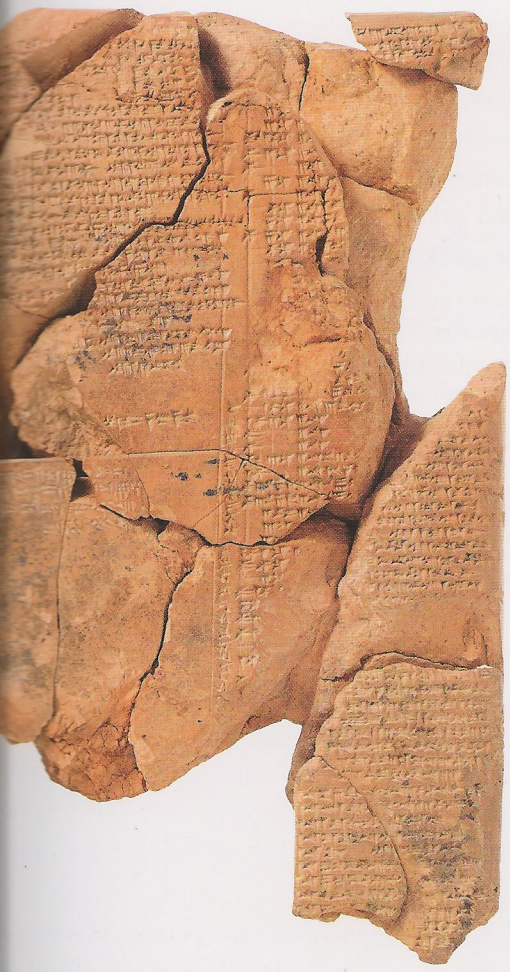


E FIG. 130 *left*

Rations for Jehoiachin, exiled Judaean ruler in Babylon

Tablets excavated at Babylon record rations from Nebuchadnezzar's palace for the support of workers, such as carpenters or boatmen, including individuals from across the Babylonian empire. This example includes the name of the Judaean king Jehoiachin as well as other Judean deportees resident in Babylon. It dates to the thirteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar (592/1 BC):

30 litres (of oil) for Ja'ukin, king of Ja[hudu]
2½ litres for the 5 [son]s of the king of Jahudu
4 litres for the 8 Jahudeans, ½ litre for each

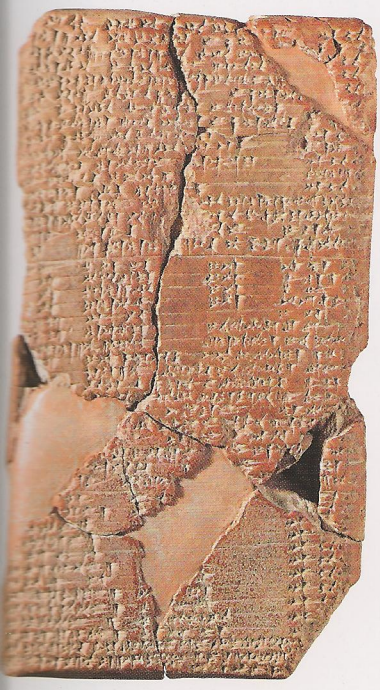
592/1 BC. From Babylon
Clay. H 20 cm, W 13 cm
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum, VAT 16283
Weidner 1939: Texts B and C; Borger 1975: 92; Pedersén 2005a; Pedersén 2005b: nos 1.97, 1.99, pl. 60

E FIG. 131 *below*

The Chronicle of Jerachmeel

The Book of Jeremiah tells us that during Jehoiachin's thirty-seventh year Amel-Marduk became king of Babylon and gave the exiled Judaean ruler his freedom. The medieval Hebrew 'Chronicle of Jerachmeel', written down almost eighteen centuries after the event, suggests a possible explanation for this compassion: it describes Jehoiachin and Amel-Marduk being in prison together. It is the only source to do so, but 'The Lament of Nabu-šuma-ukin' (Fig. 132 below), suggests that this much later European chronicle records a genuine historical event. (Prince Nabu-šuma-ukin later took the throne name Amel-Marduk.)

12th century AD
Ink on parchment
H 22.7 cm, W 34 cm (open)
Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS Heb d.11
Gaster 1899; Finkel 1999



E FIG. 132 *left*

'The Lament of Nabu-šuma-ukin'

At the break of day,
During siesta time, while sleeping,
In the evening, at dusk,
Throughout the night, during the dawn watch,
The wretched, weary person weeps;
The wretched, unseeing person sheds tears.
He sheds tears because of the tricks of mankind;
He weeps in his prison because his situation is so grievous.
He sheds tears over matters not to be spoken, the evil done him …

This poetic and tortured appeal to Marduk was composed by Nabu-šuma-ukin, son of Nebuchadnezzar, who was languishing in prison in Babylon. This Nabu-šuma-ukin is thought to be the crown prince, and thus Nebuchadnezzar's successor, who later took the throne name of Amel-Marduk (the biblical Evil-Merodach). The poem is remarkable for its obsessive and modern-sounding expressions.

Reign of Nebuchadnezzar (605–562 BC)
From Babylon
Clay
H 17.1 cm, W 9.2 cm
British Museum, BM 40474
Finkel 1999