

31) “The Judges of the King” and “the Judges of the Temples”* — The Late-Babylonian chronicle BHP 12 (= ABC 13b) describes an offering ritual conducted in E-sagil, the main sanctuary of the city of Babylon, on Nisan 8, 88 SE (224/223 BC).¹ This ritual was ordered by the king and conducted by the *šatammu* of E-sagil. The *šatammu* himself provided the animals for this ritual, but the payment for them was disbursed from the royal treasury. After the ritual, the *šatammu* distributed a portion of the animals to the lamentation-priests and to the *šatammu* himself in Babylon, and another portion to “the judges of the king (*dayyānūša šarri*)” and the free men in Seleucia on the Tigris, the Seleucid administrative center in Babylonia.

Robartus J. van der Spek explains that when the *šatammu* distributed some of the animals back to him, he was actually embezzling part of the royal funds paid for his animals. Furthermore, he surmises that a court proceeding or an accounting for this illegality was behind the distribution to the judges and the free men.² We, however, believe that rather than being an indication of such a procedure, the presentation to them may have been a precaution against being charged with embezzlement. In plain words, he attempted to bribe them not to investigate his misappropriation.

We also believe that this attempt indicates there was a division of duties between “the judges of the king” and “the judges of the temples (*dayyānūša bīt ilāni*)” who appear in several texts. The former had jurisdiction over cases concerning the royal treasury, while the latter took charge of those concerning temple property in Babylon. “The judges of the temples” heard two criminal cases in 90 SE (BHP 17:6-12; 13-35), and the latter case clearly

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¹ The ritual is recorded in the lines 3'-10' of this chronicle. For the latest edition, see R. J. van der Spek, “Seleucus III Chronicle (BHP 12): Description, Text and Translation,” Livius.org, accessed April 15, 2011, http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/bchp-seleucus_iii/seleucus_iii_01.html.

² R. J. van der Spek, “Seleucus III Chronicle (BHP 12): Commentary,” Livius.org, accessed April 15, 2011, http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/bchp-seleucus_iii/seleucus_iii_02.html.

concerned a sacrilege.³ Also, in 143 SE thieves who had “peeled” a statue of the god Nergal were held in the house of “the judges of the temples” and interrogated before them.⁴ However, it would seem that this court did not have jurisdiction over cases concerning royal funds. Since “the judges of the temples” heard cases in 90 SE, it is highly likely that their court was in existence two years before, i.e. at the time of the embezzlement recorded in BHP 12, yet the *šatammu* did not take any precaution against a complaint to the court. This fact suggests that “the judges of the temples” did not have jurisdiction over such cases.

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³ For the text of BHP 17, see F. Joannès, “Une chronique judiciaire d’époque hellénistique et le châtement des sacrilèges à Babylone,” in *Assyriologica et semitica: Festschrift für Joachim Oelsner anlässlich seines 65. Geburtstages am 18. Februar 1997*, ed. J. Marzahn and H. Neumann, 194-200 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2000); R. J. van der Spek, “Judicial Chronicle (BHP 17): Description, Text and Translation,” Livius.org, accessed April 15, 2011, http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/bchp-jud/jud_1.html.

⁴ -168A 'Rev. 16'-18' = -168C 'Rev. 8'-10'. “-n” indicates the text number of the astronomical diaries published in A. J. Sachs, *Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts from Babylonia*, vols. 1-3, ed. H. Hunger (Vienna: VÖAW, 1988-96). For the text of -168A 'Rev. 16'-18' and -168C 'Rev. 8'-10', see also Joannès, “Une chronique judiciaire,” 201-203.