

Daniel 8:20 and the ABC 7 Nabonidus Chronicle: A Possible Reason Cyrus is Mentioned on the Babylonian Chronicle Eleven Years Before He Took Over Babylon

Rochelle A. Houser
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Illustration 1:

“The ram which you saw, having the two horns—they are the kings of Media and Persia.” Daniel 8:20

In Daniel 8:20, Daniel was told that Medo-Persia would be a world power. According to Daniel 8:1, his vision was in the third year of Belshazzar, which was the fifth year of Nabonidus.

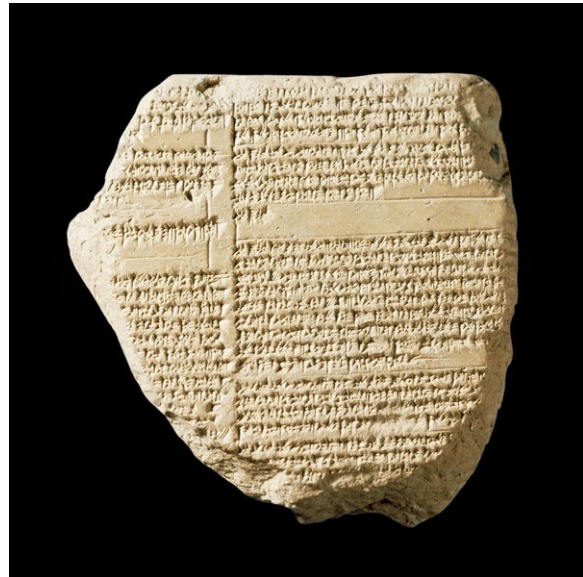


Illustration 2: Nabonidus Chronicle, ABC 7, (Obverse). Located in the British Museum, London (Britain). Date ca. 529 BCE.

Cyrus (later king of the Persians) and Astyages, king of the Medes, are mentioned in Nabonidus' sixth year, and Cyrus' actions are monitored by the Babylonians after that.

Abstract:

The Babylonian Chronicle ABC 7, also known as the Nabonidus Chronicle, has not only the actions of King Nabonidus and Belshazzar the Crown Prince, but in Nabonidus' sixth year (550 BCE), there is a seemingly unrelated entry about Cyrus, king of Ansan, defeating Astyages, the last king of the Medes¹. This is not the only account of Cyrus in the ABC 7, for we see another entry about Cyrus in Nabonidus' ninth year, when he (Cyrus) defeats a king of another country,² and another possible mention of him in Nabonidus' sixteenth year. These entries are up to eleven years before Cyrus took over Babylon in Nabonidus' seventeenth year. A possible reason the Babylonians started monitoring the actions of the Medes and Persians can be shown from Daniel 8:20, in which Daniel was told by an angel that his vision of the ram and the goat meant the Medes and Persians would be a world power that would fight

1 Lendering, Jona. “ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle).” *ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle) - Livius*, 12 Jan. 2017, www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-7-nabonidus-chronicle/.

2 Lendering, Jona. “ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle).” *ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle) - Livius*, 12 Jan. 2017, www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-7-nabonidus-chronicle/.

with and be defeated by the Greeks. In [Daniel 8:27](#), Daniel says he went back to work doing the king's business, and talked with people about the dream, but no one understood it. [Daniel 8:1](#) records Daniel's vision of the ram and goat happened in the third year of Belshazzar's reign.

By close examination of the Nabonidus Chronicle, the Nabonidus Cylinder from Sippar, and the Verse Account of Nabonidus, we can show that the third year of Belshazzar was the fifth year of Nabonidus³. Since the monitoring of the Medes and Persians on the Babylonian Chronicle started in the sixth year of Nabonidus, which is the year after Daniel had the dream of the ram and the he goat, we can provide a reason why the Babylonians would start recording on their chronicle what the Medes and Persians were doing: Daniel had identified a threat to their status of world power, and they started monitoring the actions of this new coalition that was forming. It would be another eleven years before the Medes and Persians took over Babylon, in fulfillment of Daniel's vision.

Introduction: Why is Cyrus on the Babylonian Chronicle ABC 7 Eleven Years Before He Took Over Babylon?

The Nabonidus Chronicle, ABC 7, seems to be different from the other Babylonian Chronicles, in that it not only records the actions of the King of Babylon, and the Crown Prince Belshazzar, it also has two or possibly three entries about the actions of foreign kings fighting with each other which do not involve Nabonidus or Belshazzar.⁴ In Nabonidus' sixth year, the only entry is about Cyrus, then king of Ansan, defeating Astyages, the last king of the Medes. Here is the quote:

- “[ii.1] [The sixth year: Astyages] mustered (his army) and marched against Cyrus, king of Anšan, for conquest [...]
- [ii.2] The army rebelled against Astyages and he was taken prisoner. *Th[ey handed him over]* to Cyrus. ([...])
- [ii.3] Cyrus <marched> to [Ecbatana](#), the royal city. The silver, gold, goods, property, [...]
- [ii.4] which he carried off as booty (from) Ecbatana, he took to Anšan. The goods (and) property of the army of [...].”⁵

Three years later (Nabonidus' ninth year), there is another entry about Cyrus, who is now called the king of Persia, defeating another king whose name has not been preserved. The information about Cyrus starts in line 15. Notice that Nabonidus was in Tema, and the prince, the officers, and the army

3 See the Nabonidus Cylinder from Sippar to see that Nabonidus' eldest son was named Belshazzar. See the Verse Account of Nabonidus later in this article, to see that in the third year of his reign, Nabonidus gave the kingship over to his eldest son. The two inscriptions can be read here: “Cylinders of Nabonidus.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 22 Aug. 2017, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cylinders_of_Nabonidus.

Therefore, when Daniel records in [Daniel 8:1](#) that the vision of the ram and goat came to him in the third year of Belshazzar, we can conclude it was also the sixth year of Nabonidus. Therefore, the beginning of the monitoring of the Medes and Persians starts on the Babylonian Chronicle ABC 7 the same year that Daniel was told in [Daniel 8:20](#), that the Medes and Persians would be a world power.

4 A copy of the ABC 7 Nabonidus Chronicle can be found here: Lending, Jona. “ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle).” *ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle) - Livius*, 12 Jan. 2017, www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-7-nabonidus-chronicle/.

5 Lending, Jona. “ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle).” *ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle) - Livius*, 12 Jan. 2017, www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-7-nabonidus-chronicle/. Entry for year six.

were in Akkad (Babylon). The full name of the deities listed in the record will not be given, because of [Exodus 23:13](#).

“13 And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.” Exodus 23:13.

From the ABC 7 Nabonidus Chronicle:

“[ii.10] The ninth year: Nabonidus the king (was) <in> Tema, (while) the prince, the officers, (and) the army (were) in Akkad. The king, in the month Nisanu, to Babylon [ii.11] did not come. N* [false god's name] did not come to Babylon. B* [false god's name] did not come out. The Akitu festival did not take place.

[ii.12] The offerings were presented (to) the gods of <Babylon> and Borsippa *as in normal times* in Esagil and Ezida.

[ii.13] On the fifth day of the month Nisanu the queen mother, in Dur-Karašu, which is on the banks of the [Euphrates](#) upstream from Sippar,

[ii.14] she died. The prince and his army were in mourning for three days (and) there was (an official) mourning period. In the month Simanu, in Akkad,

[ii.15] there was (an official) mourning period for the queen mother. In the month Nisanu, Cyrus, king of Parsu, mustered his army and

[ii.16] crossed the Tigris below Arbela. In the month Ajaru, he marched to the land of..

[ii.17] He killed its king, took his possessions, (and) stationed his own garrison (there) [...]

[ii.18] Afterwards the king and his garrison was in it ([...])”⁶

There is another mention of Persia in the sixteenth year of Nabonidus, but the Chronicle is badly damaged in that spot, so the rest of the information about that year is lost. See line [iii.3] below.

“[iii.1] [*lacuna*]

[The sixteenth year:^{note}] *killed/defeated*. The river ... [...]

[iii.2] [...] ... I* [false god's name] Uruk [...]

[iii.3] [...] of *Per[sia]...*

[iii.4] [...] ... [...]

⁷

These entries about Cyrus, which start eleven years before Cyrus took over Babylon, have nothing to do with what Nabonidus or Belshazzar was doing. Why would these seemingly unrelated entries about the actions of the Medes and Persians be on the Babylonian Chronicle? A possible reason would be Daniel's vision of the ram and he goat, as explained in Daniel Chapter 8. To show this, we first need to establish what year Belshazzar was given the kingship.

6 Lending, Jona. “ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle).” *ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle) - Livius*, 12 Jan. 2017, www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-7-nabonidus-chronicle/. See entry for year 9.

7 Lending, Jona. “ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle).” *ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle) - Livius*, 12 Jan. 2017, www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-7-nabonidus-chronicle/. See entry for year 16.

I. Belshazzar Was Given the Kingship of Babylon in Nabonidus' Third Year:

There are two documents that establish when Belshazzar was given the kingship of Babylon by Nabonidus.

A. The Nabonidus Cylinder From Sippar: Belshazzar Was Nabonidus' Eldest Son.

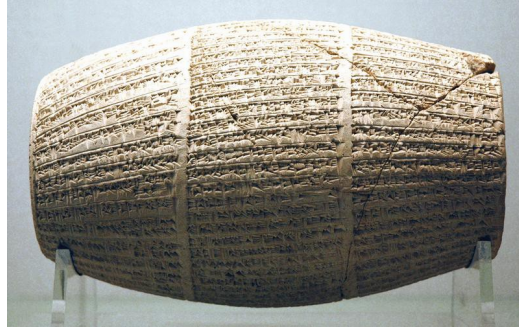


Illustration 3: Nabonidus Cylinder of Sippar. Date: 555-540 BCE. Located in the British Museum. It mentions Belshazzar as Nabonidus' eldest son.

The first document is the Nabonidus Cylinder from Sippar. This is possibly Nabonidus' last building inscription, being dated to 540 BCE.⁸ It not only tells how Nabonidus repaired a temple ziggurat, but also mentions his first-born son, whose name is Belshazzar. Here is a quote from the cylinder:

“As for me, Nabonidus, king of Babylon, save me from sinning against your great godhead and grant me as a present a life long of days, and as for Belshazzar, the eldest son -my offspring- instill reverence for your great godhead in his heart and may he not commit any cultic mistake, may he be satiated with a life of plenitude.”⁹

B. The Verse Account of Nabonidus: Nabonidus Gives First-born Son the Kingship in Year 3.



Illustration 4: Verse Account of Nabonidus in the British Museum, London. Museum No. 38299. This states Nabonidus gave the kingship to his first-born in the third year of his reign.

⁸ “Cylinders of Nabonidus.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 22 Aug. 2017, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cylinders_of_Nabonidus. See the photo for the Nabonidus Cylinder from Sippar.

⁹ “Cylinders of Nabonidus.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 22 Aug. 2017, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cylinders_of_Nabonidus. See the Nabonidus Cylinder from Sippar section.

To find out when Nabonidus gave Belshazzar the kingship, we can read the Verse Account of Nabonidus. This document seems to be written after Cyrus took over Babylon, and compares the actions of Nabonidus with the actions of Cyrus. Contained in the narrative about Nabonidus is this quote about when he gave his eldest son the kingship. This document says it was the third year of Nabonidus when the transfer of power occurred.

“After he[Nabonidus] had obtained what he desired, a work of utter deceit, had built this abomination, a work of unholiness -when the third year was about to begin- he entrusted the army [?] to his oldest son, his first born, the troops in the country he ordered under his command. He let everything go, entrusted the kingship to him, and, himself, he started out for a long journey. The military forces of Akkad marching with him, he turned to Temâ deep in the west.”¹⁰

Therefore, from these two documents, we can see that Nabonidus gave his eldest son, whose name was Belshazzar, the kingship in the third year of Nabonidus' reign.

C. Verification from other sources:

A look at the ABC 7 for the third year of Nabonidus also provides a possible reason that Nabonidus did this. He got very sick that year, but later recovered. If he got so sick that he feared he would die, that would be a reason to install Belshazzar as a co-reigning king. Quoting from the third year of the ABC 7, Nabonidus Chronicle:

[i.11] [The third year:... the mon]th Abu, the Amanus Mountains
[i.12] [...] ... orchards, all of the fruit
[i.13] [...] ... from within them to Babylon
[i.14] [... became i]ll but recuperated.”¹¹

We also can verify that the writer of the Verse Account of Nabonidus was correct in saying that Nabonidus left Babylon and went to Tema, because in the ABC 7, it is documented that after the king recuperated the third year, he took the army and went against Edom¹². Re-quoting line 14, and then continuing on in the chronicle for year three:

[i.14] [... became i]ll but recuperated. In the month Kislimu, the king
[i.15] [mustered] his army¹⁴ and to Nabû-tat-tan-úsur
[i.16] .. of Amurru to
[i.17] they/he encamped [*against* E]dom
[i.18] [...] the large army

10 “Cylinders of Nabonidus.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 22 Aug. 2017, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cylinders_of_Nabonidus. See the Verse Account of Nabonidus section.

11 Lendering, Jona. “ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle).” *ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle) - Livius*, 12 Jan. 2017, www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-7-nabonidus-chronicle/.

12 See the rest of the entry for Nabonidus' third year. here: Lendering, Jona. “ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle).” *ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle) - Livius*, 12 Jan. 2017, www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-7-nabonidus-chronicle/.

[i.19] [... the g]ate of RUGdini

[i.20] [...] ... he killed/defeated him.....”¹³

Tema is in Edom¹⁴, and the ABC 7 specifically mentions that the king was in Tema while the prince was in Akkad (Babylon) for years 7, 9, 10, and 11¹⁵. Since the ABC 7 Chronicle provides a reason Nabonidus would give Belshazzar the kingship in the third year of his reign, and also states he went to the land of Edom, and later to Tema, the Verse Account of Nabonidus is a credible source for determining the year that Belshazzar was given the kingship. It was in Nabonidus' third year.

II. Daniel's Vision About the Ram and He Goat: Medo-Persia Will Be a World Power

A possible reason the actions of Cyrus and Astyages are on the ABC 7 starting in Nabonidus' sixth year is that Daniel had a vision. Daniel 8:1 says this vision was in the third year of Belshazzar:

“ In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared *to me*—to me, Daniel—after the one that appeared to me the first time.” Daniel 8:1, NKJV.

A. When Was Belshazzar's Third Year?



Illustration 5: Daniel saw the ram by the river Ulai. Dan. 8:1-3.



Illustration 6: The ram was the sole power, and expanded his territory. Daniel 8:4

If Nabonidus gave Belshazzar the kingship in his third year, then the third year of Belshazzar would be the fifth year of Nabonidus. Since the chronicle continues to number the years according to Nabonidus' reign, it is probable that Belshazzar did not have a traditional ascension year, or year zero. Therefore, Nabonidus' third year = Belshazzar's first year. Nabonidus' fourth year = Belshazzar's second year. Nabonidus' fifth year = Belshazzar's third year. In this vision, Daniel saw a ram which was very powerful, and began expanding his empire. For a while, it was the most powerful animal, and had control of a large area.¹⁶

13 See the rest of the entry for Nabonidus' third year. here: Lendering, Jona. “ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle).” *ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle) - Livius*, 12 Jan. 2017, www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-7-nabonidus-chronicle/.

14 “Land of Tema.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 11 Apr. 2017, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land_of_Tema. See also [Jeremiah 49:7](#) and [20, Obadiah 1:9](#), [Genesis 36:1](#) [Genesis 36:15](#), [Amos 1:12](#) , [Ezekiel 25:13](#), and [Isaiah 34:6](#)

15 See the specific years' entries here: Lendering, Jona. “ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle).” *ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle) - Livius*, 12 Jan. 2017, www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-7-nabonidus-chronicle/.

16 See [Daniel 8:1-4](#)



Illustration 7: A Male Goat Came From the West--Daniel 8:5



Illustration 8: The Male Goat Defeated the Ram. Daniel 8:6-7

Then, a male goat came from the west, and fought with the ram. He defeated the ram, and the rest of the vision is describing what happened to the goat¹⁷. For the purposes of this paper, we will focus just on the ram.

After Daniel had the vision and was thinking about it, another angel told the angel Gabriel to tell Daniel what the dream meant.¹⁸ In Daniel 8:20-21, Gabriel told Daniel that the ram in his vision represented the kings of Media and Persia, and the goat represented the kingdom of Greece.

“20 The ram which you saw, having the two horns—*they are* the kings of Media and Persia. 21 And the male goat *is* the kingdom of Greece.” Daniel 8:20-21 NKJV

So, Daniel knew that the kings of Media and the kings of Persia would be joined together into one power, and would expand their territory. They would be the dominant world power for a time, until the Greeks would defeat them.

After Daniel heard the interpretation of the dream, he fainted, and was sick for a while.¹⁹ He eventually got better, and went back to work, doing the king's business.²⁰

17 For an illustrated version of Daniel Chapter 8, see the study guide for Daniel 7 and 8 here:

Houser, Rochelle A., and William P. Houser. “Daniel Chapter 7-8.” *Unofficial Bible Bowl Pathfinder 2018 Daniel and Esther Study Guide*, 24 July 2017, www.readyanswers.org/PathfinderBibleExperience/P18/P18.html.

18 See [Daniel 8:15-16](#)

19 See [Daniel 8:27](#).

20 See [Daniel 8:27](#)



Illustration 9: Daniel Told Others About His Dream After He Went Back to Work for the King.

B. Daniel Went Back to Work, and Told People About the Vision:

In [Daniel 8:27](#), Daniel says he went back to work, and was still astonished by the vision. It also is evident that he told people about this dream, because he says no one understood it.

“27 And I, Daniel, fainted and was sick for days; afterward I arose and went about the king’s business. I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it.” Daniel 8:27

Since Daniel worked for the king, and was in a high position in the government, it is very likely he was talking with the king, and other governmental officials. If Daniel told them his vision, and the explanation that the Medes and the Persians would start expanding their territory and become the next world power, it would be very reasonable, then, for the Babylonians to start monitoring the actions of the Medes and Persians, as a threat to their own status of the dominant world power. It would just be one more year until the Medes and Persians became a consolidated power, when Cyrus captured Astyages, the last king of the Medes. This entry was significant enough to the Babylonians that they recorded it as the only event on their chronicle for Nabonidus' sixth year.

Conclusion:

By showing that Belshazzar's third year was Nabonidus' fifth year, and that Daniel had a vision that year in which he was told the Medes and the Persians would be an expanding world power, there is now a reason for the Babylonians to have started monitoring the actions of the Medes and Persians.

The actions of Cyrus are recorded on the ABC 7 starting in Nabonidus' sixth year, just one year after Daniel had the vision and told other people about it. The action recorded the beginning of the coalition of the Medes and Persians, with Cyrus the Persian capturing Astyages, the last king of the Medes. The actions of the Medes and Persians continue to be recorded until Daniel's vision came true: The Medes and the Persians took over Babylon in Nabonidus' seventeenth year²¹, to become the unbeatable world power until the Greeks, under Alexander the Great, defeated them.²² We can be certain that the other

21 Lendering, Jona. “ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle).” *ABC 7 (Nabonidus Chronicle) - Livius*, 12 Jan. 2017, www.livius.org/sources/content/mesopotamian-chronicles-content/abc-7-nabonidus-chronicle/.

22“Wars of Alexander the Great.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 16 Aug. 2017,

prophecies in Daniel that are still in the future for us will be fulfilled as well.

Rochelle A. Houser,
Chemist,
Sabbath School Superintendent,
Seventh-day Adventist Church of Newburgh,
Newburgh, IN 47630
houser_w@yahoo.com

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