

Classic Poetry Series

Assurbanipal
- poems -

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Assurbanipal()

Ashurbanipal (Ashur is creator of an heir; 685 BC – c. 627 BC), also spelled Assurbanipal or Ashshurbanipal) was an Assyrian king, the son of Esarhaddon and the last strong king of the Neo-Assyrian Empire (668 BC – c. 627 BC). He is famed for amassing a significant collection of cuneiform documents for his royal palace at Nineveh. This collection, known as the Library of Ashurbanipal, is now housed at the British Museum.

In the Bible he is called Asenappar. Roman historian Justinus identified him as Sardanapalus.

Ashurbanipal was born toward the end of a fifteen-hundred-year period of Assyrian ascendancy.

His father, Esarhaddon, youngest son of Sennacherib, had become heir when the crown prince, Ashur-nadin-shumi, was deposed by rebels from his position as vassal for Babylon. Esarhaddon was the son not of Sennacherib's queen, Tashmetum-sharrat, but of the West Semitic "palace woman" Zakutu, "the pure" (cf. "that which purifies"), known by her native name, Naqi'a. The only queen known for Esarhaddon was Ashur-hamat, who died in 672 BC.

Ashurbanipal grew up in the small palace called bit reduti (house of succession), built by his grandfather Sennacherib when he was crown prince in the northern quadrant of Nineveh. In 694 BC, Sennacherib had completed the "Palace Without Rival" at the southwest corner of the acropolis, obliterating most of the older structures. The "House of Succession" had become the palace of Esarhaddon, the crown prince. In this house, Ashurbanipal's grandfather was assassinated by uncles identified only from the biblical account as Adrammelek and Sharezer. From this conspiracy, Esarhaddon emerged as king in 680 BC. He proceeded to rebuild as his residence the bit masharti (weapons house, or arsenal). The "House of Succession" was left to his mother and the younger children, including Ashurbanipal.

The names of five brothers and one sister are known. Sin-iddin-apli, the intended crown prince, died prior to 672 BC. Not having been expected to become heir to the throne, Ashurbanipal was trained in scholarly pursuits as well as the usual horsemanship, hunting, chariotry, soldierliness, craftsmanship, and royal decorum. In a unique autobiographical statement, Ashurbanipal specified his youthful scholarly pursuits as having included oil divination, mathematics, and reading and writing. According to legend, Ashurbanipal was the only Assyrian

king who learned how to read and write.

Annals Of Assur-Nasir-Pal Column I

To Ninip most powerful hero, great, chief of the gods, warrior, powerful Lord,
whose onset in battle has not been opposed, eldest son,

crusher of opponents, first-born son of Nukimmut, supporter of the seven, noble
ruler, King of the gods the producers, governor, he who rolls along the mass

of heaven and earth, opener of canals, treader of the wide earth, the god who in
his divinity nourishes heaven and earth, the beneficent,

the exalted, the powerful, who has not lessened the glory of his face, head of
nations, bestower of sceptres, glorious, over all cities a ruler,

valiant, the renown of whose sceptre is not approached, chief of widespread
influence, great among the gods, shading from the southern sun, Lord of Lords,
whose hand the vault of heaven

(and) earth has controlled, a King in battle mighty who has vanquished
opposition, victorious, powerful, Lord of water-courses and seas,

strong, not yielding, whose onset brings down the green corn, smiting the land of
the enemy, like the cutting of reeds, the deity who changes not his purposes,

the light of heaven and earth, a bold leader on the waters, destroyer of them
that hate (him), a spoiler (and) Lord of the disobedient, dividing enemies, whose
name in the speech of the gods

no god has ever disregarded, the gatherer of life, the god(?) whose prayers are
good, whose abode is in the city of Calah, a great Lord, my Lord - (who am)
Assur-nasir-pal, the mighty King,

King of multitudes, a Prince unequalled, Lord of all the four countries, powerful
over hosts of men, the possession of Bel and Ninip the exalted and Anu

and of Dakan, a servant of the great gods in the lofty shrine for great (O Ninip) is
thy heart; a worshipper of Bel whose might upon

thy great deity is founded, and thou makest righteous his life, valiant, warrior,
who in the service of Assur his Lord hath proceeded, and among the Kings

of the four regions who has not his fellow, a Prince for admiration, not sparing
opponents, mighty leader, who an equal

has not, a Prince reducing to order his disobedient ones, who has subdued whole
multitudes of men, a strong worker, treading down

the heads of his enemies, trampling on all foes, crushing assemblages of rebels,
who in the service of the great gods his Lords

marched vigorously and the lands of all of them his hand captured, caused the
forests of all of them to fall, and received their tribute, taking

securities, establishing laws over all lands, when Assur the Lord who proclaims
my name and augments my Royalty

laid hold upon his invincible power for the forces of my Lordship, for Assur-nasir-
pal, glorious Prince, worshipper of the great gods

the generous, the great, the powerful, acquirer of cities and forests and the
territory of all of them, King of Lords, destroying the wicked, strengthening

the peaceful, not sparing opponents, a Prince of firm will(?) one who combats
oppression, Lord of all Kings,

Lord of Lords, the acknowledged, King of Kings, seated gloriously, the renown of
Ninip the warrior, worshipper of the great gods, prolonging the benefits
(conferred by) his fathers:

a Prince who in the service of Assur and the Sun-god, the gods in whom he
trusted, royally marched to turbulent lands, and Kings who had rebelled against
him

[he cut off like grass, all their lands to his feet he subjected, restorer of the
worship of the goddesses and that of the great gods,

Chief unwavering, who for the guidance of the heads (and) elders of his land is a
steadfast guardian, the work of whose hands and

the gift of whose finger the great gods of heaven and earth have exalted, and his
steps over rulers have they established forever;

their power for the preservation of my Royalty have they exercised; the

retribution of his power, (and) the approach of His Majesty over Princes

of the four regions they have extended: the enemies of Assur in all their country,
the upper and the lower I chastised, and tribute and impost

upon them I established, capturing the enemies of Assur - mighty King, King of
Assyria, son of Tuklat-Adar who all his enemies

has scattered; (who) in the dust threw down the corpses of his enemies, the
grandson of Bin-nirari, the servant of the great gods,

who crucified alive and routed his enemies and subdued them to his yoke,
descendant of Assur-dan-il, who the fortresses

established (and) the fanes made good. In those days by the decree of the great
gods to royalty power supremacy I rose up:

I am a King, I am a Lord, I am glorious, I am great, I am mighty, I have arisen, I
am Chief, I am a Prince, I am a warrior

I am great and I am glorious, Assur-nasir-habal, a mighty King of Assyria,
proclaimer of the Moon-god, worshipper of Anu, exalter of Yav, suppliant of the
gods

am I, servant unyielding, subduing the land of his foeman, a King mighty in
battle, destroyer of cities and forests,

Chief over opponents, King of the four regions, expeller of his foes, prostrating all
his enemies, Prince of a multitude of lands of all Kings

Even of all, a Prince subduing those disobedient to him, who is ruling all the
multitudes of men. These aspirations to the face of the great gods

have gone up; on my destiny steadfastly have they determined; at the wishes of
my heart and the uplifting of my hand, Istar, exalted Lady,

hath favored me in my intentions, and to the conduct of (my) battles and warfare
hath applied her heart. In those days I Assur-nasir-pal, glorious Prince,
worshipper of the great gods

the wishes of whose heart Bel will cause him to attain, and who has conquered
all Kings who disobey him, and by his hand capturing

his enemies, who in difficult places has beaten down assemblages of rebels;
when Assur, mighty Lord, proclaimer of my name

aggrandizer of my royalty over the Kings of the four regions, bountifully hath
added his invincible power to the forces of my government,

putting me in possession of lands, and mighty forests for exploration hath he
given and urgently impelled me - by the might of Assur my Lord,

perplexed paths, difficult mountains by the impetuosity of my hosts I traversed,
and an equal there was not. In the beginning of my reign

(and) in my first campaign when the Sun-god guider of the lands threw over me
his beneficent protection on the throne of my dominion I firmly seated myself; a
sceptre

the dread of man into my hands I took; my chariots (and) armies I collected;
rugged paths, difficult mountains, which for the passage

of chariots and armies was not suited I passed, and to the land of Nairi I went:
Libie, their capital city, the cities Zurra and Abuqu

Arura Arubie, situated within the limits of the land of Aruni and Etini, fortified
cities, I took, their fighting-men

in numbers I slew; their spoil, their wealth, their cattle I spoiled; their soldiers
were discouraged; they took possession of a difficult mountain, a mountain
exceedingly difficult; after them

I did not proceed, for it was a mountain ascending up like lofty points of iron,
and the beautiful birds of heaven had not reached up into it: like nests

of the young birds in the midst of the mountain their defence they placed, into
which none of the Kings my fathers had ever penetrated: in three days

successfully on one large mountain, his courage vanquished opposition: along
the feet of that mountain I crept and hid: their nests, their tents,

I broke up; 200 of their warriors with weapons I destroyed; their spoil in
abundance like the young of sheep I carried off;

their corpses like rubbish on the mountains I heaped up; their relics in tangled hollows of the mountains I consumed; their cities

I overthrew, I demolished, in fire I burned: from the land of Nummi to the land of Kirruri I came down; the tribute of Kirruri

of the territory of Zimizi, Zimira, Ulmanya, Adavas, Kargai, Harmasai, horses, (fish (?)).

oxen, horned sheep in numbers, copper, as their tribute I received: an officer to guard boundaries over them I placed. While in the land of Kirruri

they detained me, the fear of Assur my Lord overwhelmed the lands of Gilzanai and Khubuskai; horses, silver

gold, tin, copper, kams of copper as their tribute they brought to me. From the land of Kirruri I withdrew;

to a territory close by the town Khulun in Gilhi Bitani I passed: the cities of Khatu, Khalaru, Nistun, Irbidi,

Mitkie, Arzanie, Zila, Khalue, cities of Gilhi situated in the environs of Uzie and Arue

and Arardi powerful lands, I occupied: their soldiers in numbers I slew; their spoil, their riches I carried off;

their soldiers were discouraged; the summits projecting over against the city of Nistun which were menacing like the storms of heaven, I captured;

into which no one among the Princes my sires had ever penetrated; my soldiers like birds (of prey) rushed upon them;

260 of their warriors by the sword I smote down; their heads cut off in heaps I arranged; the rest of them like birds

in a nest, in the rocks of the mountains nestled; their spoil, their riches from the midst of the mountains I brought down; cities which were in the midst

of vast forests situated I overthrew, destroyed, burned in fire; the rebellious soldiers fled from before my arms; they came down; my yoke

they received; impost tribute and a Viceroy I set over them. Bubu son of Bubua son of the Prefect of Nistun

in the city of Arbela I flayed; his skin I stretched in contempt upon the wall. At that time an image of my person I made; a history of my supremacy

upon it I wrote, and (on) a mountain of the land of Ikin(?) in the city of Assur-nasir-pal at the foot I erected (it). In my own eponym in the month of July and the 24th day (probably B.C. 882).

in honor of Assur and Istar the great gods my Lords, I quitted the city of Nineveh: to cities situated below Nipur and Pazate powerful countries

I proceeded; Atkun, Nithu, Pilazi and 20 other cities in their environs I captured; many of their soldiers I slew;

their spoil, their riches I carried off; the cities I burned with fire; the rebel soldiers fled from before my arms, submitted,

and took my yoke; I left them in possession of their land. From the cities below Nipur and Pazate I withdrew; the Tigris I passed;

to the land of Commagene I approached; the tribute of Commagene and of the Moschi in kams of copper, sheep and goats I received; while in Commagene

I was stationed, they brought me intelligence that the city Suri in Bit-Khalupe had revolted. The people of Hamath had slain their governor

Ahiyababa the son of Lamamana they brought from Bit-Adini and made him their King. By help of Assur and Yav

the great gods who aggrandize my royalty, chariots, (and) an army, I collected: the banks of the Chaboras I occupied; in my passage tribute

in abundance from Salman-haman-ilin of the city of Sadikannai and of Il-yav of the city of Sunai, silver, gold,

tin, kam of copper, vestments of wool, vestments of linen I received. To Suri which is in Bit-Halupe I drew near;

the fear of the approach of Assur my Lord overwhelmed them; the great men and the multitudes of the city, for the saving of their lives, coming up after me,

submitted to my yoke; some slain, some living, some tongue-less I made:
Ahiyababa son of Lamamana

whom from Bit-Adini they had fetched, I captured; in the valor of my heart and
the steadfastness of my soldiers I besieged the city; the soldiers, rebels all,

were taken prisoners; the nobles to the principal palace of his land I caused to
send; his silver, his gold, his treasure, his riches, copper

(?)tin, kams, tabhani, hariati of copper, choice copper in abundance, alabaster
and iron-stone of large size

the treasures of his harem, his daughters and the wives of the rebels with their
treasures, and the gods with their treasures,

precious stones of the land of . . . , his swift chariot, his horses, the harness, his
chariot-yoke, trappings for horses, coverings for men,

vestments of wool, vestments of linen, handsome altars of cedar, handsome . . .
, bowls of cedar-wood

beautiful black coverings, beautiful purple coverings, carpets, his oxen, his
sheep, his abundant spoil, which like the stars of heaven could not be reckoned,

I carried off; Aziel as my lieutenant over them I placed; a trophy along the
length of the great gate I erected: the rebellious nobles

who had revolted against me and whose skins I had stripped off, I made into a
trophy: some in the middle of the pile I left to decay; some on the top

of the pile on stakes I impaled; some by the side of the pile I placed in order on
stakes; many within view of my land

I flayed; their skins on the walls I arranged; of the officers of the King's officer,
rebels, the limbs I cut off;

I brought Ahiyababa to Nineveh; I flayed, him and fastened his skin to the wall;
laws and edicts

over Lakie I established. While I was staying in Suri the tribute of the Princes of
Lakie throughout the whole of them,

silver, gold, tin, copper, kam of copper, oxen, sheep, vestments of wool and linen, as tribute

and gift, I defined and imposed upon them. In those days, the tribute of Khayani of the city of Hindanai, silver,

gold, tin, copper, amu-stone, alabaster blocks, beautiful black (and) lustrous coverings I received as tribute from him. In those days an enlarged image

of my Royalty I made; edicts and decrees upon it I wrote; in the midst of his palace I put it up; of stone my tablets I made;

the decrees of my throne upon it I wrote; in the great gate I fixed them, in the date of this year which takes its name from me, in honor of Assur my Lord and Ninip who uplifts my feet.

Whereas in the times of the Kings my fathers no man of Suhi to Assyria had ever come, Il-bani Prince of Suhi together with his soldiers

(and) his son, silver, gold as his tribute to Nineveh in abundance brought: in my own eponym at the city of Nineveh I stayed: news

they brought me that men of the land of Assyria, (and) Hulai the governor of their city which Shalmaneser King of Assyria my predecessor

to the city of Hasiluha had united, had revolted: Dandamusa a city of my dominion marched out to subdue (them);

in honor of Assur, the Sun-god and Yav, the gods in whom I trust, my chariots and army I collected at the head of the river Zupnat, the place of an image

which Tiglath-Pileser and Tiglath-Adar, Kings of Assyria my fathers had raised; an image of My Majesty I constructed and put up with theirs.

In those days I renewed the tribute of the land of Izala, oxen, sheep, goats: to the land of Kasyari I proceeded, and to Kinabu

the fortified city of the province of Hulai. I drew near; with the impetuosity of my formidable attack I besieged and took the town; 600 of their fighting men

with (my) arms I destroyed; 3,000 of their captives I consigned to the flames; as

hostages I left not one of them alive; Hulai

the governor of their town I captured by (my) hand alive; their corpses into piles I built; their boys and maidens I dishonored;

Hulai the governor of their city I flayed: his skin on the walls of Damdamusa I placed in contempt; the city I overthrew demolished, burned with fire;

the city of Mariru within their territory I took; 50 warrior fighting men by (my) weapons I destroyed; 200 of their captives in the flame I burned;

the soldiers of the land of Nirbi I slew in fight in the desert; their spoil, their oxen, their sheep, I brought away; Nirbu which is at the foot of mount Ukhira

I boldly took; I then passed over to Tila their fortified city; from Kinabu I withdrew; to Tila I drew near;

a strong city with three forts facing each other: the soldiers to their strong forts and numerous army trusted and would not submit;

my yoke they would not accept; (then,) with onset and attack I besieged the city; their fighting men with my weapons I destroyed; of their spoil,

their riches, oxen and sheep, I made plunder; much booty I burned with fire; many soldiers I captured alive;

of some I chopped off the hands and feet; of others the noses and ears I cut off; of many soldiers I destroyed the eyes;

one pile of bodies while yet alive, and one of heads I reared up on the heights within their town; their heads in the midst I hoisted; their boys

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