preserva-

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[20] LAMBERT, *BWL*, p. 345.

[21] K 9724, line 10' and *Ludlul Commentary* rev. 25 (line k). LAMBERT, *BWL*, p. 345.

[22] Note the Akkadian prayer (K 2765) that Lambert cites on *BWL*, p. 288 (copy on *ibid*., pl. 19). As noted by Lambert, this prayer also contains phrases paralleling some lines from *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* Tablet I. Note also SAA 10, 294, a letter from Urad-Gula. For the primal edition, see PARPOLA, *Fs. Reiner*, pp. 257–278. The sender of the letter used phrases reminiscent of *Ludlul*, probably in order to remind the king of the favour that the narrator of the ancient poem had gained from the god Marduk, and "simultaneously" to elevate the king Aššurbanipal "to the role of Marduk who in *Ludlul* is the preferred address for appeals and ultimate source of the sufferer's salvation", HUROWITZ, *SAAB* 14, p. 131. Note also, *idem* in PERDUE ed., *Scribes*, *Sages*, *and Seers*, pp. 77–94. Incidentally, as it has been observed by Parpola, this Urad-Gula also cites the *Advice to a Prince*, the *Poor Man of Nippur*, and *Enūma Anu Enlil*, PARPOLA, *ibid*, pp. 272–274.

tion.[23] But a thorough examination of the 13 manuscripts of Tablet V, particularly those exemplars preserving the lower or bottom edges of tablets, enables us to arrange them in their right order and thus to reconstruct the story line of the last chapter. The exemplars of Tablet V which have been identified after the publication of Lambert's *BWL*, particularly VAT 10650, prove particularly useful by providing key-references for arranging them.

BM 34650 (MS V.B) is one of the manuscripts which was not available to Lambert in 1960.[24] This tablet fragment preserves, on its obverse, the first 22 lines and, on its reverse, the last 23 lines of the last chapter of the poem.[25] This can be confirmed by two facts: 1) there is no lacuna before the first line of its obverse; and 2) the reverse includes a part of the epilogue of the poem and a colophon. Based on this fragment, we can, relatively straightforwardly, arrange most of the exemplars of Tablet V in their proper order. Given the partial parallelisms with BM 34650, we now know that a multi column tablet BM 77253 (MS V.C)[26] col. i' preserves lines 8–27 of *Ludlul* V.[27] The fact that the first 16 lines preserved on the obverse of BM 34650 parallel the obverse of VAT 9442 (MS V.E)[28] confirms that the latter indeed belongs to the poem despite Lambert's hesitation to assign it there.[29] Because VAT 9442 reverse preserves what appears to be a catch-line for the next tablet but these lines on its reverse do not parallel any lines preserved on the reverse of BM 34650, we must now conclude that VAT 9442 was another half tablet and what is preserved on its reverse belongs to the mid section of Tablet V.[30]

The reverse of VAT 9442 (MS V.E) partially overlaps what has survived on a side of VAT 9303 (MS V.D). When Lambert published his edition in *BWL* in 1960, he took this side of VAT 9303 to be its reverse. However, because VAT 9442 is a half tablet while VAT 9303 is a full tablet, we should now see it to be the obverse of VAT 9303 and hence Lambert's obverse is really the reverse of that tablet. This arrangement had already been suggested by M. Vogelzang in 1979.[31]

My reconstruction of the positions and arrangements of the other manuscripts belonging to *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* Tablet V rests on these facts set forth above and on the overlapping lines they share. The chart below shows their arrangements in Tablet V.

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[23] For the previous suggestions by Lambert, von Soden and Foster, see ANNUS and LENZI, SAACT 7, p. xiii.

[24] LEICHTY, *Fs. Kilmer*, pp. 133–135.

[25] A multi column tablet BM 32208+ rev. col. ii' preserves sentences partially parallel the lines attested on BM 34650 reverse.

[26] Like BM 34650, this fragment was not available to Lambert in 1960.

[27] Judging from the fact that the lines preserved in col. ii' are now assigned to lines 85–101 of Tablet V, it is very likely that BM 77253 (MS V.C) is a part of another 8 column tablet like BM 32208+ (MS A).

[28] Incidentally, the scribe of the Assur manuscript erroneously omitted line 6. This means that line 15 of VAT 9442 (MS V.E) is in fact line 16 of Tablet V. Annus and Lenzi independently came to the same conclusion, ANNUS and LENZI, SAACT 7, p. xiii, note 15.

[29] LAMBERT, *BWL*, p. 30.

[30] Just like the scribe who copied V.F, the scribe of MS V.E (VAT 9442) erroneously omitted several lines with the notable example of line 6.

[31] VOGELZANG, *RA* 73, p 180. Cf. also ANNUS and LENZI, SAACT 7, p. xiii, note 11.

MS	1	30	60	90	120
A		——————— (ll 25–53)		(ll 101–119) ———	
V.B	——— (ll 1–22)			(ll 107–120) ———	
V.C	——————— (ll 8–27)			(ll 85–101) ———	
V.D		(ll 39–60) ———	——————— (ll 64–86)		
V.E	——— (ll 1–16)		——— (ll 48–64)		
V.F			(ll 69–90) ———————	(ll 105–120) ———	
V.G[32]		— (ll 35–39)		(ll 91–103) ———	
V.H				—— (ll 71–82)	
V.i			(ll 54–55) – — (ll 57–60)		
V.j			(ll 49–50) – – (ll 53–54)		
V.k	– (ll 6–7)				
V.L					(ll 119–120) –
V.m	—— (ll 16–22)				

Incidentally, if my restoration of the colophon of MS V.B (=BM 34650) is correct, namely [DUB.5.KÁM *lud-l*]*ul* EN *né-me-qí* ˹ZAG˺.TIL.B[I].˹ŠE$_4$˺, '[The fifth Tablet of *Ludl*]*ul Bēl Nēmeqi*-(series), (the series) en[ds]', Tablet V concludes this lengthy poem. The epilogue of this Tablet V further suggests that this lengthy composition is praise (*zamāru*, *dalīlu*, and *tanittu*) to Marduk in the name of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan. This also explains its very first word, *ludlul*, 'let me praise', which is a very common verb in the opening line of Akkadian hymns and praise offering-prayers.[33]

Plot of the Poem

The plot of the poem is as follows: The narrator opens the poem with praise of Marduk's anger and his compassion (I, 1–40). Each couplet of the first forty lines of Tablet I presents two opposing images of Marduk – on the one hand, the image of a furious god whose anger is devastating and, on the other, the image of a merciful god who drives away misfortune. This arrangement strongly indicates that one cannot understand Marduk's nature and role without taking these opposing aspects in connection with each other. Put differently, the author regards Marduk's chastisement and his blessing as representing two complementary poles of Marduk's divine authority.

Despite expressions of the harshness of Marduk's anger, the overall message of the poem calls attention to the blessing which emerges from his mercy, *Ludlul* I, 38–40:

> 38 As quickly as he forgives, so he gives life to the dead people.
> 39 Let me teach the people how close their salvation is.
> 40 May a favourable *invocation* to him carry away their [*sins*$^{?}$].

Taken together with the immediately preceding praise of Marduk's wrath in *Ludlul* I, 37, these passages clearly indicate the importance of accepting both aspects of Marduk,

[32] It is very likely that KAR 116 (MS V.G) is a direct join to VAT 9303 (MS V.D). Unfortunately I could not confirm my educated guess because Ebeling had noted a false VAT number for this manuscript in KAR and I could not find the original tablet.

[33] HECKER, *Untersuchungen zur akkadischen Epik*, pp. 77ff; SEUX, *Hymnes*, p. 15; and OSHIMA, *Babylonian Prayers to Marduk*, p. 34. For further discussion on *Ludlul* being praise to Marduk, see below.

his harshness and his benevolence. The ancient thinkers evidently believed that only absolute submission and devotion to Marduk – one might even call it blind faith in him – would be rewarded with his redemption.[34]

After lengthy expressions of reverence, the narrator states that, all of a sudden, adversities have struck him. He claims that his misery started when Marduk decided to punish him, thus causing his protective spirits and his personal gods to abandon him (I, 41–46). Evil portents had been shown to him but no one could explain the omens (I, 49–54). The narrator states that his misfortune had first manifested itself in the royal court. While other courtiers plotted hostility against him, the king also turned on him with anger (I, 55ff). As the result, as van der Toorn suggests, the protagonist seems to have lost his position at the royal court.[35] The narrator then goes on to relate how everyone, i.e. his city, his friends, and his family, turned hostile to him (I, 82–92). He found no more good will, not even a kind word of sympathy; he says that he has become a curse (I, 95–97). He has lost everything – his properties, his friends, his family, his physical strength, and his health (I, 93ff). He turned to his personal gods and protective spirits, but they did not come to rescue him. He asked diviners to find out what his sin was. But no one could help him (II, 3–9).

The narrator claims that he has always been pious and neither neglected his prayers nor forgotten offerings to the gods (II, 10–32). He complains that no one understands the gods' behaviour (II, 33–38): What people find proper to the gods, gods take to be inappropriate; whereas what people regard to be inappropriate, the gods accept as righteous (II, 39–47). Thus he claims to find no correspondence between human acts and the divine response to them (II, 48). With these words, he seems to suggest that the gods have wrongfully punished him. Despite his protests, illness has taken him prisoner. He is now afflicted by different illnesses all over his body (II, 49ff). And when his condition worsened, he could do nothing but wait for the end of his life. Already before his death, his family was conducting his funeral. He saw his grave opening, he heard the funeral laments (II, 114–120).

In a series of dreams, the protagonist saw various men and a woman with remarkable appearances (III, 10ff). The first man, a young man, was sent by the protagonist's lord (III, 15 and 18). Due to lacuna in III, 16, it is difficult to follow the story but it seems that the appearances of this young man itself constituted a sign of his deliverance. The second person who appears in the narrator's dream is a priest who is carrying a tamarisk and probably a water basin for a purification ritual (III, 23–24). It is very likely that he was an incantation-priest, but rather interestingly this person says to the narrator: "Laluralimma, an incantation-priest of Nippur, sent me in order to purify you (III, 25–26)." This episode in *Ludlul* III suggests that, at least when *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* was composed, a purification ritual took place before an incantation-priest carried out the main ritual.[36] Given the reference to the action of rubbing (III, 28), the ritual which

[34] E.g., SPIECKERMANN in KRATZ and SPIECKERMANN eds., *Divine Wrath and Divine Mercy*, p. 8. For this see pp. 34ff below.

[35] VAN DER TOORN in LAATO and DE MOOR, *Theodicy*, p. 78.

[36] Needless to say, purification-priests (i.e. *išippu* and *ramku*) were trained in the lore of the incantation-priesthood, although they might hold a lower rank than *āšipu* or *mašmaššu*. For example, Esagil-kīn-apli, known as the 'author' of the *Sakikkû*-series (the *Diagnostic Handbook*), *Alamdimmû*

the priest performed was most likely the *Muššuʾu*-ritual, ('rubbing-ritual').[37] The third person who appeared in the narrator's dream was a young woman. He states that she was not a temple-performer but had a godly appearance (III, 31–33). Like the first person but unlike the second one, she did not perform a ritual; instead she only said: "*Aḫulap*" which is the word normally marking the end of one's suffering and the beginning of salvation by the gods (III, 35 and 38). The fourth person whom the narrator saw in his dream was Urnintinugga, an incantation-priest from Babylon (III, 40–42), who is described as carrying a writing board (III, 42). B. Pongratz-Leisten interprets this writing board to be the board on which the sins of the narrator were written, and erasing the entries of these sins symbolised his absolution.[38] But, it is also possible that this board symbolised incantations, such as the *Utukkū Lemnūtu*-incantations or *Namburbi*.[39] Either way, Urnintinugga's ritual marked the end of the narrator's adversity and the beginning of his recovery.

The speech of Urnintinugga reveals the name of the sufferer/narrator, to be Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan (III, 44).[40] After having been finally redeemed, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan makes no further reference to these dreams or to the people that appeared in them. Instead, he praises the greatness of Marduk's saving power. Thus it is evident that the people in the dreams are Marduk's messagers.[41] These dreams mark the turning point in the ordeal of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan.

The climax opens with a testimony by the narrator to the power of Marduk. He says that it was Marduk who saved him from his most adverse situation, although Marduk was also the one who had imposed all the sufferings to him. When Marduk's anger was appeased and he received the prayers offered to him, he lifted his punishments (III, 50–54). Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan further describes how Marduk removed his illnesses (III, 55ff). The account of his recovery from illness apparently continued into Tablet IV which is now almost completely lost except for the excerpts preserved in the *Ludlul Commentary* and three small fragments which might belong to the poem. Judging from the sequence of events in Tablet I and Tablet II, it is very likely that Tablet IV also recounted how the narrator reconciled with his family, his friends, his fellow courtiers,

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(the physiognomic omens), and also as the systematiser of the *Beschwörungskunst*, lists all the positions he held in the list of incipits of the *Sakikkû*- and *Alandimmû*-series, FINKEL, *Fs. Sachs*, pp. 143–159. In it, he further states that, among the other priesthoods he held, he was also *išippu*- and *ramku*-priest of Ninzilzil (Nanaya), *ibid*., pp. 148–149, A 59–60// B 23'. See also, OSHIMA, SAACT 9, pp. xxxvii–xxxviii and note 120.

[37] ANNUS and LENZI, SAACT 7, p. xxii and note 40. For the so-called *Muššuʾu*-ritual, see, e.g., FINKEL, *AuOr* 9, pp. 91ff; BÖCK, *Das Handbuch* Muššuʾu "*Einreibung*," *passim*, esp. pp. 67ff.

[38] PONGRATZ-LEISTEN in ALEXANDER, LANGE and PILLIGER eds., *In the Second Degree*, pp. 139–157, esp. 153–154.

[39] For further discussion, see the philological note on *Ludlul* III, 42 below.

[40] LAMBERT, *BWL*, p. 21.

[41] Note Lambert's observation on *BWL*, p. 24:

> "A god may appear in a dream, but gods themselves did not perform ritual curing. This was the task of priests, and they did not normally practice their rites in other people's sleep. So the writer resorts to a succession of none too convincing dreams as a means of bringing the necessary priests to the sick man's bedside."

and most importantly his master, the king. Judging from the passages preserved in the *Ludlul Commentary*, it seems that Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan had to go through a river-ordeal,[42] probably not in order to prove his innocence but rather for the absolution of his sins.[43]

In addition, it seems that, somewhere in Tablet IV, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan finally came to realize that his negligence towards Esagil, the cult centre of Marduk in Babylon, was the reason of his adversity. Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan had evidently neglected the cultic obligations to Marduk and his temple. In other words, his 'mysterious' sufferings were the consequence of his failure to fulfil his duties to Marduk, and his claim on his righteousness and piety in Tablet II was evidently a false profession due to his ignorance on his sins.[44]

Tablet V resumes the story with further glorification of Marduk's power of redemption (V, 1ff). Very interestingly, Tablet V refers to people who maltreated the protagonist just like the demons and evil-spirits that brought diseases upon him (V, 12–23). These lines suggest that people ill-treat or abuse others because Marduk allows them to do so in order to punish them for their sins. On the other hand, if one shows Marduk his piety, the god can protect him from the ill-wishers' hands or even smite them.[45] The description of Marduk as the punisher of ill-wishers goes on until line 29, where the protagonist praises Marduk's power to destroy evil-doers (V, 28–29).

In the following section, the narrator states that the punishment of Marduk was so severe that it almost killed him. Yet he declares that Marduk did not fail him and saved him from certain death (V, 30–36). This section reminds one of the first 40 lines of Tablet I that warn of Marduk's devastating power while they also praise his unfailing redemption.

In the next section, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan recounts his pilgrimage to Esagil. He states that he entered the temple of Marduk with prayers and offerings (V, 40ff). At the first stage of his visit to Esagil, he states that he has recovered what he had lost and has been absolved of his sins. He lists a series of blessings, i.e. regaining his prosperity, the return of his protective spirit, welfare, life, forgiveness, remission etc., each of which is said to have been granted at the gate whose name corresponds to it. For example, his prosperity was received at Ká.ḫé.gál, the 'Gate of Abundance', (line 42); his Lamassu-spirit came back to him at Ká.lamma.ra.bi, the 'Gate of his Lamassu-spirit', (line 43); he regained his wellbeing at Ká.silim.ma, the 'Gate of Wellbeing', (line 44) and so on. In Tablet III, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan had already recounted how his recovery from his illness had begun. He had even stated earlier in Tablet V that Marduk had redeemed him already prior to his visit to Esagil. Thus according to *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*, standing at/in front of the different gates of Esagil in fact only symbolizes the completion of the process of his salvation.

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[42] For the river-ordeal, see FRYMER-KENSKY, *The Judicial Ordeal in the Ancient Near East*; GURNEY, *MB Texts*, pp. 10–12; and VAN SOLDT, *RlA* 10, pp. 124–129, Ordal A.

[43] Further, see the philological note to *Ludlul* IV, line j.

[44] Although the exact nature of his sin is not known, the reader/audience of the poem already knew that Marduk was behind the protagonist's adversities, because he has already referred to Marduk's anger and the god's punishment of him in *Ludlul* I, 41–42.

[45] For further discussion, see pp. 66–68 below.

The second stage of the protagonist's visit to Esagil (V 54–66) recounts how he showed his gratefulness and devotions by making offerings and prayers. The narrator attributes his rescue from distress and adversity to Marduk and Zarpanītu. In person, the protagonist stands before the gods Marduk and Zarpanītu in their cellae and offers them fragrant incense, libation, animal sacrifice, meal-offerings, and so forth as signs of his gratitude.

After the visit to Esagil, the protagonist came to a public place where residents of the city of Babylon held a banquet (which was most likely organized by Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan by himself). Upon having witnessed the miracle that happened to the protagonist, the Babylonians extol Marduk's and Zarpanītu's saving power (V, 67–82). Due to the lacunae, it is difficult to determine the exact nature of the next section. Judging from what has survived, it seems that the rest (V, 83–106) is either the narrator's or the Babylonians' wishes for Marduk's governance of the world. These lines also refer to wishes for establishment of the human kingship over the land and probably good health or long reign for king Nazimaruttaš (V, 100 and 103).

The narrator continues his invocation of Marduk's divine rule over mankind. He also offers Marduk his wish to be allowed to praise Marduk's mercy and also to be allowed to tell people about his adversities caused by his own sins against Marduk and his temple Esagil (V, 101–106). The rest (V, 107–120) consists of pleas to Marduk to ease the suppliant's pain and grief and to absolve his sins.[46] He also addresses petitions to his personal gods – he asks them to offer praise to Marduk for his sake in order to secure the wellbeing of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan (V, 115–119). This is notable, because in the last 15 lines Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan is referred to by the third person pronouns.[47] This fact suggests that, although this poem takes the form of a monologue up-to Tablet V 106, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan was neither the real reciter nor the author of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* as such. It is very likely that, like many Sumero-Akkadian royal hymns, this praise to Marduk was in reality composed and recited to the god by a priest of Esagil for the sake of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan.[48]

This lengthy monologue concludes with a phrase stating that it was praise (*dalīlu* and *tanittu*) to Marduk, V, 120:

120 *id-lu-la dâ-lí-*[*lí-ka … t*]*a-nit-ta-ka ṭa-bat*
120 He (Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan) (has) extolled [your (Marduk's)] glo[ry …] your [p]raise is gratifying.

Phrases similar to this are attested in the epilogue of Akkadian hymns and prayers of praise offering. Because the beneficiary of the pleas (i.e. Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan, the nar-

[46] It seems that *Ludlul* V, 112 is a petition for the sake of the king rather than for Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan himself.

[47] Shifts of the subject of sentences, e.g., from the third person to the second person, or from the first person to the third person, are very common in Sumero-Akkadian hymns. Cf. HECKER, *Untersuchungen zur akkadischen Epik*, pp. 73ff. Needless to say, however, it is also possible that this pronoun in the third singular person refers to someone else, e.g. to the king or to an unspecified person. In that case, *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* would not reflect the personal experience of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan with Marduk. Instead, it would have to be seen as a story recounting how Marduk's retribution and his power of redemption might have happened to anyone.

[48] For the question of authorship, see below.

rator) is referred to here by third person pronouns, as various modern scholars have already suggested, *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* was initially composed as a thanksgiving prayer in order to offer praise to Marduk solely for the sake of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan.[49] That would mean that the poem represents Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan's personal view on Marduk. However, he gained his 'enlightenment' concerning the greatness of Marduk's power of punishment and mercy through his experience with the official cult, i.e. his adversity resulted from his negligence of the cult duties of Esagil and his redemption was established through the rituals performed by the messengers of Marduk (i.e. priests of Esagil),[50] thus his understanding of the world order at the centre of which Marduk stood was largely influenced by the official teaching on Marduk. Thus one may view the imagery of Marduk described in the poem to be an amalgam of a personal belief and the official dogma.[51]

The Narrator and the Authorship of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*

Narrator/Protagonist

As already stated above, *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* is a monologue recounting a man's sufferings. The sufferer's name, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan, is first revealed in *Ludlul* III, line 44 and is later attested again in *Ludlul* V, lines 111 and 119. As discussed above, however, there is good reason to assume that Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan who serves as the protagonist

[49] For the genre of the poem, see pp. 31–32 and note 132 below

[50] The boundary between the 'official' religion and 'private' belief is not as clear as some modern scholars often present it. For example, Å. Westenholz offers a model distinguishing four groups for the early religion (Pre-Sargonic and Sargonic periods), CRRA 21, p. 215:

1. The popular religion
2. The religion of practitioners not attached to the temples (i.e. presumably certain kinds of incantation priests);
3. The religion of practitioners attached to the temples (i.e the official cult);
4. The official religion of the ruling family in each city state; notable that of the Akkadian kings and their family.

However, a boundary between the popular religion and the religions of practitioners (attached or not attached to the temples) might well be less sharp than Westenholz's model suggests. For example, Babylonian cleansing rituals involved many canonical incantations recited by incantation-priests, but it is not clear whether the client himself also had to recite the incantations following the priest. Yet, we know from various ritual instructions that he/she was surely present at the scene of ritual performed by the priest(s). See, e.g., GERSTENBERGER, *Der bittende Mensch*, p. 81; MAYER, *UFBG*, p. 63–65; MAUL, *Zukunftsbewältigung*, p. 40; FRECHETTE, *Mesopotamian Ritual-prayers*, pp. 133ff. Although the divinity addressed in these canonical incantations and incantation-prayers belonged to the 'official' religion, by listening to them, a private person was confronted with the notions of the official representatives of the religion; in this way, the 'official' theology could be transmitted directly to people who were not attached to the temples. One may compare it with open religious services of any kind. See OPPENHEIM, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, pp. 181, 193ff; ALBERTZ, *Persönliche Frömmigkeit*, pp. 10ff.

[51] For the terminologies 'personal belief' and 'official religion', cf., ALBERTZ, *ibid*., pp. 4–11. Further discussion on this subject, see below.

and the narrator of the poem publicly declaimed it in thanksgiving for his redemption. In this sense, he was its 'author', although he very likely did not compose it by himself. Yet, it is highly unlikely that the 'narrator' of the poem was merely a literary 'I' as Sitzler has suggested.[52] Just like the Old-Babylonian or Neo-Assyrian royal hymns and prayers, this poem was presumably composed and recited for the sake of a real person, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan, probably at his request. In other words, he probably did not write the poem, but he commissioned it.[53]

The text itself offers very little information on Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan, e.g. neither his place of residence nor his social status. The epilogue reveals that *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* was not so much a straightforward narrative, but was essentially a hymn of praise to Marduk declaimed by Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan, in the course of which he recounts what has happened to him. Given this fact, one can speculate that the author of the poem found it irrelevant to go into detail about the protagonist's background: he himself knew very well who Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan was. It is also possible, as Lambert has already asserted, that the historical Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan was indeed a familiar figure in ancient times, so that those hearing or reading the poem would need no such information.[54] Nevertheless, if the text had really been intended as a narrative, one would expect more information on the identity of its main character. But, in fact, *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* offers practically no concrete information about its protagonist. Thus, judging from the very personalized tone of the poem, it is more likely that the poem was intended, from the beginning, as a personal expression of devotion to Marduk.

Although the text itself does not provide details about the protagonist's background, we can still learn something about him through close examination of the poem.

Because the text refers to Nazimaruttaš (Tablet V, 100), the Babylonian king of Kassite origin, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan apparently lived around 1300 BCE.[55] He must have held a very high social status, because, in Tablets I–II, he refers to 'my' city (I, 82, 102), 'my' land (I, 83) and 'my' people (II, 30). This indicates that he could have been the governor of a region or the prefect of a city.[56] Yet, he was certainly not a royal person. In addition, despite the allusion to his role in the royal court,[57] there is no indication in the poem that he was a resident of the city of Babylon.[58] As Moran puts its, "[i]n

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[52] SITZLER, *Vorwurf gegen Gott*, p. 93.

[53] For the question of the authorship of the poem, see below.

[54] LAMBERT, *BWL*, pp. 21–22.

[55] According to Brinkman, Nazimaruttaš reigned Babylonia between 1307–1282 BCE. BRINKMAN, *MSKH*, p. 31. For a recent discussion of the later second millennium chronology with up-to-date bibliographical references, see BLOCH, *UF* 42, pp. 41–95.

Note also Laluralimma, *Ludlul* III, 25. His name is attested twice in administrative documents from the Nippur temple archive which modern scholars date to the reign of Nazimaruttaš. For Laluralimma, see below in this section.

[56] Note also that the narrator likewise refers to his canals (I 100) and fields (I 101).

[57] *Ludlul* I, 55–58 state that the king became angry with the narrator, the courtiers plotted hostile action against him, and others spoke against him.

[58] Because Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan's name is attested mostly in documents found in Ur and Nippur, his residence was more likely in southern Mesopotamia. See LAMBERT in DAY *et al*. eds., *Wisdom in ancient Israel*, pp. 33–34.

his piety and his belief" Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan was a "Mesopotamian Everyman".[59] In other words, the narrator was a man with conventional personal religion based on devotion to the personal gods and the gods of his city.[60]

As Lambert has repeatedly observed, Šubši-mešrê/â-Šakkan is not a name type widely attested.[61] Given the rarity of this name type, whenever a Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan is attested together with the Kassite king Nazimaruttaš in any text, one may safely conclude that the reference is either to the narrator of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* or to the person who served as the model of this character.[62]

There are three such texts referring to Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan in conjunction with king Nazimaruttaš. The first and probably the most important is a contemporary legal document from Ur dated to the year 16 of Nazimaruttaš.[63] Due to the poor preservation of the tablet, its exact contents and the role of Šubši-mašrâ-Šakkan[64] are not certain, yet his title *šakin māti*, 'the governor of the land', suggests that he was a local governor, probably of the southern regions of the Kassite kingdom near Ur.[65]

The second text is PBS II/1, no. 20, an administrative text found at Nippur. It is also another contemporary text and dated to Nazimaruttaš year 4.[66] Its line 31 records a ration of grain issued to the messenger of Šubši-ma[šrâ]-Šakkan.[67] Unlike the previous text, however, his status is not mentioned in the preserved portions of the tablet.

The third text connecting king Nazimaruttaš and Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan is BM 38611 // K 9952.[68] While the latter bears a Kouyunjik registration number, the former is written in Neo-/Late-Babylonian scripts and probably found in Babylon. This fact suggests

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[59] MORAN, *The Most Magic Word*, p. 186.

[60] Several cuneiform texts refer to the city gods alongside the personal gods as being the providers of welfare for individuals as well as being their punishers. For further discussion on this subject, see below, pp. 144–149. If indeed Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan was not a resident of the city of Babylon, but lived in a southern Mesopotamian city like Ur or Nippur as it has been suggested by modern scholars, the poem actually indicates that Marduk's dominion had extended to the traditional Sumerian cities, beyond of his 'natural' territory: i.e. the city of Babylon and its surroundings. It is difficult to determine, however, whether Marduk's power of punishment extending to the traditional centre of the Sumerians is based on the belief in Marduk as the ruler of the entire Mesopotamia or on some other quality of Marduk. In fact Marduk's harm-doing power reaching well beyond the boundaries of the Babylonian king's political dominion is already mentioned in the early Old-Babylonian period. In his letter-prayer to Ninisina, Sîn-iddinam, the king of Larsa (1849–1843), the contemporary of Sumû-la-El (1880–1845) and Sabium (1844–1831) of the First Dynasty of Babylon, complains that he was affected by the wrath of Marduk. For the edition, see HALLO, *Kramer AV*, pp. 213–224. For further discussion, see OSHIMA, *Babylonian Prayers to Marduk*, pp. 45–47.

[61] LAMBERT, *BWL*, pp. 296–297; *idem* in DAY *et al*. eds., *Wisdom in Ancient Israel*, p. 34.

[62] See LAMBERT in DAY *et al.* eds., *ibid*, pp. 32–34.

[63] GURNEY, *MB Texts*, no. 76 lines 9 and 14.

[64] *mašrâ* is an archaic form of *mešrê*.

[65] See LAMBERT, *op. cit*., pp. 33–34. As *Ludlul* III, line 25 refers to a man of Nippur as being the sender of one of the priests to Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan in his dream, it is also possible that the latter was a resident of Nippur. It seems that the Kassite kings often spent time in Nippur. See SASSMANNSHAUSEN, *Beiträge zur Verwaltung und Gesellschaft*, p. 10. For the dreams of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan, see below.

[66] PBS II/2, no. 20, line 43.

[67] See LAMBERT in DAY *et al*. eds., *Wisdom in Ancient Israel*, p. 33.

[68] LAMBERT, *BWL*, pl. 12 and pp. 296–297. For a full edition, see below, pp. 465–469.

that these exemplars are both later copies of a Kassite document. Lambert has suggested that K 9952 is an historical epic. However, despite their poor states of preservation, judging from what has survived on BM 38611 and K 9952, they are more probably later copies of a legal document or a letter concerning a dispute over an estate or household. Apparently this dispute went on over several decades, because it refers to three kings: Burnaburiaš II (1359–1333), Kurigalzu II (1332–1308), and Nazimaruttaš (1307–1282).[69] Among different personal names, a certain Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan is attested, 24'–25':

24' … by the command[?] of Nazi]muruttaš, my lord, your *real* (lit.: begetter) father,
25' Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan has rendered (the case) in my favour and gave them (estates) to me. …

Due to lacunae of the manuscripts, it is not clear what was the outcome of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan's decision. Yet, this text, like the text from Ur described above, likewise implies that Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan was a contemporary of Nazimaruttaš and held an important office.

There are other cuneiform texts that might confirm our conclusions about the lifetime of the narrator. They do not refer to Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan himself but mention Laluralimma, another character named in the poem. A certain *làl-úr-alim* is known from administrative documents found in the temple archive of Nippur (BE XV no. 44, 10, no. 156, 2 and no. 168, 12; 21), and from two letters from the Hilprecht-Sammlung of the Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena (HS 110, 2; 113, 2[70]). Unfortunately these texts offer no further details about this person because none of these texts mentions the name of the king. However, if Martuki, the addressee of the letters in the Hilprecht-Sammlung is indeed the administrator in Nippur who was active during the reign of Nazimaruttaš,[71] this Laluralim and the incantation-priest from Nippur Laluralimma, known from *Ludlul* III, 25 might be the same person. This would support the conclusion that the narrator was a contemporary with Nazimaruttaš or at least that *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* is situated during his reign.[72]

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[69] As for the regnal years of these three Kassite kings, I follow, BRINKMAN, *MSKH*, p. 31.

Incidentally, judging from the contexts, it seems that the dispute had started during the reign of Kurigalzu (II) and that Burnaburiaš (II) is merely mentioned as the father of the former.

[70] For the editions of these texts, see BERNHARDT and ARO, *WZJ* 8, pp. 567–568; 571 with copies on pls. V–VI; XI respectively.

[71] Cf., BERNHARDT and ARO, *WZJ* 8, p. 568, note for line 2.

[72] Clay has suggested that most of the texts published in BE XV might have been written during the reign of Nazimaruttaš, BE XV, p. 15. For the other attestations of Martuki, see HÖLSCHER, *Die Personennamen*, pp. 139–140.

Incidentally, BM 38611 // K 9952 discussed above refers to a certain Kilamdi-Marduk. This name is also attested on BE XV no. 168 (line 11) immediately before Laluralim (line 12). This fact might also speak in favour of identifying the Laluralim known from the Nippur documents with the incantation-priest from Nippur known from *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*.

Like Urnintinugga, Laluralimma is listed in the Neo-Assyrian exemplar of a name list from the Kassite period, *VR* 44, ii 17. See, further, notes on *Ludlul* III, 25 and 40 below. Very interestingly, just like the king Nazimaruttaš and the narrator, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan, Laluralimma and Urnintinugga needed no introduction in *Ludlul*. This fact further supports the thesis that this poem was not initially intended to be told to an unspecified audience like a folk tale or legend.

Author, *Main Motif*, *and Setting of the Poem*

As discussed already above, *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* has long been referred to as *The Babylonian Job* or *The Righteous Sufferer* by the modern scholars, and treated as a part of the corpus of 'wisdom literature' like the biblical story of Job.[73] The epilogue of *Ludlul* (V, 120), however, proves that this lengthy poem is intended as prayer and praise to Marduk (*dalīlu* and *tanittu*).[74] Its epilogue also suggests that *Ludlul* was originally composed solely for the sake of the historical person Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan. It even offers pleas for his sake (V, 104–119). This also explains why the poem begins with a phrase typically found in an Akkadian hymn, i.e. *ludlul*, 'let me praise'.[75] In terms of structure, one may compare this text to the Old-Babylonian or Neo-Assyrian royal hymns.[76] These compositions likewise conclude with pleas for the sake of the monarchs in whose names they were composed and recited.

Despite the reference to his name and the pleas for the absolution of his sins in the epilogue of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*, it is hard to believe that Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan himself could have composed this lengthy poem.[77] Needless to say, however, we cannot rule out such a remote possibility with certainty.[78]

On the other hand, the real author of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* could not have been any ordinary scribe, namely one who worked for the administration, because this poem employs the so-called *Jungbabylonisch* or Standard Babylonian with rare terms for different names of illnesses and body parts which are not widely attested in administrative documents and letters.[79] Both the vocabulary and many phraseologies as well as the main theme well show clear parallels to Akkadian prayers including the so-called *Šui-*

[73] E.g., most recently, PERDUE, *Wisdom Literature*, pp. 86–88, esp. 87; UEHLINGER in KRÜGER, *et al*. eds., *Das Buch Hiob*, pp. 137–146, esp. 145–146; KLEIN, *Fs. Vanstiphout*, p. 132; and LUX, *Hiob*, pp. 28–43, esp. 28–29.

[74] Cf. ANNUS and LENZI, SAACT 7, p. ix.

[75] In their first lines, Akkadian hymns tend to contain words like *dalālu*, *nâdu*, both 'to praise, extol', and *zamāru*, 'to sing', in precative first singular. See HECKER, *Untersuchungen zur akkadischen Epik*, pp. 77ff; SEUX, *Hymnes*, pp. 14–17; and OSHIMA, *Babylonian Prayers to Marduk*, p. 34. Incidentally, *tanittu* is a derivative of *nâdu*.

[76] For Akkadian hymns to deities, see, e.g., VON SODEN, *RlA* 4, pp. 544–548; HECKER, *Untersuchungen zur akkadischen Epik*, pp. 69ff; EDZARD in BURKERT and STOLZ eds., *Hymnen der Alten Welt*, pp. 19–31; SEUX, *Hymnes*, pp. 14–17.

[77] *Contra* FOSTER, *Akkadian Literature*, p. 32, 2.5.1.

[78] Some ancient kings (e.g. Šulgi and Aššurbanipal) claimed literary skills. Yet, it is most likely that their scribes, more precisely, their advisors or scholars, were chiefly responsible for the composition of royal inscriptions throughout the history of ancient Mesopotamia. Being a governor of a region, it is not completely impossible that Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan was able to write and read simple texts. For the discussion on the literacy of the officials during the Neo-Assyrian period, see PARPOLA, *Fs. Rölling*, pp. 315–324. For the literacy of the ancient kings, see FRAHM in RADNER and ROBSON eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture*, pp. 508–532. Note also LIVINGSTONE, *ZA* 97, pp. 98–118; ZAMAZALOVÁ in RADNER and ROBSON eds., *ibid*., pp. 312–330. For the scholars' responsibility for the composition of royal inscriptions, see TADMOR in FALES, *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*, pp. 31–33; LUUKKO, *SAAB* 16, pp. 227–228; CHARPIN, *Reading and Writing*, p. 229 and 236–237; also, PONGRATZ-LEISTEN, *Herrschaftswissen*, p. 274; LAMBERT, *NABU* 2001, no. 83.

[79] For a short survey of these words, see ANNUS and LENZI, SAACT 7, pp. xxvi–xxviii.

la-prayers.[80] On the other hand, we know from various ancient texts that, in the course of their education, temple scholars and royal counsellors had to master the texts classified by modern scholars as medical diagnostic texts, omen texts, incantations, lamentations, didactic texts, myths, legends and so forth.[81] As P.-A. Beaulieu points out, the author of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* must have had such an education and thus have come from the same "cultural milieu that saw the compilation of the *Diagnostic Handbook* and the systematization of the *āšipūtu* by Esagil-kīn-apli and his school."[82] If so, it is reasonable to speculate that a temple scholar, an *ummânu* belonging to the cult of Marduk, more specifically, a *mašmaššu*/*āšipu* (incantation-priest),[83] composed *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* at Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan's commission. Although there is no direct internal or external evidence to support this surmise, being a governor (*šākin māti*) under the Kassite kings, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan would have had sufficient means to hire someone to write the poem for him.[84] This means, however, that we will probably never know the identity of the 'ghost writer' of this poem.

Thematically speaking, *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* belongs to a genre often called 'righteous sufferer' poems, among which the Sumerian *Man and his God* and the Babylonian *Man and his God* are also counted. As many scholars, however, have already observed, because the protagonists of these poems eventually admit their guilt despite their initial claims of innocence, this modern term represents neither accurately the contents of these poems nor their main intention.[85]

The Sumerian Man and his God

First, I will discuss the Sumerian *Man and his God*. The Sumerian *Man and his God* is written in Sumerian and was composed probably during the Ur III period or the Old-Babylonian period.

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[80] BEAULIEU in CLIFFORD ed., *Wisdom Literature in Mesopotamia and Israel*, p. 11. See also, FOSTER, *Before the Muses*[3], p. 393. For a brief survey of parallelisms between *Ludlul* and Sumero-Akkadian prayers, see below.

[81] HUROWITZ in PERDUE ed., *Scribes*, *Sages*, *and Seers*, pp. 64ff, esp. 67–76.

[82] BEAULIEU, *op. cit*., p. 13. For Esagil-kīn-apli and further references, see OSHIMA, SAACT 9, pp. xxxvii–xxxviii.

[83] See, most recently, LENZI in CROUCH, *et al*. eds., *Between Heaven and Earth*, p. 38 and note 4. Note also, GERHARDS, *Der undefinierbare Gott*, p. 98. Significantly, in the protagonist's dreams in Tablet III which were said to be the signs of his redemption, the narrator only mentions priests belonging to *āšipūtu*, i.e. 'the lore of the incantation-priest'. This fact may speak in favour of the conclusion that the actual author was an incantation-priest. For the failed rituals, see p. 68 below.

As I have discussed elsewhere (OSHIMA, SAACT 9, pp. xxxvii–xl), however, because an *ummânu* possessed not only the knowledge in his main field but also that of other disciplines, one may also speculate that any scholar trained in other scholarly activities – i.e. lamentations, divinations, omen-texts, and medicine – could have composed it.

[84] Lambert hypothesized that *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* is not complete fiction. Thus he believed that it was probably composed by the scholars of Esagil based on some experience of this 'historical' Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan, see LAMBERT in DAY, *et al*. eds., *Wisdom in Ancient Israel*, pp. 33–34. Cf. also the previous section on the narrator in this chapter above.

[85] Therefore, Mattingly suggests that the term "pious" sufferers would be a more appropriate alternative to 'righteous' sufferers, the term commonly used by modern scholars, MATTINGLY in HALLO *et al*. eds., *Scripture in Context* III, p. 318.

The plot of the Sumerian *Man and his God* is as follows:[86]

Just like *Ludlul*, the Sumerian *Man and His God* is mostly written in a monologue form, but it opens with requests for permission to allow the supplicant to praise his god and to calm the divine wrath (1–8). In this section, the sufferer is referred to in the third person singular, *Man and His God* lines 1–8:

1 Let a man utter faithfully the exaltedness of his god!
2 Let a young man praise without contrivance the words of his god!
3 Let him *unravel them like a thread before* the inhabitants of the well administered Land!
4 Let the *harp*[87] player, his female (or) male companion, assuage *his spirit*!
5 Let *him* soothe *his* heart!
6 [Let *him*] bring forth ....., let him utter .....!
7 Let him *instruct* .....!
8 Let his words of lament soothe the heart of his god!

The wording of the hymnic opening of this poem is reminiscent of the opening praise to Marduk in *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* and its epilogue. The initial praise section is followed by laments describing the sufferer's adversity (lines 9–24). In this section, the sufferer asserts that he has committed no crime, for example lines 9–10:

9 (For) a man without a (personal) god will not *obtain* (his) food.
10 The young man does not *commit* evil *with* his power in the place of murder.

Another example is lines 14–17:

14 Behind (him) it placed an evil hand on him, treated him like a *storm*.
15 The valiant (one), before his god,
16 the young man, was bitterly weeping on account of the 'evil arm', that had been placed upon him.
17 He was reverent and paid homage (to his god).

The monologue is introduced by a reference to his prayer, lines 22–24:

22 ..... bitter lament is set [*in his heart*].
23 He is filled up with [*sorrow*].
24 *He utters him* [*a prayer*], *addresses him* [*a supplication*]:

In the monologue section (which actually follows the prayer formula), the supplicant presents himself as a learned young man (e.g. lines 28; 45). Yet, he complains that his wisdom has become bewildered, lines 28–29:

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[86] For the most recent studies of the Sumerian *Man and His God*, see UEHLINGER in KRÜGER *et al*. eds., *Das Buch Hiob*, pp. 128–132; KLEIN, *Fs. Vanstiphout*, pp. 123–143. For the research history of the poem, see KLEIN, *ibid*., pp. 124–127. Note Klein's observation, *ibid*., p. 139: "Even if *Man and his God* as a whole was composed not earlier than the OB period, the various literary generic elements incorporated in it, and especially the long penitential psalm, which form its kernel and most important part, is certainly borrowed from an old cultic genre, which goes back at least as far as the Old Akkadian period." The translation offered in the present monograph is taken (with some minor modifications) from J. Klein's forthcoming edition of the poem. I would like to thank J. Klein for his kind permission of use his unpublished materials.

[87] The original word is ^{giš}balag in Sumerian. U. Gabbay has observed in his unpublished Hebrew University dissertation that balaĝ initially referred to a lyre, but, in the later period, the term was also used for other musical instruments including a drum, *Sumero-Akkadian Prayer*, pp. 57–65.

28 As for me, the young man, the learned one, I cannot make my *knowledge* avail;
29 the truth which I speak, it *is turned into* a lie.

The supplicant of the *Man and His God* first had to face social isolation and the hostility of his friends and family members (lines 30–43), e.g., lines 33–34:

33 When I enter the house, heavy is the spirit;
34 I, the young man, when I go out to the street, anguished is the heart.

This is comparable with the situation of the narrator of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* in Tablet I, 81–96. The supplicant of the *Man and His God* also recounts that his servants and friends spoke against him or even cursed him (lines 35–39). He further complains that his personal god neither protects him from the curse nor punishes his antagonists (lines 39–43). He then laments that he is considered to be a fool (lines 44–45). It seems that, in the following section, which is poorly preserved, the supplicant further complains about the loss of his property (lines 46–57).

The supplicant of the *Man and His God* asks permission to offer prayers to his personal god, lines 58–59:

58 Let me speak to you, my tears are *excessive*, my words are supplication!
59 Let me tell you about it! Let me unravel before you like a thread the ill-fate *of* my course!

By contrast to the fate of the narrator of *Ludlul*, however, the supplicant's family stand by him and offer prayers and lamentations for him, 64–68:

64 Lo, let not my mother, who bore me, cease my lament before you!
65 Let my sister, the harp player, who is *indeed* (a person) of sweet voice,
66 utter tearfully my misfortunes before you!
67 Let my wife intone dirge (and) lament over my sufferings!
68 Let the singer, who is expert in lamentations, unravel my bitter fate to you like a thread!

In lines 72–74, the supplicant then complains that he is beset by evil-spirits that bring him illnesses:

72 Suffering overwhelms me like a weeping child.
73 In the hands of the (demon) Fate (=Namtar), (my) features have been changed, my breath of life had been carried off;
74 the malignant (demon of) sickness (=Asag) bathes in my body.

In the following section, the supplicant himself and his family bewail his ill state.

After another poorly preserved section (lines 82–91), he again seeks for help from his personal god and requests for restoration of his health (lines 98–102). At this point, however, the poem takes a dramatic turn. In lines 106–110, the supplicant now begins to confess his offences against his god:

106 My god, my forgotten (*sins*), which I have *committed against you in arrogance*,
107 (and) the .... of the *revealed* (*sins*), which I have done before you,
108 The young man who ....., the wise one – let him speak pleasant words!
109 On a day, *when I lay in my chamber unclean*, I verily *walked* before you,
110 in my being unclean (and) impure, I *disturbed* the city in its *peacefulness*.

He reveals that his sins consisted of breaking taboos, more specifically, not keeping purity of certain places (e.g. in the bed chamber, the cultic niche in the house, and

probably during the cult services of the city). He further requests permission to confess his sins not only in front of his personal god but also in the assembly (lines 113–116).

His prayer concludes with requests for the acceptance of his supplications by his personal god and for leniency (lines 117–119). Just as the narrator of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* does, the supplicant compares divine anger with a flood (line 119).[88]

At this point, in the course of lines 120–134, the style of the Sumerian *Man and His God* changes. The supplicant is now referred to in the third person singular just like the opening lines of the poem. The poem states that the supplicant's prayers have been accepted (lines 120–124), and that his personal god has lifted the adversities from him (lines 125–129). The restoration of his wellbeing is completed by the return of the supplicant's protective spirits, lines 131–132:

131 A benevolent udug-spirit, that watches over the *head*, set by him (as a) guardian;
132 lamma-spirits (of) "good eyes", he (also) gave him.

This section effectively suggests that the benevolent udug- and lamma-spirits (Akkadian *šēdu* and *lamassu*) are under the authority of the personal gods.

At line 135, however, the style of the poem shifts once again and, in the concluding thanksgiving section, the supplicant is again referred to by the first person singular. The poem concludes with praise to the supplicant's personal god and a plea for absolution of his sins (lines 135–142).[89]

The Babylonian Man and his God

Another text that shares the same motif and tone of wailing is the so-called Babylonian *Man and His God*.[90] Lambert dates this text to the late Old-Babylonian period (around the reign of Ammiditana).[91] Unlike the Sumerian *Man and His God* and *Ludlul Bēl*

[88] For the motif of Marduk's anger being a flood, see the philological note on *Ludlul* I, 7.

[89] Incidentally, the poem is called ér-šà-ne-ša$_4$ by its colophon. According to an ancient lexical list, this word is a Sumerian equivalent of *taqrīb unnīnim*, MSL 4, p. 120, 11. For *taqrību* being not only a ritual or offering but also a kind of prayer, see OSHIMA, *Babylonian Prayers to Marduk*, p. 174 philological note for *Prayer to Marduk no. 1* line 29.

Note also the subscript of the Babylonian *Man and His God*, line 68b, which reads:

68b *un-ne-en a-ar-di-ka li-ri-id a-na li-bi-ka*
68b May the prayer of your servant sink into your hear.

Given this, one may suggests that the Babylonian *Man and His God*, although it seems to take a dialogue form, is likewise an *unninnu*. Note also the *Prayer to Marduk no. 1*, another *unninnu*-prayer: although it is a supplication seeking Marduk's help in adversity rather than a thanks-giving or praise-offering prayer. Unlike the Sumerian *Man and His God* or the Babylonian counterpart, it also shares many similarities in motifs. For further discussion of the *Prayer to Marduk no. 1*, see below, pp. 26–27.

[90] The primal edition with a hand copy is NOUGAYROL, *RB* 59, pp. 239–250. For the most recent edition with collation, see LAMBERT, *Fs. Reiner*, pp. 187–202 and for an English translation and further bibliographical references, see FOSTER, *Before the Muses*[3], pp. 148–150. Note also von Soden's translation with various useful comments, TUAT III/1, pp. 135–140.

[91] LAMBERT, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

Nēmeqi, it takes the form of a dialogue between a human sufferer and his god.[92] The plot of the poem is as follows.

A narrative recounting the adversities of the sufferer opens the poem (lines 1–9).[93] While bewailing his misery, the sufferer suggests that he has done nothing wrong that might provoke the fury of his god (lines 11–16). Like the sufferers of the Sumerian *Man and His God* and *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*, it seems that the sufferer also suffers from social isolation and slander on the part of his colleagues and family, see line 15:

15 *ú-ul d*[*a*-(*a*)-*g*]*i-il a-*ʳ*ḫu*ˀ [*a*]-*ḫi-iš-šu ka-ar-ṣí ib-ri-im ib-ra-šu la* ʳ*a*ˀ-[*ki-il*]
15 (If) a brother does not look after his brother;[94] would a friend not slander his friend?

Like the Sumerian sufferer and Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan, he follows the account of his social problems with references to his health problems. The sufferer complains that deadly illnesses beset him, lines 27–31, and he attributes his plight to his personal god, lines 29–30:

29 *pí-ya-am ma-la*ˀ*-am tu-ma-ar-ri-ra-am da-an-ni-iš* × [××××] ×*-tu-šu i-wu da-da-ar-šu*
30 [(×)] ×*-tim*ˀ *tu-úr-ri-ú*ˀ *ta-*ʳ*ad*ˀ*-lu-uḫ ma-mi pí-iš-ri* × [×] × *IR*ˀ *iš-tu ṣe-eḫ-re-ku*

29 You (the personal god) made my mouth full of (food?) badly bitter, . [....] . of his, his centaury speaks.
30 .. whom you instructed, you muddied water, my release . [.] .. since I was small.

It seems that in lines 32–38, like the narrator of the Sumerian *Man and His God*, the sufferer makes a confession of his offences committed against his god. Yet, because of the poor preservation, the exact nature of his sins remains uncertain.

The next strophe, lines 39–47, is again a narrative, but this time, recounting the restoration of the sufferer's health by his personal god. This narrative leads to a response on the part of his personal god describing the sufferer's redemption, lines 48–61. In it, the god implies that all the adversities that the sufferer had to face were done according to divine plan, note, especially, lines 50–51:

50 *šu-um-ma-ma-an la qá-bi-ya-at a-na ba-la-ṭi-im*
51 *ki-ma-ma-an te-le-*ʾ*i di-ya-am ka-ab-ta ku-ul-la-ti-iš-šu ta-aš-du-ud*

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[92] Given the poem's overall structure, beginning with an initial narrative recounting the sufferer's woeful condition, followed by his lamentations and his confession of sins, and then followed up by a second narrative recounting the restoration of his health and the declaration of his salvation, this poem is not really a dialogue as such but rather follows the basic formulae of prayers like the Sumerian *Man and his God*.

[93] Nougayrol, von Soden, and Müller suggest that, in this section, the sufferer's family or his friend present his problem to his personal god, NOUGAYROL, *RB* 59, p. 243; VON SODEN, TUAT III/1, p. 136; and MÜLLER, *OrNS* 47, p. 368. On the other hand, Lambert takes this section (lines 1–21) to be a narrative, just like lines 39–47, and suggests that there is only one human speaker and only one god speaking, *Fs. Reiner*, p. 189. Here I follow Lambert.

[94] Note VON SODEN, TUAT III/1, p. 137: "Nicht blickt ein Bruder auf seinen Bruder, spricht sein Verleumdungen des Freundes sein Freund nicht [aus]." Lambert, on the other hand, translates "Does a brother look down his brother?" *Fs. Reiner*, p. 191. Note also FOSTER, *Before the Muses*[3], p. 148: "Brother does not de[sp]ise his brother." Probably what this line implies is that if one had his god, his brother would look after him, and no friend would slander him.

50 If you (i.e. the sufferer) have not been commanded to life,
51 how could you manage it? (How could) you bear the severe *di'u*-disease to its end?

Given this text, one can surmise that the author regarded the severe diseases as instruments for teaching the protagonist the power of the god's deliverance and the divine order. This is followed by a warning not to forget who his god is (lines 56–57):[95]

56 *aḫ-re-ti-iš* u_4*-mi la ta-ma-aš-šu-*⌜*ú*⌝ *il-*[*ka*]
57 *ba-ni-ka ki ta-da-am-mi-qú-nim a-at-ta*

56 In the future days, you should not forget your god,
57 at the same time, your creator, you should please.

After the protagonist's god has assured his protection and long life, he further instructs the repenter to provide food and water to those who in need – sorcerers excepted (lines 63–66). After a further promise of prosperity (lines 66–67), the poem concludes with pleas for the sake of the sufferer (line 68) and for a scribe named Kalbānum (line 69).

The basic structure of these poems is reminiscent of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*. Although *Ludlul* opens with praise to Marduk instead of with a narrative as in the Sumerian and Babylonian *Man and his God*, all three poems initially describe the social problems that the protagonists had to face, the illnesses that beset them, but then, after initial protestations of innocence, they go on to acknowledge the protagonists' guilt. They also conclude with praise to the gods.[96] This suggests that *Ludlul* was actually composed following the literary tradition already canonized by the Sumerian *Man and his God*, with the difference that the Sumero-Babylonian poem refers to the supplicant's personal god while *Ludlul* presents Marduk as the ruler of all the personal gods. It is possible that the author of *Ludlul* deliberately used this literary formula in order to remind the readers that Marduk was the one who actually decides the fate of each individual person, and that the personal gods were merely his extensions in the personal sphere.

There are other ancient texts that probably originated from the same topoi. Like *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*, but unlike the Sumero-Babylonian *Man and His God* poems, these texts are dedicated specifically to Marduk. Although not identical with any parts of *Ludlul*,[97] they attest to belief in Marduk as the punisher and saviour of human beings, both individually and collectively, and thus share many similar, if not identical motifs with *Ludlul*. In all, they show that the key elements of *Ludlul* were already in existence when the poem was composed in the Kassite period.

Ugaritica 5, no. 162

The most important of these parallel texts is *Ugaritica* 5, no. 162.[98] Judging from the contexts preserved on the tablet, it is a thanksgiving prayer to Marduk very similar to

[95] The phrases are not formulated in the prohibitive nor written as a caution. But the way it is worded makes the intention of the sentences clear: they are a warning not to forget who his god is.

[96] The Babylonian *Man and his God*, however, concludes with an instruction to honour the god.

[97] However, *Ugaritica* 5, no. 162 might still be a forerunner of *Ludlul*.

[98] For the most recent edition with up-to-date bibliography, see DIETRICH in NEUMANN ed., *Wissenskultur im Alten Orient*, pp. 188–219; COHEN, *Wisdom from the Late Bronze Age*, pp. 165–175; OSHIMA, *Babylonian Prayers to Marduk*, pp. 205–215.

Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi.[99] The manuscript R.S. 25.460 (D 6752 = *Ugaritica* 5, no. 162) was found at Ugarit, the modern Ras Shamra, in 1962.[100] The date of composition of this text cannot be later than the late thirteenth century BCE since the city of Ugarit lay in ruins in the early twelfth century BCE.[101] The exact date of composition is yet to be determined, but we can tentatively date this text to very late in the Old Babylonian period[102] or to the early Middle Babylonian period. The fragment preserves the bottom half of a single column tablet with 46 lines in total on its obverse and reverse. We do not know the exact length of the original text, but it appears to have contained around one hundred lines.

The preserved portion of the text is a monologue recounting the narrator's sufferings due to an undetermined cause (1'–24'), followed by praise to Marduk (25'–33') and testimony to the narrator's salvation by Marduk (34'–46'). Just like *Ludlul*, its narrator attributes his adversities to Marduk and makes Marduk likewise responsible for his ultimate salvation. Although, unlike *Ludlul*, this Ugarit text contains no explicit challenge to the traditional *Tun-Ergehen* principle, similarities in the motives between this text from Ugarit and *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* are evident.[103] In addition to the basic plots, both texts occasionally include virtually identical phraseologies in similar contexts, although the number of such parallels is not very great.[104] Yet, because these parallels do not follow in the same order, R.S. 25.460 cannot be a duplicate of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*. Therefore, one may suggest the possibility that *Ugaritica* 5, no. 162 might be a copy of a forerunner to *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*.[105]

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[99] E.g., VON SODEN, TUAT III/1, p. 140–143; DIETRICH, *op. cit.*, p. 219; COHEN, *op. cit.*, pp. 171–175.

[100] For the find location, see VAN SOLDT, AOAT 40, p. 653.

[101] See, e.g., KUHRT, *The Ancient Near East*, vol. I, p. 314.

[102] Sommerfeld, suggests an Old Babylonian date, see SOMMERFELD, *Der Aufstieg Marduks*, p. 201.

[103] The parallelisms between our text and *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* have been discussed in the commentary to the edition of the text by Lambert *apud* NOUGAYROL, *Ugaritica* 5, pp. 269–272. Note also the fact that the Tablets I and II of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* contain 120 lines each in a single column format. Note also DIETRICH, *op. cit.*, p. 219; COHEN, *op. cit.*, pp. 171–175.

[104] E.g., *Ugaritica* 5, 162, 43' (*i-na* ŠU *qé-bi-ri-ia mar-ra i-ki-im*) is an exact parallel of *Ludlul* V, 18. Cf. also, *Ugaritica* 5, 162 40': *ul-tu pi-i mu-ti i-ki-ma-an-ni* and *Ludlul* V, 5: 42': [*i-na ḫaš-t*]*i e-ki-ma-an-ni*; and *Ugaritica* 5, 162, 42': *ir-bir kak-ki ma-ḫi-ṣi-i-ia* and *Ludlul* V, 12: *im-ḫa-aṣ rit-ti ma-ḫi-ṣi-ia* respectively.

Incidentally, there are likewise no parallel lines between *Ugaritica* 5, 162 and the *Ludlul Commentary*.

[105] One might consider the possibility that *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*, as we know it from the first millennium manuscripts, is in fact an *Überarbeitung* of older texts. While ancient scribes faithfully reproduced many canonical religious texts (i.e. prayers, lamentations, and incantations) according to the older manuscripts, some longer compositions, which modern scholars often refer to as epics and myths, went through several processes of (re-)editing. For example, the SB *Gilgameš Epic* (*ša nagba īmuru*, 'the one who saw the deep') which is best-known from the library of Aššurbanipal was expanded and re-edited based on the Old-Babylonian version of the *Epic of Gilgameš* (*šūtur eli šarrī*, 'surpassing the kings'). The SB *Gilgameš Epic* is attributed to Sîn-lēqi-unninni; see GEORGE, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, pp. 28; 30. George suggests a MB date for Sîn-lēqi-unninni's work. A tablet fragment found at Ugarit (modern Ras-Shamra, RS 94.2066) preserves the prologue of the *Gilgameš Epic* with the incipit: [*š*]*a na-ag-ba i-mu-ru il-di ma-*[*ti*], 'the one who saw the

Akkadian Prayers to Marduk

Nevertheless, I do not think that *Ugaritica* 5, no. 162 was the single source of *Ludlul*. Parallels are also found between *Ludlul* and other religious texts, namely Akkadian prayers. As I have noted elsewhere, many Akkadian prayers, particularly those dedicated to Marduk, share motifs and phrases similar to those of *Ludlul*. Of particular interest is the *Prayer to Marduk no. 1*, an Akkadian *unninnu*-prayer with over 200 lines in a four-column tablet format.[106] Based on the script, the oldest known exemplar of this prayer is dated to the Old-Babylonian period,[107] and thus, this Akkadian prayer to Marduk predates *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* by at least 300 years. Judging from the context, this text was recited for the sake of an unknown individual, apparently suffering from some deadly illness for which Marduk is to blame.

The content of this prayer is as follows: The reciter of this prayer, probably a priest, opens the prayer with pleas to Marduk for appeasement of his anger (lines 1–4). After comparing the wrath of Marduk with the flood (*abūšīn*) and the flood-weapon (*šibbu*) in lines 5–8, the supplicant then offers praise to Marduk and extols his mercy and compassion (lines 9–32). The supplicant implies here that, when Marduk accepts his prayers, the sufferer will be forgiven and released from the punishment, i.e. his illness (lines 25–32). In lines 33–65, the supplicant again speaks of the anger of Marduk, but he repeats his pleas for mercy and forgiveness. The supplicant not only describes Marduk's anger in general, but also speaks concretely of the sufferings of the individual for whose sake he is offering the prayer, and he asks forgiveness for him (lines 66–160). Having vowed gifts and blessings to Marduk in return for his aid (lines 161–168), the supplicant again asks Marduk for absolution of sin and requests that the sufferer's *lamassu*-spirit should be returned to him (lines 169–176). Then, the supplicant again offers thanksgiving, and he pledges that the sufferer will present offerings to Marduk, closing with a repetition of the plea for mercy (lines 177–206). Just like *Ludlul*, the

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deep, the base of the land,' ARNAUD, AuOrS 23, p. 130 and pl. XIX; GEORGE, *AuOr* 25, pp. 237–254. Note also, *idem*, *Kaskal* 9, pp. 228–229. Yet, as GEORGE, *AuOr* 25, pp. 239–241 points out, this Ugarit exemplar of Tablet I of the *Gilgameš Epic* contains many variants. The incipit *šūtur eli šarrī*, 'surpassing the kings' is found at line 29 of the Standard Babylonian version. See GEORGE, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, p. 29.

Probably Sîn-lēqi-unninni, who is alleged to be author of the Standard Babylonian *Gilgameš Epic*, was responsible for adding the story of the deluge which is best known from the Old-Babylonian version of the *Atra-ḫasīs Epic* (=Tablet XI of the SB *Gilgameš Epic*) as well as from the Sumerian poem of *Bilgameš and the Netherworld* (=Tablet XII) to the poem. See GEORGE, *op. cit.*, pp. 33; 47–54. Moreover, even the Old-Babylonian Epic of Gilgameš was, most likely, 'composed' by combining different independent stories affiliated with Gilgameš. *Ibid.*, pp. 17–22; JONES in HALLO *et al.* eds., *Scripture in Context* III, p. 356–357. See also N. Wasserman's study of allusions to the *Epic of Gilgameš* and citations from it in various literary texts from different eras (the *Baby-Incantations*, the *Ištar Hymn* otherwise known as the *Ištar-Louvre*, the *Series Fox*, and the *Dialogue of Pessimism*), *AfO* 52, pp. 1–9. For other texts which are known both in OB and SB versions, see COOPER, *JAOS* 97, pp. 508–512.

[106] Similarities between *Ludlul* and the prayer to Marduk have already been noted by ALBERTZ, *Fs. Deller*, p. 44 with note 57. For a recent edition, see OSHIMA, *Babylonian Prayer to Marduk*, pp. 137–190.

[107] See OSHIMA, *ibid.*, p. 138.

Prayer to Marduk no. 1 identifies Marduk's wrath as the main reason of the supplicant's suffering and praises Marduk's mercy and benevolent attention as the basis of his salvation. In this prayer, the supplicant vows to bring offerings and offer praise to Marduk for his redemption by Marduk in much the same way as the narrator of *Ludlul*, in Tablet V, presents gifts and sacrifice to Marduk with benedictions and supplication after having been redeemed by him.[108]

The parallelisms between *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* and the *Prayer to Marduk no. 1* suggest that *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* was based on a belief in Marduk which may have existed as early as the Old-Babylonian period and endured throughout the history of Babylonia.

There are other Sumero-Akkadian religious texts including motifs paralleling *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*. For example, the motif of a pilgrimage to Babylon and Esagil by a penitent after the remission of his sins is known not only in the *Prayer to Marduk no. 1* discussed above, but also in other prayers to Marduk, such as VS 24, 97[109]; KAR 312[110]; and IVR^2, 59/2[111]. Similarly, the theme that a person may be ignorant of the nature of his sin is found in BMS 11[112] just as in the *Prayer to Marduk no. 1*. Likewise, the theme that Marduk's anger might remove one's personal god is also referred to in BMS 12.[113] In addition, Marduk's role as the divine healer and reviver of the dead is well known from different Sumero-Akkadian texts, the best examples being the *Utukkū Lemnūtu-Incantations* and *Prayer to Marduk no. 2*.[114]

In summary, although some of the texts referred to here were probably written after *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* was composed (e.g. KAR 312; IVR^2, 59/2, and BMS 12), the *Ludlul* author evidently came from the same cultural milieu of the priests and the scholars who recited, copied and studied the prayers to Marduk (e.g. *āšipu*s and *ummânu*s) and must have been familiar with the beliefs in Marduk. Put differently, *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* was a

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[108] For the discussion of the offerings brought by Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan, see the philological note on *Ludlul* V, 56 below.

[109] For references and edition, see OSHIMA, *Babylonian Prayers to Marduk*, pp. 87; 198–203, and *idem*, *NABU* 2011, p. 100, no. 84.

[110] See OSHIMA, *Babylonian Prayers to Marduk*, pp. 90–91; 275–281. Incidentally, Lambert takes VS 24, 97 and KAR 312 to be duplicates of the same prayer. LAMBERT, *Babylonian Creation Epics*, p. 226. Yet, although the lines preserved on these tablets are similar, they vary significantly.

[111] *Ibid*., pp. 91; 282–294.

[112] *Ibid*., p. 346. (See also, *ibid*, pp. 111–112; 346–353; *idem*, *NABU* 2011, p. 100, no. 84.)

[113] See OSHIMA, *Babylonian Prayers to Marduk*, p. 354. BMS 11 referred to above also speaks of Marduk's authority over the personal gods, see *ibid*, p. 346. For further discussion on the subjects of human ignorance of the divine order and ethics as well as on Marduk's authority over personal gods, see below, pp. 66–69.

For BMS 12, see also, OSHIMA, *ibid*., pp. 112–113; 354–362; *idem*, *NABU* 2011, p. 100, no. 84. Note that K 15430 has been identified as a new join to K 163+218+15538+20155. See now, Pl. LXII below. The lacunae in the first four lines in the *Šuila*-prayer to Marduk preserved on BMS 12 should now be read as follows:

17 … *šal-b*[*a-b*]*u ra-šub-bu*
18 … *gít-ma-*[*l*]*um te-le-é-ú-um*
19 … KÚR-*ru ṣi-it* KA-*šú*
20 … *uz-*[*n*]*i* ABGAL DINGIR.MEŠ *mu-*[*t*]*ál-lum*

[114] OSHIMA, *ibid*., p. 218.

fruit of all the topoi of the thinkers of Kassite period Babylon. One might well view this poem as an embodiment of Babylonian cult dogma in the second half of the second millennium BCE.

Raison d'être of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*

Modern scholars have offered various suggestions regarding the genre of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*. Particularly, suggestions taking it to be the main text of the supposed 'Babylonian wisdom literature' have gained popularity and *Ludlul* has often been compared with the biblical *Book of Job*. It is indeed very likely that, in the first millennium, the poem *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* was regarded as belonging to a Babylonian canon of "Scripture",[115] and that it was in fact studied by the ancient Mesopotamian thinkers and their apprentices in order to learn and teach a theology of Marduk, the god of Babylon. However, as indicated by the epilogue of this lengthy poem, *Ludlul* was, at least initially, composed as a *dalīlu* and a *tanittu* (i.e. 'praise') to Marduk in the name of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan. If this be the case, the next question is, why did Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan write or commission this poem in praise of Marduk?

An important clue to answering this question is found in Tablet V, the last chapter, of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*. As explained above, after having recounted how Marduk revived him from the certain death (*Ludlul* III, 1–V, 39), Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan comes with offerings to Esagil, the cult centre of Marduk in Babylon. First, he visits various cellae in Esagil as well as the temple of Amurru[116] and that of Madānu[117] which stood in the vicinity of Esagil. He states that, at each place, he received a blessing corresponding to the name of its gate.[118] After having received these blessings, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan recounts how he offered lavish gifts and prayers to Marduk and to Zarpanītu, his consort.

It seems that the account of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan's pilgrimage to Esagil is a recollection of ancient Mesopotamian traditions. Judging from different cuneiform texts, after the healing and cleansing rituals, the ancients visited the temple(s) of the god(s) who was/were involved in the ritual(s) in order to honour him/her/them with prayers and gifts. This act not only symbolised the sufferer's gratitude but also marked the end of his/her adversity, the absolution of sins and redemption by divine power. For example, a prayer to Marduk preserved in VS 24, 97, a small fragment written in Middle-Babylonian scripts, offers the following plea, lines 6'–7':[119]

6' *i+na pi-i be-lí-ia li-iš-ša-kin a-ṣú-ú-a*
7' ⌜*a*⌝*-mu-ur* KÁ.DINGIR.RA^{ki} *e-la-a a+na é-sag-íla*

6' May my release be set in the mouth of my lord,
7' (by saying): "Behold Babylon! Go up to Esagil!"

[115] For the terminology "Scripture", see PARPOLA, *LAS* II, p. XXI.
[116] *Ludlul* V, 48.
[117] *Ludlul* V, 49.
[118] For this, see the philological notes on *Ludlul* V, 40–63 below.
[119] OSHIMA, *Babylonian Prayers to Marduk*, p. 199–202; *idem*, *NABU* 2011, p. 100.

The meaning of these sentences is clarified in a later duplicate of this prayer preserved in a Neo/Late Babylonian school exercise but with minor variants, BM 64377+: its lines 8–10a read:[120]

8 *i-na pi-i be-lí-ia liš-šá-kin a-ṣu-ú*
9 *lu-mur* TIN.TIR^{ki} *lu-li a-na é-sag-íl*[*l*]
10a *lut-tal-lak ana*$^{?}$ TIN.TIR^{ki}

8 May (my) release be set in the mouth of my lord,
9 let me see Babylon, let me go up to Esagil,
10a let me go to Babylon, …

Since these manuscripts preserve only small portions of the prayer, it is not easy to grasp the whole picture. Nevertheless, these lines clearly suggest that the declaration of one's redemption could very well take the form of Marduk's command allowing the sufferer to go to Babylon and Esagil instead of or in addition to the more frequent word of salvation, "*aḫulap*".[121]

After the pilgrimage to Esagil, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan states that he came to a place where the residents of Babylon most likely were holding a banquet. Upon having witnessed the miracle that had happened to the protagonist, the Babylonians extolled the power of salvation of Marduk and Zarpanītu (V, 97–112). Presumably, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan publicly recounted his ordeal and his redemption by Marduk and Zarpanītu to the people in the main street of Babylon.[122] Judging from the ancient texts, such an action on the part of Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan would not have been exceptional; rather he was following a very standard ancient custom.[123]

In the section which modern scholars usually call the 'thanksgiving' and which is normally found as the conclusion to an ancient prayer, the ancient people often vowed to demonstrate their piety by publicly making offerings and prayers as a token of their gratitude for redemption and for their salvation from sufferings.[124] This section typically expresses the supplicant's wishes that other gods and people, or that the supplicants themselves, would offer blessings and praises to the god/s addressed in the prayers. Among these phrases, we often find expressions of the supplicants' intention to proclaim publicly the greatness of the gods and their saving actions. For example, the supplicant of a *Šuila*-prayer to Šerūʾa says, Ebeling, *Handerhebung*, p. 140, rev. 8–10:[125]

[120] *Ibid*., p. 201.

[121] For attestations of this word in Akkadian prayers, see MAYER, *UFBG*, p. 226. For further discussion of *aḫulap*, see the commentary on *Ludlul* III, 35 below.

[122] *Contra* ANNUS and LENZI, SAACT 7, p. ix; GERHARDS, *Der undefinierbare Gott*, p. 97.

[123] Cf., SPIECKERMANN, *Fs. Borger*, p. 107.

[124] There is a problem with this terminology as there is no word that exactly means 'to thank' or 'to be grateful' in Akkadian, VON SODEN, *RlA* 3, p. 161, §4. Yet, because the last section of a prayer is frequently referred to by this term, I continue to use it here. Mayer, incidentally, calls the last element of a prayer "*Gebetesschluß*" but he agrees that the main purpose of this part is to express gratitude to the deities. However, as von Soden and Mayer have correctly observed, these phrases are primly "Dankversprechen" and "Dankwunsch" rather than a straightforward expressions of thanks, see, e.g., MAYER, *UFBG*, p. 307. One may compare this to the praise- and thanksgiving-prayers in the Old Testament, see KRATZ, *HGANT*, p. 308.

[125] Cf. MAYER, *UFBG*, p. 425, Zarpanītu 2. Incidentally, Šerūʾa had initially been the daughter of the god Aššur but later became his consort. See KREBERNIK, *RlA* 12, pp. 399–400. Meinhold has

8 *lu-mur* DINGIR-*ut-ki lu-ta-ʾ*-[*id*] DINGIR[?]-*ut-ki*
u_4-*me-šam-ma a-na ṣal-mat* SAG.DU *lu-š*[*á-p*]*i ner-bi-ki*
10 *l*[*u-šar-r*]*i-iḫ qur-di-ki ta-ni*[*t*]*-ta-ki lut-tep-pu-uš*

8 Let me see your divinity,[126] let me prai[se] your divinity;
everyday, let me proclaim your glory to the black-headed (i.e. mankind),
10 l[et me glor]ify your heroism, let me *recite* your praise repeatedly.

Although such phrases expressing the wish to proclaim the greatness of gods to the people in the context of a person's redemption might sound strange, they recur repeatedly in Akkadian prayers asking for deliverance from sins and/or for redemption by the gods. Another example is BMS 18 and duplicates, a *Šuila*-prayer to Marduk under another name Tutu, 16':[127]

16' *la-ta-am nar-bi-ka ana* UN.MEŠ DAGAL.MEŠ
16' Let me speak of your glory to the widespread people.

There are also a number of examples of texts requesting the people who witness the miracle to offer praise to the divine. For example, a great *Šuila*-prayer to Ištar, lines 101–102:[128]

101 *a-mi-ru-ú-a ina* SILA *li-šar-bu-ú zi-kir-ki*
102 *u ana-ku ana ṣal-mat* SAG.DU DINGIR-*ut-ki u qur-di-ki lu-šá-pi*

101 May those who see me in the street exalt your command,
102 and let me proclaim your divinity and heroism to the black-headed (i.e. mankind).

Similar phrases are also attested in an Old-Babylonian period origin Akkadian prayer to Marduk, *Prayer to Marduk no. 1*, lines 181–188:[129]

181 *a-mir-šú ina* SILA *lit-ta-aʾ-id* DINGIR-*ut-ka*
EN-*ma* LÚ.ÚŠ *bul-luṭ i-le-ʾi li-iz-zak-ru*
ᵀ*a*ᵀ-*mir-šú ina* SILA *lit-ta-aʾ-id* DINGIR-*ut-ka*

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observed that Šerūʾa and Erūʾa (byname/Sumerogram of Zarpanītu) were syncretized, when Sennacherib initiated a cult reform and transferred Marduk's divinity to Aššur in the seventh century, *Ištar in Aššur*, p. 211.

[126] The word *ilūtu* is normally translated 'divinity, divine power', or the like. See, e.g., *CAD* I, pp. 104–106, *ilūtu*; *AHw* pp. 347–348, *ilūtu*. However, as is evident from this sentence, it can also refer to an image or an object representing the godhead of a deity, i.e. a statue or symbol. Cf., e.g., MAYER, *UFBG*, pp. 177–179.

[127] For the recent edition, see OSHIMA, *Babylonian Prayers to Marduk*, p. 379. Cf., MAUL and STRAUß, KAL 4, no. 43 with an edition on pp. 92–94, esp. philological note on lines 1'ff. For further examples of pleas of this kind, see MAYER, *op. cit.*, pp 341–342.

[128] For a recent edition with a full *Partitur* and bibliographical references, see ZGOLL, *Die Kunst des Betens*, pp. 42–67 (Ištar 2). For an English translation, see FOSTER, *Before the Muses*[3], pp. 599–605. See also, the composite text offered by ZERNECKE in LENZI ed., *Reading Akkadian Prayers*, pp. 257–290.

For other examples of this kind, see MAYER, *op. cit.*, pp. 329 and 345.

ūmišamma luktarrabka āmirūʾa ana dārâti dalīlīka lidlulū
Everyday, let me pray to you forever; may those who see me exalt you.

[129] OSHIMA, *Babylonian Prayers to Marduk*, pp. 168–169. Cf., ALBERTZ, *Fs. Deller*, p. 44 with note 57.

[d]AMAR.UTU-*ma* LÚ.ÚŠ *bul-*[*luṭ i-l*]*e-ʾi li-iz-zak-ru*
185 ⌜*ù*⌝ *ar-du šá* [*i*[?]*-na*[?] …] × *tag-me-*⌜*lu*⌝*-šu*
⌜*a*⌝*-na kul-lat* UN.ME[Š *li-šá*]*-pi nar-bi-ka*
[*li*]*d-lul šá mi-tu-u*[*s-su*] ⌜*ú*⌝*-kal-li-mu-šú* ZALÁG
188 [*l*]*ik-tar-ra-ba-ka* […] × *LA it-ti-šú*

181 May everyone who sees him in the street praise your divinity,
may they say: "(Only) the lord can revive the dead." [130]
May everyone who sees him in the street praise your divinity,
may they say: "(Only) Marduk [c]an revi[ve] the dead."
185 And the servant whose life you spared [*in*[?] *the difficulty*[?]],
to the whole people, let him [pro]claim your greatness.
[L]et him praise the one who showed him the light in hi[s] *grave* (lit.: death),
let him bless you continuously […] .. with him.

From these ancient texts, a very clear picture of the ancient practice emerges – when a person's suffering came to an end, he/she had to come to the temples of the gods, who had been involved in the process of redemption, and offer prayers and offerings to them. After the pilgrimage, he/she was expected to go into a main street of the city[131] in order to publicly recount his/her experience and offer praise to the gods. Given this practice and judging from the contents of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*, particularly its epilogue, we can conclude that this lengthy poem was composed for Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan in order to publicly acknowledge Marduk's mercy and his redemption by Marduk and, at the same time, to warn people of his harsh punishment for negligence of the cultic duties.[132] The fact that Marduk in this poem is mostly addressed by the pronoun for the

[130] For further examples of this motif, see MAYER, *UFBG*, p. 329.

[131] The supplicant of the Sumerian *Man and his God* also intends to recount his suffering at the gate of *assembly* and to declare what his sins were, lines 114–116 (the text edition, courtesy of J. Klein):

114 ká ⌜unkin⌝-ka ḫa-lam-ma-bi dil-bad-bi ga-àm-du$_{11}$
115 guruš-me-en ka-tar nam-tag-gu$_{10}$ igi-zu-šè ga-si-il
116 unkin-e ú-KU muru$_{9}$-gin$_{7}$ hu-ub-šèg-šèg-e

114 I shall recount in the gate of the *assembly* those of them that have been forgotten, and those of them which are visible;
115 I, the young man, shall declare my sins before you!
116 In the assembly, let (my) *tears* fall like a downpour (of rain)!

The main street near the city gate or in front of the temple of a city was normally used for public gatherings. See STEINERT, *AoF* 38, pp. 318–319. Note also the philological note on *Babylonian Theodicy* line 291 below.

[132] Although the epilogue of the poem was not yet available, various scholars had already proposed taking *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* to be an "individual thanksgiving psalm". For example Bentzen, following Lindblom, defines "the Babylonian poem … labelled 'I will serve the lord of Wisdom' [=*Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*]" as being "in reality a *psalm*, a combined psalm of lamentation and of thanksgiving", BENTZEN, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, I, p. 182. Note also that M. Weinfeld observed resemblance between the Sumero-Babylonian stories with the "Job Motif [i.e. the Sumerian *Man and His God* and *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*]" and the Psalms of Thanksgiving of the Bible and concluded that the Sumerian *Man and His God* and *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* were composed to thank the divine saviours (the personal god in the *Man and His God* and Marduk in *Ludlul*), WEINFELD in CLAASSEN ed., *Text and Context*, pp. 217–222. W. Moran also suggested that *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*

third masculine singular and that the narrators wish to proclaim Marduk's greatness in the last four lines of prologue of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* (Tablet I, 37–40) strongly supports this conclusion: the lord smites, but he also heals. *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* teaches that suffering and redemption are "signs of divine power"[133] of Marduk, the lord who governs the human world. The narrator's suffering was imposed by Marduk as the punishment for his negligence and his absolution by the god came as his personal realisation of Marduk's rule over him. Although Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan gained his personal insight into Marduk's governance of the human world through participation in the official cult activities at Esagil, he made his knowledge public when he recounted his experience with Marduk in the main street of Babylon. I presume that, in course of the long history of Marduk's cult, many other people gave similar testimonies on comparable occasions. Thus, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan's words would not have been the only such public witness to Marduk's greatness.[134] However, the fact that the texts of other such proclamations have not survived is probably due not simply to the accidental character of the archaeological finds; more likely, most such testimonies were delivered orally and never committed to writing.[135]

Although it is very likely that *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* was initially composed solely for Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan as a praise-offering prayer to Marduk, it evidently gained canonical status in the scribal tradition of ancient Mesopotamia and thus joined the Mesopotamian "Scriptures" at least by the seventh century BCE. Its manuscripts have been found in various major cities of Assyria and Babylonia.[136] That means that the ancient scribes regarded it as an important normative text. This conclusion is reinforced by the

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"should be seen as the fulfillment of such a promise [i.e. the penitent will sing to the world the praises of the healing god or goddess]", MORAN, *Most Magic Word*, p. 191. Similar suggestions have been made by other scholars, see, e.g., LINDBLOM, *Boken om Job*, p. 33. Note also, e.g., STAMM, *Das Leiden des Unschuldigen*, p. 80; VON SODEN, *ZDMG* 89, p. 164; MÜLLER, *OrNS* 47, p. 363; ALBERTZ, *Fs. Deller*, p. 50; DAY, *Psalms*, p. 44–48; MORAN, *JAOS* 103/1, pp. 255–260; VAN DER TOORN in LAATO and DE MOOR eds., *Theodicy*, p. 76.

Some scholars, however, take the poem to be a personal lament, e.g., VON SODEN, *MDOG* 96, p. 46; KRECHER, *RlA* 6, pp. 1 and 6. Cf. also, EDZARD, *RlA* 7, p. 43. Yet, as Weinfeld points out, because both the Sumerian *Man and His God* and *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* conclude the narrative with an account of the sufferers' salvation and praise to the gods glorifying their compassion, it is more likely that the main intention of these texts was to demonstrate the gratitude of the sufferers for their redemption, not to draw the gods' attention to their sufferings. WEINFELD, *op. cit.*, p. 217 and *passim*. For further discussion on the so-called Mesopotamian 'Job Motif', see pp. 19ff above.

[133] FOSTER, *Before the Muses*[3], p. 394.

[134] Probably the best example is the praise to Marduk found at Ugarit, *Ugaritica* 5, no. 162 referred above.

[135] Note *Unninnu-Prayer of Nabû-šuma-ukīn*, line 80 (OSHIMA, *Babylonian Prayers to Marduk*, pp. 322–323):

80 *ut-nin-nu an-ḫu ka-su-ú šá* EN ḪUL-*ti ik-su-šú ú-šá-an-nu-ú a-na* ^{d}AMAR.UTU *ina un-nin-nu šá* ^{d}AMAR.UTU *li-ip-pa-ṭir-ma* UN.MEŠ *u* KUR *li-mu-ru tar-ba-ti-šú*

80 The prayer of the weary and bound man, whom the man of evil (intention) gnawed upon and who reported (the incident) to Marduk. By his prayer to Marduk, may he be released so that the people and the land will see his greatness.

[136] UEHLINGER in KRÜGER, *et al.* eds., *Das Buch Hiob*, pp. 137–138.

fact that students in the scribal schools in Babylon and other cities copied excerpts of *Ludlul* as a part of their school exercises alongside other texts relating to Marduk (e.g., god-lists, bilingual *Utukkū Lemnūtu*-incantations, *Enūma Eliš*, prayers to Marduk, and so forth). Given the strongly religiously oriented contents of the texts, it is very likely that many of these texts were written by trainees for the priesthood of Marduk (e.g. *āšipu*) or by apprentices of the *ummânu*s, the temple scholars and king's advisers, probably in order to contemplate Marduk's godhead.[137]

Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi is by no means an exceptional example of the canonisation of a text that was initially meant for personal use. Alongside prayers and incantations that were meant to be used for different persons on various occasions,[138] there are a number of hymns and prayers which had initially been composed for the sake of a particular individual but later became a part of the canonical "Scriptures". For example, the *Gula Hymn of Bulluṭsa-rabi*: It is clear from the contents of this hymn, that it was initially composed solely for the sake of the author himself (i.e. Bullussa-rabi) because it seeks his welfare and health in the last section (lines 188–200).[139] Of particular interest are lines 199–200:

199 *áš-šú* ^{m}*bul-luṭ-su-ra-bi*[140] *li-še-ṣi né-e-šú*
200 *ud-da-kam šap-la-ki lu-ú kit-mu-us*

199 May he/it bring forth life with reference to Bulluṭsu-rabi,
200 so that he (Bulluṭsu-rabi) bow down before you daily.

In view of the fact that this text is listed in the ancient catalogue of literary works as the work of "Bullussa-rabi, the incantation-priest, the s[cholar] of Babylon"[141] and in virtue of the lines cited above, it is obvious that this hymn was composed by Bullussa-rabi

[137] See Gesche's discussion of the second level of Babylonian school education, *Schulunterricht*, pp. 172–178, esp. 178. Based on Gesche's observation, Y. Cohen suggests that *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* and works of a similar complexity were also studied in the second stage of the scribal school curriculum during the Kassite and post-Kassite periods, COHEN, *Wisdom from the Late Bronze*, p. 65. Note also Cohen's observation on "wisdom literature" in the first millennium school curriculum on *ibid*., p. 76:

> "Finding the use of wisdom literature in such exegetical works [i.e. ancient commentaries] may highlight for us its role in Mesopotamian thinking. Perhaps rather than maintaining an image of wisdom solely learned for the sake of morally improving oneself, we should also think of wisdom as a means of achieving scribal education and erudition, and on a higher level, as a source of exegesis, just as the book of Proverbs was used in Talmud tractates to explicate select passages from the Bible."

[138] Personal names rarely appear in these prayers and incantations. At the place where the name of a supplicant is expected, one normally finds the standard formula *annanna mār annanna ilšu annanna ištaršu annanna*, ('So-and-So the son of So-and-So, his (personal) god is So-and-So, his (personal) goddess is So-and-So') or something similar. That means that, when these texts were recited, the name of the penitent was inserted at the place of *annanna* of the prayer template.

[139] Text edition, see LAMBERT, *OrNS* 36, pp. 116–132. Although it is customarily called the *Gula Hymn*, in fact, up to line 187, it is a monologue of the goddess in which she praises her own glory and that of her spouse.

[140] The PN is preserved on Lambert's MS A (Ashmolean 1937-620) and MS E (K 3225+6321), both of which read *bul-luṭ-su*$^{!}$.

[141] *Ibid*., p. 107; *idem*, *JCS* 16, p. 66, V, 3–5. The catalogue also lists another hymn to a goddess (also Gula?) as his work as well.

himself for his own sake. Nevertheless, it is not certain, how this text was used in the official cult or even what the private belief in Gula meant to Bullussa-rabi himself. However, given the fact that there are at least 12 different exemplars of this *Gula Hymn of Bulluṭsa-rabi* with 5 exemplars from Kouyunjik,[142] one may speculate that it was repeatedly copied by the ancient scribes, not only for ritual and archival use, but also in order to teach the greatness of the deity, to meditate on it, and to transmit its teachings as 'Scriptures'.[143]

Likewise, Šubši-mešrê-Šakkan's personal story was transmitted to the learned people of later generations. Reading it, they would have felt sympathy for his doubts about divine retribution elicited by baffling adversities, and they would have gained a deeper insight into the divine order from its theology of divine punishment and salvation. Thus, at this stage, the 'I' in the poem became a symbol for every person seeking answers to personal suffering.[144] In this way, the poem became a canonical text proclaiming Marduk's greatness and compassion and encouraging people to worship him.[145]

Suffering and Blessing: Signs of Divine Rule

Retribution by Marduk according to Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi

In *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*, the narrator recounts how, due to Marduk's anger, he had first been ill-treated by people (including the king, courtiers, his family, slaves, and passers-by) and then how various evil demons brought illnesses upon him.[146] The poem suggests that these attacks were not due to any intrinsic sinister or wicked nature of either the people or the spirits; instead it implies that they were acting as agents under the control of Marduk's will. Thus the modern identification of the minor deities which bring illness or misfortune as 'evil demons' is not altogether correct. By the same to-

[142] Lambert had listed 10 manuscripts already in 1967, *ibid*., p. 115. Since Lambert's publication, two further exemplars, BM 54801 and 62744, have been identified.

[143] The fact that Lambert's MS a was copied in Babylon by a certain Nabû-ēṭir, 'an apprentice, junior incantation-priest' (LAMBERT, *ibid*., p. 115) also suggests that it was intended either for archival use or for the purpose of meditation but definitely not for a ritual.

[144] Sitzler suggests that the 'I' in the *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* refers to an "Idealtyp mesopotamischer Normerfüllung", SITZLER, *Vorwurf gegen Gott*, p. 93. Uehlinger also suggests a similar interpretation, UEHLINGER in KRÜGER, *et al*. eds., *Das Buch Hiob*, p. 144. Note also, ANNUS and LENZI, SAACT 7, p. ix; GERHARDS, *Der undefinierbare Gott*, p. 97. Sitzler also explains the motif of "*Vorwurf gegen Gott*", or what modern scholars customarily call the 'righteous sufferer motif', as being "keine 'Krisendokumente' individueller oder historischer Art, sondern im Gegenteil Restaurationsdokumente. Sie wollen den Weisen und die Weisheit für eine veränderte Situation wieder sicher und fest machen." SITZLER, *Vorwurf gegen Gott*, p. 230. Principally I agree with Sitzler. Yet, as far as *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* is concerned, this interpretation must be understood not as the initial intention of the narrator or author, but rather as a secondary development that took place in the course of the history of the Mesopotamian scribal tradition.

[145] Cf. e.g., ALBERTZ, *Fs. Deller*, pp. 51–53. Also VON SODEN, TUAT III/1, p. 113; SPIECKERMANN, *Fs. Borger*, p. 332.

[146] The same sequence of adversities (i.e. the social problems followed by illnesses) is also found in the Sumerian and Babylonian *Man and His God*. For the discussions, see above.

ken, they are not like the biblical figure of Satan, literally the 'accuser, opposer',[147] who, according to the Old Testament, challenges the authority of God[148] and, according to the New Testament, is believed to bring misery and sorrow to mankind and to corrupt people's minds.[149] On the contrary, these spirits belong to the divine judicial system governed by the 'normal' gods as the agents for exercising divine punishment on people.[150] In fact, some of these spirits were even honoured as the children or messengers of the prominent gods. For example, Lamaštu, the demoness most feared by the ancients for her vicious devastating power,[151] was the daughter of Anu,[152] just like the mother-goddess Mami[153] or the goddess of war and sex Ištar[154]. Note also that Nergal[155] was also worshipped as a god although he was held responsible for death, plague and war. The Mesopotamian 'demons' are harmful only when the gods permit or command them to attack people. Put differently: although they are dangerous divine agents, they are neither 'evil spirits' nor 'demons' as these terms are normally understood.[156]

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[147] For the biblical notion of Satan, see, e.g., *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, pp. 985–988, "Satan"; *DDD*^{2}, pp. 726–732, "Satan"; *The Encyclopaedia of Judaism*^{2}, pp. 778–783, "Evil and Suffering, Judaic Doctrines of"; *Neues Bibel-Lexikon*, pp. 448–452, "Satan".

[148] E.g., the *Book of Job* 1–2. For the role of Satan in the heavenly confrontation scene described in *Job* 1–2, see, e.g., LUX, *Hiob*, pp. 82–95, esp. 85–86. HECKL, *Leqach* 10, pp. 51–55.

[149] I Chronicles 21, 1–17 recounts how the Satan made king David conduct a census (population count) against the will of God. God commanded David to choose one out of three punishments: 3 years of famine, 3 months of destruction at the hands of his enemies or 3 days of being stricken by the sword of God (i.e. plague), I Chr. 21, 12. The same story is also told in 2 Sam 24, 1–9, but there it is said that it was not the Satan but God in his wrath who made the king David carry out the census. This example from the I Chronicles indicates that the belief that the Satan corrupts people's minds and leads to rebellion against God was accepted as early as the Second Temple period. Cf., LUX, *op. cit*.

[150] In this sense, the term 'evil demons' does not really express their true nature. Probably 'fierce (in the sense of vicious) gods' would better fit the reality.

[151] FARBER in FINKEL and GELLER eds, *Disease in Babylonia*, pp. 137–145.

[152] FARBER, *RlA* 6, p. 439.

[153] E.g., the Old Babylonian hymn to Mama in the Jena tablet collection (HS 1884), KREBERNIK, *AfO* 50, p. 16, rev. i 9':

9 [^{d}]^{r}*ma*$^{\urcorner}$*-ma bu-uk-ra-at a-ni-im wa-ši-ba-at ke-eš el-li-im*
9 Mama, the first-born of Anu, the one who dwells in the holy Keš.

[154] E.g., GEORGE, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, pp. 622–623, Tablet VI, 80–82:

80 ^{d}*iš-tar an-na-a ina* [*še-me-e-šá*]
81 ^{d}*iš-tar ug-gu-gat-ma a-na šá-ma-mi* [*i-li*]
82 *il-lik-ma* ^{d}*iš-tar ana* IGI ^{d}*a-ni*[*m*] AD-*šá i-*[*bak-ki*]

80 When Ištar heard this (the insults from Gilgameš)
81 Ištar was furious and [went up] to the heavens,
82 Ištar went [weeping] before her father, Anu.

[155] For the god Nergal, see WIGGERMANN, *RlA* 9, pp. 215–223.

[156] Given the neutral nature of these beings, CUNNINGHAM, *Deliver Me Evil*, p. 39, for example, has suggested using the term "*daimon*" to refer to them. There, he also notes that "they are divine agents capable of helping as well as harming rather than diabolic forces opposed to the senior deities."

Furthermore, it seems that the Mesopotamian thinkers believed that human beings, in this respect, were hardly different from the evil spirits. When gods permit them or cause them to do so, they too will attack a person. For the Mesopotamian thinkers, therefore, people could also be instruments for punishing persons for their sins. In this function, they were rather like modern-day jailors or prison guards who are charged with carrying out sentences ordered by court-ruling.

The ancient thinkers apparently thought that even the kings were not immune from such maltreatment by their own people. As discussed in the philological note to *Ludlul* I, line 55 below, the ancient Mesopotamian thinkers occasionally, especially in the earlier periods, asserted that the gods, particularly the head of the pantheon, granted to a king the right to rule his subjects on the basis of his divine parentage. However, as Selz has convincingly shown,[157] the king needed continuously to prove his legitimacy to retain the "Mandate of Heaven"[158] by acting in accordance with the divine ordinance.[159] "Dynastic legitimization is only an additional, not the ultimate source of legitimacy", as Selz explains.[160] If the king failed to demonstrate his virtue, the gods might permit his subjects to revolt against him or they might allow a foreign enemy to devastate his land. In either case, the rebels or the *barbarian*s served as instruments for bringing divine punishments upon the king. It is also interesting to point out that, in the Mesopotamian world, when the destruction of a city or the land was concerned, the righteousness of its inhabitants played no role. For the devastation his kingdom suffered, the king alone was believed to be solely responsible.[161]

In the traditional belief of the ancient Mesopotamians, the personal gods and protective spirits were supposed to protect people from such attacks by angry gods, demons, ghosts, and malicious people (including witches). Therefore, the ancients believed that,

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[157] SELZ in CHARVÁT and MAŘIKOVÁ VLČKOVÁ eds., *Who Was King*?, esp. p. 13.

[158] *Ibid.*

[159] The so-called *Šulgi P*, section b 5–10 lists some obligations of the king towards the gods, KLEIN, *Hymns of Shulgi*, pp. 35; 37:

5 šul-gi lugal-bala-sa$_6$-ga-ke$_4$
dingir-me-èn pi-lu$_5$-da nam-lugal-lá mu-gá-ra-a šu ḫu-mu-ra-ab-du$_7$-du$_7$
giš-ḫur-dingir-re-ne-ke$_4$ si ḫu-mu-ra-ab-sá-e
nì-u$_4$-sakar-ra nì-zà-mu-ka-ke$_4$ giš ḫu-mu-ra-ab-tag-ge
zé a-ra-zu-ni u$_4$ ḫé-ma-túm-èn
10 ḫé-gál ú-šim-gin$_7$ ki-dar-ra giš-gu$_{10}$ n[a$^?$-n]am$^?$

5 Šulgi, the king of a propitious reign,
for you (Ninsun) the goddess, may he (Šulgi) perfect the cultic-norms, which are established for the kingship!
May he properly execute the decrees of the gods!
May he present you the offerings of the New-Moon and the offerings of the New-Year!
May you daily bring his prayers to me!
10 The abundance is my tree which sprouting from the earth like herbs.

[160] SELZ, *op. cit.*, p. 13. See also Machinist's observation on the kingship in the Neo-Assyrian period in BECKMAN and LEWIS eds., *Text, Artifact, and Image*, p. 188: "The office [of being the king] … was not a natural endowment of the individual king; it was a gift of the true gods, to whom he, as their earthly representative, had to remain attentive and obedient."

[161] For this subject, see ALBREKTSON, *History and the Gods*.

as long as people were surrounded by their personal gods and protective spirits, they would be safe from harm.[162] On the other hand, they regarded illness and maltreatment by other people as signs of the withdrawal of their personal gods and protective spirits as a consequence of their sins. Arguing on the basis of the overall scheme of the *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* – i.e. Marduk's punishment and redemption – some modern scholars have proposed that Marduk took over the roles of the personal gods and protective spirits, and thus became the personal god *par excellence*.[163]

Yet, the poem actually tells a somewhat different story. It is true that the text first speaks of Marduk's decision to punish the protagonist because of his anger towards him – a role typical of personal gods, *Ludlul* I, 41–46:

41 *On* the day when the lord punished me,
and the hero Marduk became angry with me;
my god rejected me and went up to his mountain,
my goddess deserted (me) and moved away.
45 The favourable *šēdu*-spirit who (*stood*) *at* my side split away,
my *lamassu*-spirit took fright and sought someone else.

However, there is no hint suggesting Marduk being his personal god in thie poem. More crucially, the narrator in this section recounts his abandonment by his personal gods and protective spirits. Already in *Ludlul* I, 15–16, allusion had been made to Marduk's power over one's personal deities and protective spirits. These lines clearly indicate that Marduk did not himself assume the role of the personal gods and protective spirits but rather that he exercised control over them.[164] That is to say, Marduk not only had the power to send malevolent agents to a victim but also he could remove the victim's protection against such evils. Moreover, because the personal gods were believed to teach ethics to their protégé,[165] their withdrawal made the person prone to commit other sins against the gods. That, needless to say, might bring more agony upon the victim. Thus, the first image of Marduk presented in the poem is one of a very fierce deity.

However, Marduk was not simply heartless. In the first 40 lines of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* (Tablet I, 1–40), while the narrator recounts Marduk's harsh treatment of man out of anger, he does not forget to mention Marduk's unfailing mercy. However bad one's condition might be, Marduk is merciful and will redeem him immediately (esp. *Ludlul* I, 37–40).[166] As B. Foster has observed, the narrator clearly regards retribution

[162] See, e.g., VORLÄNGER, *Mein Gott*, pp. 71–73; 85–86; ALBERTZ, *Persönliche Frömmigkeit*, pp. 111–126.

[163] E.g., ALBERTZ, *Fs. Deller*, pp. 34 and 43; SITZLER, *Vorwurf gegen Gott*, p. 91.

[164] MORAN, *Most Magic Word*, p. 195; OSHIMA, *Babylonian Prayers to Marduk*, pp. 76–77. However, this power to withdraw the personal gods and protective spirits is not unique to Marduk. Further, see below.

[165] For this, see below, pp. 58ff.

[166] Cf., e.g., ALBERTZ, *Fs. Deller*, p. 37.

See *Prayer to Marduk*, *no. 1*, 10 (OSHIMA, *ibid*., pp. 158–159):

10 [*ṭ*]*a-a-bi na-as-ḫur-ka ki-i a-bi re-mu-uk*
10 Your (Marduk's) benevolent attention is gratifying; your mercy is like that of a father.

See also, *BMS* 11, line 2 (*ibid*., pp. 348–349):

and redemption to be the "signs of divine power" of Marduk and the basis of the whole divine order.[167]

These messages, however, are not entirely in agreement with traditional Sumero-Babylonian teachings on human piety and divine blessing as evidenced in the extant cuneiform didactic texts. As I shall discuss below, the ancient didactic texts (e.g. instructions of sages, proverbs, and the so-called the *Babylonian Theodicy*) state that gods, particularly the personal gods, reward a person for his devotion with wealth, whereas failure to demonstrate such piety will lead to punishment. This belief, for example, underlies the complaints of the sufferer of the *Babylonian Theodicy* that his piety has not been rewarded with riches.

On the other hand, the narrator of *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* suggests that his adversities are the direct outcome of Marduk's will. By making suffering and salvation to be the two opposite poles of human life, the poem implies a merism embracing the whole spectrum of human life. Thus, for example, D. Sitzler interprets Marduk's power to bring both adversity and redemption as a kind of "polaren Monotheismus".[168] Sitzler rightly observes that "Marduk verkörpert den Dualismus der Welt".[169] As discussed above, the narrator realized the power of Marduk's judgment only through his experience of punishment and restoration to health. But as I have noted elsewhere, Marduk was not the only god who incorporated both the positive and the negative sides of the world. For example, Inanna/Ištar shared almost identical powers over human beings.[170] In other words, this theology might be a step towards true monotheism, but it is not monotheism *per se*.

In addition, Sitzler failed to realize that the Sumero-Babylonian didactic texts promise not only health but also wealth. If *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* indeed refers to a fundamental merism of human life, it would also have to recount a restoration of the protagonist's

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2 *nap-šur-šu a-bu re-mé-nu-ú*
2 His (Marduk's) forgiveness is (that of) a merciful father.

For the latter, note also, HUNT, *The Hymnic Introduction*, pp. 93–94. Very interestingly, these lines from the two different prayers to Marduk also follow phrases referring to the devastating power of Marduk's wrath just like each couplet from the first 40 lines of *Ludlul* I. See also p. 174 fn. 31 below.

[167] FOSTER, *Before the Muses*[3], p. 394.

It is also important to note that, at least in the preserved portions of the poem, the narrator never refers to his being abandoned by Marduk himself. One might speculate that the author does not mention Marduk's withdrawal, because he did not feel any close relationship with Marduk. However, it is also possible to argue that, although, in Tablet II, the protagonist complains about the remoteness of the divine mind and therefore its opaqueness, he eventually comes to realize that Marduk never really departs from people but instead constantly observes them and reacts in accordance with their behaviour – i.e. if they accept their guilt and repent, he removes their punishments and relieves their adversities, on the other hand, if they fail to recognize their sins, he might impose further penalties on them. In fact, the narrator expresses this quite clearly in *Ludlul* I, 39: "Let me teach the people how close their salvation is."

[168] SITZLER, *Vorwurf gegen Gott*, p. 89. Note also UEHLINGER in KRÜGER, *et al*. eds., *Das Buch Hiob*, pp. 138–139, note 140.

[169] SITZLER, *ibid*.

[170] See OSHIMA, *Babylonian Prayers to Marduk*, pp. 72ff.

prosperity. Yet, *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* only rarely refers to other poles of human life like the contrast between wealth and impoverishment. Because the narrator states that, during his pilgrimage to Babylon and Esagil, at Ká.ḫé.gál (the Gate of Abundance), abundance was given to him (*Ludlul* V, 42), one might conclude that Marduk's mercy could also bring prosperity to a person. Yet, the dominant theme of the protagonist's pilgrimage to Babylon and Esagil remains absolution of his sins and the restoration of his health. The absence of any clear allusion to Marduk's role as the source of riches and prosperity in *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi* is interesting because otherwise in the Babylonian texts, Marduk is well attested to as the divine controller of watercourses and provider of abundance.[171] Given the fact that, in the prologue of the poem, the narrator makes no mention of wealth as Marduk's blessing, one may speculate that the narrator regards suffering and relief from suffering alone to be the principal manifestations of Marduk's divinity. For him, Marduk is the divine disciplinarian, so to speak.

Marduk's Harsh but Compassionate Role in the Personal Beliefs of the Kassite Period

Akkadian prayers to Marduk typically describe him as being wrathful but merciful.[172] Because the *Prayer to Marduk, no. 1*, an Old-Babylonian origin prayer, already refers to these two contrasting qualities of the god, it is very likely that this belief in Marduk, 'harsh but compassionate', was a tradition well established as early as the early second millennium.[173] In addition, as I have suggested elsewhere, it is very likely that Marduk was not initially seen as a merciful saviour *per se* but rather as a god of divine retribution.[174] In this point, the primary imagery of Marduk differs from that of Asalluḫi, the divine incantation-priest, who later – through a process of syncretism going back as early as the late 18th century BCE – became an aspect of Marduk's divinity.[175] Asalluḫi could release people from the hands of the evil demons and relieve them in their illness. Some texts state that he could even save a man from death.[176]

Through examination of the personal names collected and studied by W. Sommerfeld,[177] we can safely conclude that, as early as the Old-Babylonian period, people came to regard Marduk as being their personal saviour or protector, a function originally attributed to their personal gods. Assuming that we can take them at face value, names like *ṣillī-marduk* ('My-Protection-Is-Marduk'); *marduk-mušallim* ('Marduk-Is-the-One-Who-Keeps-(One's) Wellbeing'); *marduk-nāṣir* ('Marduk-the-Saviour'); *marduk-tajjār* ('Marduk-Is-Lenient'); *rēmanni-marduk* ('Marduk-Has-Mercy-on-Me'); *igmil-marduk* ('Marduk-Did-Favour'); and *ilī-marduk* ('My-God-Is-Marduk') clearly

[171] For Marduk being the god of river and agricultural products, see OSHIMA, *JANES* 30, pp. 77–88. For titles referring to Marduk as the god of fertility and watercourses in Akkadian prayers, see *idem*, *Babylonian Prayers to Marduk*, pp. 453–454.

[172] OSHIMA, *ibid*., pp. 50; 60; and 81–82.

[173] *Ibid*., pp. 48ff.

[174] *Ibid*., pp. 44–47; GELLER, *Udug Ḫul*, p. 96 note for line 179.

[175] SOMMERFELD, *Der Aufstieg Marduks*, pp. 13–18. Sommerfeld suggests, however, that Marduk's "Menschfreundlichkeit" was the main reason of Marduk–Asalluḫi syncretism, *ibid*., p. 125. *Contra*, OSHIMA, *op. cit*., p. 42, note 13.

[176] See OSHIMA, *ibid*., pp. 42–43.

[177] For the O.B. onomastics with the DN Marduk, see SOMMERFELD, *op. cit*., pp. 137–147.