IDENTIFICATION
OF
DARIUS THE MEDE

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concisely as possible. Specific historical details concerning throne names, ancient names, and ancient pagan prophecies which link Cyrus to "Darius the Mede" will now be presented.

Throne Names

In almost every proposed solution for Darius the Mede, the idea is offered that Darius the Mede was a throne name for that particular candidate. The concept of throne names, especially for the kings of Babylon, is well-known and may be a legitimate answer.[3] By the time of Sargon (eighth century BC), the custom had been established that a new ruler of Babylon, when he would "take the hand of Bel," would also take a new throne-name.[4] The Mesopotamian understanding of such names and the significance assigned to them will now be discussed.

The biblical record documents the throne name of a Mesopotamian king named Tiglath-Pileser. Tiglath-Pileser was the Assyrian king who carried away three tribes of Israel into captivity (the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh; see 1 Chr 5:26). When Tiglath-Pileser conquered Babylon he took the name Pul for his throne name.[5] 1 Chronicles 5:26 records both of his names, Tiglath-Pileser and Pul, in parallel phrases:

וַיָּעַר אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־רוּחַ פּוּל מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר

And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria,

וְאֶת־רוּחַ תִּלְּגַת פִּלְנֶסֶר מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר

that is, the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria   (1 Chr 5:26).

Incidentally, the *wāw* which connects these two parallel phrases, and which indicates that these two names refer to the same person, is a *wāw* explicativum (similar to the use of the *wāw* in Dan 6:28).

In ancient times not only was it normal for some kings to receive a new name at coronation, but also, whenever an individual came to serve a king, he was given a new name to mark the initiation of his "new life."[6] The biblical record includes examples of people who

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[3] Many admit that "ancient kings had two names"; see Lewis B. Paton "The Book of Daniel" (review of *Studies in the Book of Daniel: A Discussion of the Historical Questions* by Robert Dick Wilson) *The American Journal of Theology*, 23 (2) (Apr 1919), 230.

[4] G. Maspero, A. H. Sayce, and M. L. McClure, *The Passing of the Empires, 850 B.C. to 330 B.C* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1900), 274. Laesoe reports that Sargon is a throne name meaning "The King is steadfast"; see Jorgen Laessoe, *People of Ancient Assyria*: *Their Inscriptions and Correspondence*, trans. by F. S. Leigh-Browne, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963, 23. Laesoe reports that four other kings besides Shamshi-Adad I chose his name for their own throne names; see Laessoe, 40. Laesoe also reports that when Tiglath-Pileser conquered Babylon in 719 he took the throne name Pûlu, and his son Shalmaneser V when he ascended the Babylonian throne took the throne name Ulûlai; see Laessoe, 113.

[5] Laessoe, 113.

[6] This tradition of a new name, life and allegiance has continued even into modern times and is evidenced in street gangs as they rename new members. In modern film this tradition is evident in the prison life portrayed by the film *Cool Hand Luke* (1967) when Dragline renames Luke, and it is also evident in the *Star Wars* series when Darth Sidious renames Anakin Skywalker as "Darth Vader."

received new names when they started service under the authority of a new king.[7] Eric Heaton believes the new name signaled a change in the person's allegiance from his former life, his former king, and his former god to those in his new life. Heaton adds concerning Daniel: "The Hebrew names of the writer's heroes all contain the name of their God; whereas the new names obliterate this reference and, in most of the cases, substitute what appears to be the name of a pagan deity."[8]

In this present study, the assertion is not being made that Cyrus took "Darius the Mede" as a throne name when he conquered Babylon; neither is this assertion necessary. If Cyrus had taken a throne name in Babylon, it likely would have been recorded somewhere in a royal inscription or in the contract tablets. Even so, Richard Frye explains that the names Cyrus and Cambyses are also hard to explain as throne names or otherwise:

> Like his father [Cyrus], Cambyses (OP Kambüjia) may carry a non-Iranian name, in spite of attempts to connect his name with the Kambojas, a people living in north-west India, meaning then 'king of the Kambojas', a throne name. The possibility of a throne name was [*sic*] well as a personal name is attractive, but one problem is that neither the name Cyrus nor Cambyses can be adequately explained as one or the other, and we really do not know. [Also see J. Charpentier. *Der Name Kambyses, Zeitschrift fur Indologie und Iranistik 2, 1923,* pp. 148, and K. Hoffmann, '*Vedische Namen', Worter und Sachen* 21 (1940), 146.][9]

In any case, the present issue concerns the name Darius the Mede as a throne name, not Cyrus.

There is a good possibility that Cyrus had already received a new throne name when he conquered Astyages, the king of the Medes. William Boscawen suggested that Darius might have been an appropriate throne name for Cyrus, as the new king of the Medes.[10] Even so, proving that at some point Cyrus received the throne name "Darius the Mede" is not necessary for the theory presented here, that Cyrus is Darius the Mede. The pertinent question is not if Cyrus took the throne name Darius the Mede. The pertinent question is if Daniel, in his work of literature, used the appellative "Darius the Mede" to refer to Cyrus. More discussion will be devoted to this question later in this chapter.

In Mesopotamian culture and theology the concept of name was extremely important. Georges Contenau explains this "doctrine of name":

> The doctrine itself can be summarized in the basic principle that nothing exists unless it has a name. The Creation epic opens with the affirmation that in the beginning Chaos alone existed and nothing had a name:—
> > *When the heavens above were yet unnamed*
> > *And no dwelling beneath was called by a name. . .*
> > *When no names had been recorded. . .*

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[7] Joseph to Zaphnath-paaneah, Gen 41:45; Eliakim to Jehoiakim, 2 Kings 23:34; Mattaniah to Zedekiah, 2 Kings 24:17; Daniel to Belteshazzar, and his companions, Hananiah to Shadrach, Mishael to Meshach, Azariah to Abednego, Daniel 1:7

[8] Eric W. Heaton, *The Book of Daniel*, Torch Bible Commentary (London, England: SCM Press, 1956), 118.

[9] Richard Frye, *The Heritage of Persia* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1963), 83. OP = Old Persian.

[10] William Saint Chad Boscawen, "Babylonian Dated Tablets, and the Canon of Ptolemy" In *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, (London: Office of Society of Biblical Archaeology, 1878), 29.

As long as anything had no name, it did not exist, which is no doubt the reason why we read in Genesis (Chapter II, v. 19), that after creating the animals, God called them before Adam so that the latter might name them and thus confer individual existence upon them. The Akkadian phrase denoting universality, 'Everything which bears a name', is itself an expression of this belief.[11]

As Adam's naming of the animals signified his authority and the animals' purpose, so the throne-name of the kings given at their "re-birth" (enthronement) would signify the authority of the gods who ordained the king's existence and his new purpose.

Contenau goes on to explain the belief that knowing the proper pronunciation of someone's name was required for its invocation and for incantations. Therefore, these ancient peoples believed if one knew another's "true name" (whether a god or man) then one could exercise power over him. Contenau continues, "Since the knowledge of a person's name gave power over its owner, care was naturally taken to prevent it from becoming known. The Egyptians, for example, gave a child one name and called it by another throughout its entire life."[12]

Figure 5.1 Fight Between Bel-Merdach and Tiamat[13]

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[11] Georges Contenau, *Everyday Life in Babylon and Assyria* (London: E. Arnold, 1954), 160.

[12] Contenau, 164.

[13] These limestone reliefs are from the Palace of Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal II (885-860) at Nimrud and are currently at the British Museum. Illustration is from inside the front cover of E. A. Wallis Budge's book, *Babylonian Life and History* 3rd ed. ([London]: Religious Tract Society, 1891). Concerning Marduk, Budge writes, "The omnipresent and omnipotent Marduk (Merodach) was the god, who 'went before Ea' and was the healer and

The importance of names is also seen in the fifty names given to Marduk (the god portrayed fighting the lion-like creature in Figure 5.1 above). It seems that the name "Marduk" is itself an important wordplay. In the Mesopotamian poem of creation when the god Marduk is "invested with supreme power" by the other gods, he tests the existence of his newly-granted power. The test is twofold and involves Marduk's decree making a cloak non-existent, and then also a second decree to re-create the cloak. This action of Marduk and the test of his new divine powers are captured in his name "Marduk" through wordplay. Contenau gives the specifics of this wordplay:

> The second syllable of the name Marduk was not unlike the Sumerian *tug*, meaning 'cloak', while *mar* can also mean 'place'. This is the point of the 'placing of a garment' among the gods. But this was not all. *Duk* also meant 'to speak' and *mar* also had the diametrically opposed meanings of 'produce' or 'create', and 'destroy'. This explains the latter part of the quotation. There is reason to believe that this was how the scribe was thinking, since in the list of the epithets of Marduk with which the compiler leaves the actual name of the god, those which glorify him as the creator are followed by those lauding him as the destroyer. The influence of this etymological ingenuity is visible throughout the list. . . . which again must be a carefully-phrased reference to the different meanings of *mar* and *duk*.[14]

Wordplay was an important literary device for ancient Mesopotamian cultures and their literature,[15] and it also played an important role in determining what someone might be named. It is significant here that the name of the god Marduk conveyed multiple meanings, including one of which described him as a destroyer and another describing him as creator. Similarly, two opposing roles, one as destroyer and the other as liberator, are the roles which are respectively fulfilled by Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Great in the book of Daniel.

Mesopotamian Kings

In order to understand the Mesopotamian concept of royalty, one must understand the culture's perception of the divine king and how that perception developed. The king was to imitate the gods, like Marduk, the king of the gods, and protect everyone from evil just as Marduk did (see Figure 5.1, page 129). Dumu-zi is the fifth king listed in the ancient kings list. He is identified as both a god and a shepherd.[16] Later kings, such as Etana "who ascended to heaven" (this phrase seems to indicate his apotheosis) were also identified as both kings and shepherds.[17] Silvestro Fiore explains the combination of the concepts of the divine king and the shepherd-king:

> In the course of time, the king's role as a god and as a shepherd underwent profound changes. . . . The shepherd-king, who once had to lead his people to fresh pastures for

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mediator for mankind. He revealed to mankind the knowledge of Ea; in all incantations he is invoked as the god 'mighty to save' against evil and ill" (127).

[14] Contenau, 170.

[15] Scott Noegel, "Wordplay in the Tale of the Poor Man of Nippur" *Acta Sumerologica* 18 (1996): 169-186.

[16] A. Leo Oppenheim, "Babylonian and Assyrian Historical Texts," *ANET*, 266.

[17] Oppenheim, "Babylonian and Assyrian Historical Texts," *ANET*, 266.