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Per. 2

Selected Excerpts from:

The Journals of Nebuzadanan,  
Commander of the Imperial Guard,  
Under Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon

Edited and translated by David Meeks

October 10, 590 B.C.

Midmorning today, I was summoned by King Nebuchadnezzar, and, as usual, I hastened to answer his call, taking my escort with me into the Hall of Audience. On bended knee, I awaited his pleasure to speak. I inquired of him the reason for his summons.

Filled with the wisdom of the gods, his voice echoed profoundly in that chamber, drumming his message into my mind. Zedekiah, the heathen king of Jerusalem, had ceased to pay tribute toward the glory of Babylon. In the absence of payment, a messenger was sent declaring Jerusalem free of Babylonian sovereignty. Of course, the emissary was killed.

Nebuchadnezzar declared war upon Zedekiah, king of Jerusalem, and ordered me to assemble the army...



all of it. The Dragon, today, has awakened, and woe to those who think to stand against His Teeth.

An hour was spent, as the army assembled during the afternoon, giving sacrifice to the gods. Marduk was honored, and Ishtar warmed with blood. Evening came, but Nebuchadnezzar, filled with godly wrath, ordered the march. Thus the might of Babylon passed through the Gate of Ishtar and headed west, toward the citadel of the Jews.

October 15

Our pace is grueling, but there is wisdom in it; Zedekiah must learn the lesson of fear. Already I long for my sweet Abuzzerra, and already Ishtar is altering my lust toward the sword and blood. My dreams are filled with the battlefield, and my heart grows hard in readiness.

October 20

We entered Riblah late this afternoon. The clansman here saw fit to deny Zedekiah's authority, and no man was outspoken in his hatred for us, but



I could feel it just the same. They're jealous of our might, and fear that their great Jerusalem may fall.

This night I was informed of a rumor that a prophet in Jerusalem had foreseen the demise of his city. The gods weaken their hearts for defeat.

October 21

Early this morning we set out. I had delegated a small contingent to hold Riblah; that city will help maintain our supplies.

October 24

I look out from my tent at a veritable sea of campfires, and, in their midst, at the watch fires atop Jerusalem's walls. It is indeed a formidable fortress, but we shall sap its strength soon enough.

October 25

As dawn reddened the sky, a clarion call pierced the air and rebounded off the rocks into the distance. Looking to the gates, I saw the trumpeter atop the wall, and the man beside him who waited calmly. Nebuchadnezzar sent forth

a herald who went within 100 feet and shouted, "To Zedekiah, self-proclaimed king of Jerusalem, and to the people of Jerusalem: your ruler, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, allows you this day to open wide your gates and to seek his mercy!" He would have continued had not the archers in the ramparts shot him down.

Nebuchadnezzar ordered the attack.

A sea of men broke like waves upon the citadel, but the walls held, and as the day grew old, I urged the king to lessen his wrath and await weaknesses yet to be discovered.

This night our spies are about, and the men are wrapped in a brooding silence, licking their wounds and eyeing the blatant, immobile source of their hurt with bitterness in their heart.

October 31

The wall is not going to fall. We sit in siege, and wait.

June 6, 589 B.C.

The men which we have not sent back to strengthen the supply line through



Riblah have become very restless. Only the fearful presence of Nebuchadnezzar has enabled the siege to last. Even so, today, one of my men killed another for his rations. Weak are weak in supplies, but not that weak. The culprit was beheaded at sunset.

April 9, 588 B.C.

Before daybreak, what was left of the Jerusalem armed forces broke through our encampment toward the Arabah. With Nebuchadnezzar's consent, I quickly gathered the Imperial Guard to hunt down the weakened troops, assigning Balthazar to take the city.

The haggard Jews could not keep up the chase, and they resignedly drew up a battleline before their defeated king. I, armor blazing, my sword afire, plunged through their ranks, flanked by two soldiers on either side, and cut my way straight up to Zedekiah. The Jewish troops gave up the fight, and consigned themselves to our custody. Nebuchadnezzar came forward to look upon Zedekiah, and then we returned with our captives to Jerusalem.

The city was little more than



buildings. Within, the ravages of so long a famine had left its traces with dust and the dead.

It was no great matter finding those favored by Zedekiah; though worn, they were not starving.

In the twilight outside the city we assembled the family of and the leaders under Zedekiah, and slew them before his eyes. So that he might remember what he saw for the rest of his days, Nebuchadnezzar ordered Zedekiah blinded. The former king of Jerusalem was then shackled in bronze, and readied for exile to Babylon.

April 12

Among the people of the city, I encountered the prophet Jeremiah, who had foretold the fall of Jerusalem. I spoke to him thus: "Your God is wise, and has chosen you to bear his word. The people of Jerusalem did not heed your warning, and so they have paid for their folly. You may come with us to Babylon, where you will be treated well, or you may remain in this land under our rule."

He chose the latter. I think it a pity; he could have served Babylon well.

May 5

It did my weary heart well to lead my troops victorious back into the great city of Babylon. After honoring Ishtar and Marduk in turn, I returned home to Abuzzerra, glad for a time of rest.