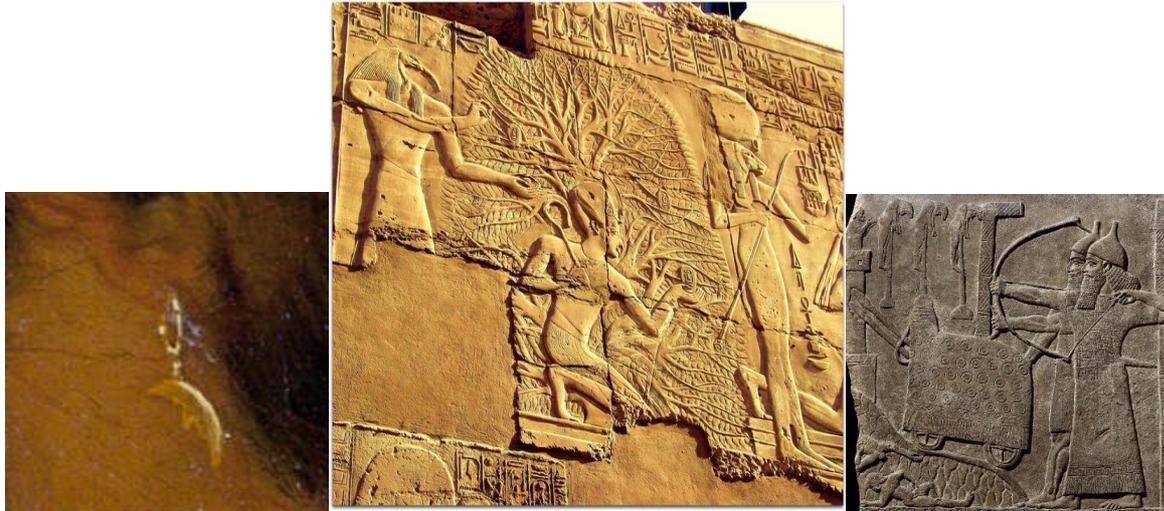


ANCIENT SPOOKS

Part II: Spookish relations

By Gerry, July 2018



Hello and welcome again. I invite you to a second round of analyzing Biblical texts and other ancient records. In Part I, we looked at Bible passages, and saw that some odd puns seem to have been planted there, presumably by ancestors of our modern “spooks”, whom I call “Ancient Spooks”. We’ll continue our analysis here, with ancient manufactured wars and ancient aristocratic relations.

There will be one new underlying theme here, and that’s the implicit relation of god-like overlords to actual gods. I don’t know for sure what the Ancient Spookian overlords believed in, but I think they did not believe in gods, or in our God. Rather, their top-down view on kingdoms and wars seems to be a little like that of gods themselves. I don’t think the spooks ever deluded themselves that they were actual gods, but they did appear to call themselves gods, for whatever reason. I will therefore exclude religion from my analysis, and treat it *as if the ancient elites didn’t believe in it*. This has always led me to the most consistent results and to the most straightforward explanations.

Naturally, this doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t believe in religion. I personally have lost my faith, but I think you’re safe to read my analysis even if you are religious, as long as you don’t confuse the Biblical message with the messengers, who were mere humans like us.

The Tree of Life

Let's ease in with a theme found in many ancient religions: the [Tree of Life](#). Speculation about its meaning abounds, but I think there's one unmentioned, yet straightforward answer in our context. We all know the Biblical story: God forbids Adam and Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, claiming they'll die. The serpent tells them that's they won't die, but will become knowledgeable like God. In the Biblical version, it turns out God lied and the serpent was right, because they get more knowledgeable after they eat. God confirms this when he speaks to his unspecified peers:

Then the LORD God said: Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the Tree of Life, and eat, and live forever. [GEN 3:22](#)

ויאמר | יהוה אלהים הן האדם היה כאחד ממנו לדעת טוב ורע ועתה | פן־ישלח ידו ולקח גם מעץ החיים ואכל וחי לעלם

In this narrative, man has become too knowledgeable for God's tastes, and may acquire immortality like God, *through the Tree of Life*. Man is then shut out, to prevent that. It's just a detail, but note we have two plurals here: God speaks about "us", but the Tree of Life is also written with a plural: it's the Tree of "The Lives", *ha-chayim* (החיים), from *chay* (חי). The grammar is perfectly legal here, but may be a clue as to how the aristocrats interpret this verse.

Mainstream analyses link this Biblical tree to similar sacred trees from other religions. It seems to be important in all of them. While I don't know what it ultimately means there, we have one particular tree which might hint at what it means *to the spooks*: the [Assyrian Tree of Life](#). It is quite peculiar, and scholars have "not reached consensus as to the meaning". Wikipedia mentions it's depicted by "series of nodes and criss-crossing lines", but shows only a badly lit picture. But there are links to two other related topics, the [Bucket and Cone](#) motif, and the [Winged Genies](#) used in it: The Tree of Life is usually depicted with two genies, winged and bearded, eagle-headed, or fish-cloaked, flanking it while holding bucket and cone. They seem to use the cone to sprinkle something on the tree, in some kind of fertilization ritual. In some images they point the cone at the king or gateways. The cone is of course made of **seeds**, and that is another clue—as you are about to see.

You wouldn't guess it at Wikipedia, but it's one of the most prolific themes in Assyrian palaces. I tried to make a list, but it's impossible to hunt them all down. Walls of an entire hall in the Nimrud palace were plastered with [endless repetitions of trees and genies](#). While you look at the samples, please take a minute to appreciate the incredible level of detailed realism that the masons achieved here, carving out single beard locks and tassel hairs. Here's my Assyrian Tree of Life list:

- **British Museum:** [367067](#), [367063](#), [367051](#), [367058](#), [367065](#), [367071](#), [367057](#), [468173](#), [366004](#), [277960](#), [468176](#), [365970](#), [367053](#), [1419393](#), [1419355](#), [1418528](#), [1416991](#), [369248](#), [369242](#), [369256](#)
- **Brooklyn Museum:** [70575](#), [70569](#), [70574](#), [70578](#), [70567](#), [70568](#), [70570](#), [70571](#), [70572](#), [70573](#), [70576](#), [70577](#)
- **Vorderasiatisches Museum Berlin:** [1743003](#), [1743075](#), [1743090](#), [2063638](#), [2064038](#), [2061236](#), [2065672](#)
- **Los Angeles Museum of Arts:** [235417](#), [235354](#), [235356](#), [235387](#), [235703](#)
- **Yale University Art Gallery:** [199](#), [201](#), [202](#), [203](#), [204](#)

- Louvre: [39120](#), [39457](#)



So, what may be the secret behind all these funny-looking trees? It's not like Assyrian masons couldn't carve trees: Their trees are usually almost as realistic as the humans. Obviously, this Tree of Life isn't a literal tree, but a symbol of something important to the royals. It grows in separated layers, with branches that *criss-cross to connect to one another at the far end, in visible nodes*.

It's not so hard to guess, is it? If you've been a regular readers of Miles' column, then you all know a tree just like that, very very important to the spook aristocracy. And it sometimes appears with a genie. And it bestows eternal life! It's the **Family Trees** of the interbred aristocratic clans, so important to the cryptocrats that they put them on public genealogy sites, like the one named "Geni", and risk detection. They grow in generations, branch out, but then the related families intermarry again, reconnecting the ends. By nurturing the family tree, aristocrats achieve eternal life *through their families!* I think that's what the Assyrian Tree of Life means. And that's why it's a fertility rite, and directed towards the king and visitor entrances.

You could say that a symbol like this is harmless, as everyone would wish for a "fertile" family tree. I think the harm was done once these trees connected internationally in secret, to form one giant global mega-tree, as with the core trunk and intertwined branches. Why do I have a problem with that? Because the Jewish aristocrats were always the top of the food chain. They could reign with impunity and scam their subjects at whim. . . *almost*. The only thing that held them in check, or so we're told, was that they'd constantly backstab each other. In theory, if a king overplayed his corruption hand, he'd lose the support of other aristocrats, and would be supplanted. But as soon as family trees connected as one, that one check of aristocratic power was gone, and I think it vanished millennia ago.

There's more: The Tree of Life lists also includes Egyptian trees. And here we have another hint that the symbol is perhaps not about life in general, but about aristocracy. The Egyptian tree images are sparse, but there's a famous relief from the famous [Precinct of Amun-Re](#) in the Karnak Temple

Complex, also [found at Wikipedia](#). The depicted pharaoh's name is not given, but on a nearby wall there's a similar tree setup, where the king is [identified as Ramesses II](#).



Several things to note: In Assyria, genies were flanking the tree or king, and kings were flanking the tree themselves. In Egypt, the god Thoth is standing next to both tree and king, while the king sits at the center of the tree. The Assyrian tree had nodes, or buds. The Egyptian tree has three objects hung up like fruit, each with a glyph of a seated person with an ankh and a sun disk, like many glyphs of ancestors and gods, in a [cartouche](#) like a royal name. A similar figure is among the glyphs above the tree, flanked by two cobras. Thoth is the god of scribes, and you'll see that he writes the fruit onto the tree, with his reed pen. The king is holding another fruit in his hand. If the figures on each fruit stand for real people, it would be a "Tree of the Lives" of them, just as in the Bible verse. All this *could* be interpreted as a royal family tree, with the pharaoh being part of it, and the gods granting children, or appointing kings.

There's one more aspect. Take a look at these two cylinder seal imprints:



The first one obviously depicts the Assyrian Tree of Life theme: 2 eagle-headed genies, 2 priests, a winged sun overhead, and the tree with buds in the middle. I cannot read the Akkadian cuneiform, but it probably tells something about the seal's owner. Now look at the second: 2 priests, 2 bull-footed genies, a winged sun overhead, and the tree even with the criss-cross lines. But note the script: It's the Semitic alphabet developed in the Levant, from Egyptian hieroglyphs, of which [Hebrew is a modern variant](#). This alphabet is so simple, we can even read it, top-down: LPLTHDN. If PLT is the same as BLT, then it means "of Lady Haddon".

Both seals are dated Neo-Assyrian, 850 BC and 700 BC. The wall panels are also all dated Neo-Assyrian, around 850 BC. The Egyptian tree friezes would be from the reign of Ramesses II, around 1250 BC. Since depiction implies that the concept is already well-known, the idea of the family tree could be much older. The oldest Mesopotamian sacred trees are Sumerian ones, flanked by 2 ibexes.

There's another link to Biblical history. Remember the Assyrian palace room with [endless mirror repetitions of trees and genies](#) on its walls? Here's a Brooklyn Museum description:

Assyrian artists favored symmetrical compositions, the exact correspondence of figures on opposite sides of a real or imaginary dividing line. On both the upper and lower registers of this slab, winged genies strike similar poses on either side of a sacred tree, forming near-mirror images of each other. These scenes were repeated along the walls of the room where the relief once stood.

Compare that with wall decorations in Solomon's Inner Temple, built in the [10th or 8th century BC](#):

It was carved with cherubim and palm trees; and a palm tree was between cherub and cherub, and every cherub had two faces, [EZE 41:18](#).

a man's face toward the palm tree on one side and a young lion's face toward the palm tree on the other side; they were carved on all the house all around. [EZE 41:19](#)

From the ground to above the entrance cherubim and palm trees were carved, as well as on the wall of the nave. [EZE 41:20](#)

I don't know which way the symbols traveled at which time, but it's possible that many sacred trees from the Wiki list are indeed related. Our cylinder seals here are not old enough, but similar items, and people who traded them, may have carried the idea across the Fertile Crescent.

Saul, Jonathan and David

When reading Miles' papers, I always wondered how the spooks could co-opt the aristocracy of the entire planet. Many theories were discussed, including "cloak-and-dagger" ones, where spooks switch assassinated rulers for impostors. Personally, I don't think it's the ultimate answer, and Miles doesn't choose it, either. First, it should have created heavy opposition, of which we've seen virtually no trace. Second, the "cloak-and-dagger" theme is heavily peddled to us by the spooks themselves. I found evidence for another theory: It was consensual, and rulers *wanted* to merge their families with the spook clans—since the spooks were actually *above* them in class.

Miles has also found out that many spooks seem to be gay, with some official officeholders being lovers of powerful spooks. This might have helped them in keeping up cooperation across clans. As we know, homosexual mentor-student relationships were publicly lived out among the Ancient Greek elites, who inherited much of their culture from the Ancient Spookians. Perhaps their openly gay aristocracy was unique only in that it was *openly* gay, and not secretly.

There's a Bible story where we find faint traces of this homosexuality: that of Saul, Jonathan and David. Naturally, there's nothing wrong with being gay, and these inserted snippets tell us more about the Spookian authors and readers than about any historical characters. But if these three are your personal heroes and you want to keep them as they were, you might want to skip this chapter. Saul and David, the first two Israelite kings, were both chosen by the LORD from among the people. It seems these kings were picked for their good looks: both are described as particularly handsome.

He had a son whose name was Saul, a choice and handsome man, and there was not a more handsome person than he among the sons of Israel; from his shoulders and up he was taller than any of the people. [1 SAM 9:2](#)

So he sent and brought him [David] in. Now he was ruddy, with beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he." [1 SAM 16:12](#)

There also seems to be a very special relationship between the newly appointed king David, and Jonathan, son of the incumbent king Saul. At David's first audience with Saul, Jonathan sort of falls in love with him, told with a word for soul, *nepshesh*, (נפש), which also means "passion" or "desire".

And it came to pass, when he had ended speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. [1 SAM 18:1](#)
ויהי ככלתו לדבר אל־שאול ונפש יהונתן נקשרה בנפש דוד [ויאהבו כן] (ויאהבהו ק) יהונתן כנפשו

And Jonathan and David made a covenant because he loved him as his own soul. [1 SAM 18:3](#)
ויכרת יהונתן ודוד ברית באהבתו אתו כנפשו

And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his dress, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle. [1 SAM 18:4](#)

Jonathan has this "desire", strips his clothes and hands them to David. Is there platonic love on first sight like that? What's left if you strip both robe and dress? What do sword, bow and girdle point to?

This very close relationship seems to incite some sort of jealousy in king Saul, who regularly has David “play the harp with his hand”, while Saul has a “spear in his hand”, and then gets excited and wants to “pin David to the wall” ([1 SAM 18:11](#), [1 SAM 19:10](#)).

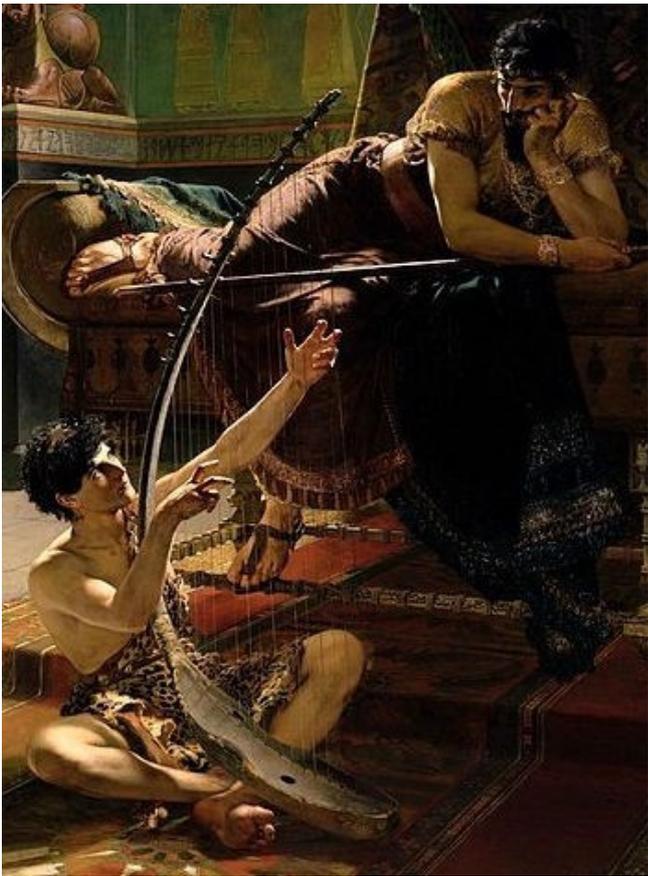
More double-meanings are found in Jonathan and David’s farewell scene: The kissing, *nashaq* (נשק), is shortened to *shaq*, same root as *chashaq* and *chesheq* (חשק), meaning “to love” or “to desire”. The weeping, *bakah* (בכה), plus direction means “embrace”. The word for “another”, *rea* (רע) also means “husband” or “lover”. The last word *higdil* is a form of *gadal* (גדל), which means “enlarge”. Not sure if that means what I think it means. Here’s the farewell:

And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed [or loved] one another, and wept [and embraced] one with another [or his lover], until David exceeded [“enlarged”].
[1 SAM 20:41](#)

הנער בא ודוד קם מאצל הנגב ויפל לאפיו ארצה וישתחו שלש פעמים וישקו | איש את־רעהו
ויבכו איש את־רעהו עד־דוד הגדיל

This time, we know how spooks interpret these characters, because we know how later aristocrats had their artists interpret them.





Is there anything wrong with having some hinted homo-eroticism in a story? I'd say No, not really. Many texts are written to mean different things to different target audiences. It's done skillfully and subtly here, and no one has complained or even noticed for millennia. My only criticism is that it's hypocritical if, at the same time, Biblical authors denigrate male temple prostitutes ([1 KING 14:24](#)), and have the scripture stipulate the death penalty for homosexual practices ([LEV 20:13](#)).

In any case, I'm not here to discuss homosexuality and religion. I'm here because I'm after the spooks. While relationships like that of Saul, Jonathan and David may be found in Greek epics, there is something else that troubles me here, also found in Greek epics. Remember, the LORD picked David for his looks. Things get more strange once David becomes king. When he triumphantly enters Jerusalem, he dances before the LORD:

And David was dancing before the LORD with all his might, and David was wearing a linen
 [or: only an] ephod . [2 SAM 6:14](#)
 וְדָוִד מְכַרְכֵּר בְּכָל־עֹז לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְדָוִד חָגוּר אֶפֶד בָּד

Why would they stress whether it was linen? There's much speculation if David was wearing *only* an ephod, what constituted an ephod at the time, and whether it, by itself, covered your naughty parts appropriately. But no one mentions that this is simply a pun again: The word *bad* (בַּד) means both "[linen](#)", and "[alone, by itself](#)". If David wore the ephod "alone by itself", it would explain why he's getting in trouble with one of his wives:

As the ark of the LORD was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, she [despised him](#) in her heart. [2 SAM 6:16](#)

When David returned home to bless his household, Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet him and said, “How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, going around **half-naked [or uncovered]** in full view of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would!” [2 SAM 6:20](#)

וישב דוד לברך את־ביתו ותצא מיכל בת־שאול לקראת דוד ותאמר מה־נכבד היום מלך ישראל אשר נגלה היום לעיני אמהות עבדיו כהגלות נגלות אחד הרקים

There’s a lot of hasty explanation that priestly clothing was “inappropriate” because Levites were a lowly class. But that’s absurd if you read about the gold and jewelry woven into ephods and priestly robes ([Ex 28](#)). It’s really about some sort of uncovered-ness. The term *galah* (גלה) is often used for “uncovering” of private parts ([Ex 20:26](#), [LEV 18:6](#), [LEV 20:11](#)). How then does David answer his wife?

David said to Michal, “It was before the LORD, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the LORD’s people Israel – I will celebrate before the LORD. [2 SAM 6:21](#)

I will become even more **undignified [or vile]** than this, and I will be **humiliated [or despised]** in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor.” [2 SAM 6:22](#)

ונקלתי עוד מזאת והייתי שפל בעיני ועם־האמהות אשר אמרת עמם אכבדה

He was *half-naked*, and intends to become *even more* undignified. Then he says he’ll humiliate himself, *even in his own eyes*. Though it won’t be with those slave girls, who’ll hold him in honor. What’s that supposed to mean? If this was written by an honest faithful author, it feels weird. It gets more worrying if you assume, like I do, that spooks are not religious and are giving hints to their own relations here. Is that how kings related to higher-ups? It looks like it.

Psalm 139 is also attributed to David. It is very good poetry and contains some inspiring verses, but also more strange allusions:

O LORD, You have searched me and **known** me. [PSALM 139:1](#)

...

You scrutinize my path and my **lying down**,
And are **intimately acquainted** with **all my ways**. [PSALM 139:3](#)

...

You have **enclosed me behind and before**,
And laid Your hand upon me. [PSALM 139:5](#)
Such **knowledge** is too wonderful for me;
It is too high, I cannot attain to it. [PSALM 139:6](#)

...

Even there Your hand will lead me,
And Your right **hand will lay hold of me**. [PSALM 139:10](#)

Also, in the verses [PSALM 139:2](#) and [PSALM 139:17](#) the word *rea* (רע) is translated as “**thoughts**”, but these are the only 2 attestations of that meaning, all other occurrences meaning “**friend**” or **even “lover”**, as we saw in Jonathan’s farewell scene.

There’s one final passage of this kind, which gives us a clue for later: In [2 SAM 7](#), after having built a palace for himself, David offers to build a house for the LORD. However, the LORD answers that he *doesn’t* want David to build a house for him. Quite the opposite: The LORD wants to build David’s house. And the LORD wants to be a father to David’s son, and raise that son in David’s stead. That son then will build the LORD’s house:

“Go and say to My servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are **you** the one who should build **Me** a house to dwell in? [2 SAM 7:5](#)

...

[...] The LORD also declares to you that the **LORD** will make a house for **you**. [2 SAM 7:11](#)

“When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. [2 SAM 7:12](#)

“He shall build a house for **My name**, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. [2 SAM 7:13](#)

“I will be a **father to him** and he will be a **son to Me**; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men [2 SAM 7:14](#)

We don't need to analyze the Hebrew here, since the pun works in English as well: “house” means “household”, “family”, even “dynasty”. The text is literally about a temple. But in that other sense, David is here forbidden to build his dynasty himself. Someone else will build it for him.

How does David react? His answer is called a “thanksgiving”, but between the lines you can read that he feels offended. David seems to develop a split personality in his answer: He refers to himself in the *first person* in a humbled and self-denigrating way, and in the *third person* to the one whose dynasty is to be founded, calling that person the “**servant**” (עַבְדִּי). “Servant” is a common name component and even [a name](#) by [itself](#). Are David and the “servant” referring to the same person, or is this a clue that they're different people? On one single occasion, this “servant” is also called “David” by David. Maybe the wordplay was originally more clear-cut, and muddled by later editors.

Then David the king went in and sat before the LORD, and he said, “**Who am I, O Lord GOD**, and **what is my house**, that You have brought me this far? [2 SAM 7:18](#)

“And yet this was insignificant in Your eyes, O Lord GOD, for You have spoken also of the house of **Your servant** concerning the distant future. And this is the custom of man, O Lord GOD. [2 SAM 7:19](#)

“Again what more **can David say to You?** For You know **Your servant**, O Lord GOD! [2 SAM 7:20](#)

...

“Now therefore, O LORD God, the word that You have spoken concerning **Your servant and his house**, confirm it forever, and do as You have spoken, [2 SAM 7:25](#)

that Your name may be magnified forever, by saying, ‘The LORD of hosts is God over Israel’; and may the house of **Your servant David** be established before You. [2 SAM 7:26](#)

“For You, O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, have made a revelation to **Your servant**, saying, ‘I will build you a house’; therefore **Your servant** has found courage to pray this prayer to You. [2 SAM 7:27](#)

“Now, O Lord GOD, You are God, and Your words are truth, and You have promised this good thing to **Your servant**. [2 SAM 7:28](#)

“Now therefore, may it please You to bless the house of **Your servant**, that it may continue forever before You. For You, O Lord GOD, have spoken; and with Your blessing may the house of **Your servant** be blessed forever.” [2 SAM 7:29](#)

In [2 SAM 11](#), the scene follows where David impregnates his absent officer's wife Bathsheba, and covers it up by sending the man to the front into his death. To punish David, God strikes the child dead ([2 SAM 12:15](#)). But David later begets another child with the same woman, and God then loves that second child ([2 SAM 12:25](#)). God is not being very logical, as usual, telling us we are not dealing with God or gods, but with “gods”. And if the “house” and the “servant” have a double-meaning, then there may be something special about that child's parentage. We all know his name: Solomon. But we know little of his reign. For every other king in the Book of Kings, there's a reference to the Chronicles of Kings. Not so Solomon: he had an entire book dedicated to him: the [Book of the Acts](#)

[of Solomon](#). Sadly, this book has been lost and its contents are unknown. It's been so lost that it's not even mentioned on [Solomon's Wiki page](#). This is all very suspicious, as I think you will agree. We will learn more of Solomon later.

The Teachings of the Teacher

It seems that even in ancient times, the succession of kings was decided by someone else. If these kings were not allowed to make certain decisions on their own, what personality would such a king develop? I'd say he might become a manic-depressive egomaniac, who oscillates between extravagance and decadence, and then frustration and nihilism. There is a Biblical book narrated by an unspecified king that I think expresses just such a split personality: the [Book of Ecclesiastes](#). The narrator endlessly repeats that "all is in vain". Apart from that, he switches between boasting of his life in luxury—giving tips for a humble lifestyle enjoying little things like eating and drinking—and complaining that you cannot change the way things are run. If that comes from an ancient king, then I'd find it quite troubling, though it might be more honest and closer to the truth than other records that simply list "great deeds".

While I didn't set out to criticize the official message of the Biblical scripture, I'll make an exception here. This "king" narrator, whether historical or not, was based on someone from wealthy ruling elites, and his speech reads like the utter and complete capitulation of an office holder, who states he cannot change anything and then calls this "wisdom". I respect the first part for its honesty, but the second part is our big clue.

The text of Ecclesiastes has positive and negative verses. I'll list *only the negative ones* here to make this aspect more visible. You can read the full text in a Bible of your choice. I will also be nit-picking at the text, criticizing the author's indifference. You may think that I'm unfairly mistaking a religious text for something it's not meant to be, but I feel this book is not at all religious. Judge for yourself:

The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. [Ecc 1:1](#)
Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, Vanity of vanities! All is vanity. [Ecc 1:2](#)
What advantage does man have in all his work Which he does under the sun? [Ecc 1:3](#)

If this is supposed to come from a king, does then a king have no "advantage" from his "work"? Or is this king referring to his subjects?

And I set my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly; I realized that this also is striving after wind. [Ecc 1:17](#)
Because in much wisdom there is much grief, and increasing knowledge results in increasing pain. [Ecc 1:18](#)

I can understand that knowledge of unhappy truths results in grief. But what would be so painful about wisdom? Not having the chance to apply it, as a king?

I enlarged my works: I built houses for myself, I planted vineyards for myself; [Ecc 2:4](#)
I made gardens and parks for myself and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees; [Ecc 2:5](#)
I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing trees. [Ecc 2:6](#)
I bought male and female slaves and I had homeborn slaves. Also I possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. [Ecc 2:7](#)

Also, I collected for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I provided for myself male and female singers and the pleasures of men – many concubines. [Ecc 2:8](#)

Note how he lists homeborn slaves with cattle. He seems to have had it all, luxury-wise.

Then I said to myself, As is the fate of the fool, it will also befall me. Why then have I been extremely wise? So I said to myself, This too is vanity. [Ecc 2:15](#)
For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise man as with the fool, inasmuch as in the coming days all will be forgotten. And how the wise man and the fool alike die! [Ecc 2:16](#)

So you might as well be a foolish king, and reign foolishly, since all will be forgotten? I can understand rulers might think that way now and then, but why would Biblical editors include this?

Thus I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, for I must leave it to the man who will come after me. [Ecc 2:18](#)
And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This too is vanity. [Ecc 2:19](#)

If the narrator is a king, wouldn't he have a say in which man will come after him, say one of his sons, and have influence on whether it will be a wise man or a fool? If not, who decides this?

There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven – [Ecc 3:1](#)
A time to give birth and a time to die; A time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted. [Ecc 3:2](#)
A time to kill and a time to heal; A time to tear down and a time to build up. [Ecc 3:3](#)
A time to tear apart and a time to sew together; A time to be silent and a time to speak. [Ecc 3:7](#)
A time to love and a time to hate; A time for war and a time for peace. [Ecc 3:8](#)

When would be a time to be silent for a king? When his superiors give him commands? Shouldn't a king be able to avert this time for killing, tearing down, hate and war?

Furthermore, I have seen under the sun that in the place of justice there is wickedness and in the place of righteousness there is wickedness. [Ecc 3:16](#)

For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity. [Ecc 3:19](#)

Shouldn't a king have some power to reward the just and punish the wicked, so that their fate is *not* exactly the same, and so that we're *not* all like beasts? If that's not possible, then why not?

Then I looked again at all the acts of oppression which were being done under the sun. And behold I saw the tears of the oppressed and that they had no one to comfort them; and on the side of their oppressors was power, but they had no one to comfort them. [Ecc 4:1](#)

That is terrible! But he's a *king*. He'll fix the worst excesses of this oppression, right?

So I congratulated the dead who are already dead more than the living who are still living. [Ecc 4:2](#)
But better off than both of them is the one who has never existed, who has never seen the evil activity that is done under the sun. [Ecc 4:3](#)

So, the ruler cannot do anything about oppression? Nihilism is the answer of a governor? That's very honest and matches my modern experience, but I'd still like him to spell out the reasons.

A poor yet wise lad is better than an old and foolish king who no longer knows how to receive instruction. [Ecc 4:13](#)

From whom then does such a king receive his instructions?

Then comes an interesting passage. He talks of visits to God, using the word [Elohim](#), which can also mean high-ranking human “[lords](#)”. Is he visiting God, or some lords? You can read it both ways. He talks of obtaining “[dreams](#)” (דלח), which also means “[leniency](#)” in Arabic.

Guard your steps as you go to the house of God and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know they are doing evil. [Ecc 5:1](#)
Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few. [Ecc 5:2](#)
For the dream comes through much effort and the voice of a fool through many words. [Ecc 5:3](#)
When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it; for He takes no delight in fools. Pay what you vow! [Ecc 5:4](#)
It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. [Ecc 5:5](#)
Do not let your speech cause you to sin and do not say in the presence of the messenger of God that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry on account of your voice and destroy the work of your hands? [Ecc 5:6](#)
For in many dreams and in many words there is emptiness. Rather, fear God. [Ecc 5:7](#)

Are these tips for future kings-to-be on how to deal with their superiors? Be careful what topics you bring up? Don't promise too much? Don't admit mistakes beforehand?

If you see oppression of the poor and denial of justice and righteousness in the province, do not be shocked at the sight; for one official watches over another official, and there are higher officials over them. [Ecc 5:8](#)

And a king apparently cannot do anything about oppression of the poor, or denial of justice? Good thing that this reliable chain of officials takes care of the oppression and injustice business.

Whatever exists has already been named, and it is known what man is; for he cannot dispute with him who is stronger than he is. [Ecc 6:10](#)

Just who exactly are those people who are stronger than a king?

There's another passage about proper behavior towards superiors. It's translated as applying to the king's subjects, but could again have a double-meaning as the *king himself* obeying the command of “[lords](#)”. The “king” isn't in the Hebrew original for [Ecc 8:5](#). Other king verses are phrased strangely.

I say, Keep the command of the king because of the oath before God. [Ecc 8:2](#)
Do not be in a hurry to leave him. Do not join in an evil matter, for he will do whatever he pleases. [Ecc 8:3](#)
Since the word of the king is authoritative, who will say to him, What are you doing? [Ecc 8:4](#)
He who keeps a royal command experiences no trouble, for a wise heart knows the proper time and procedure. [Ecc 8:5](#)
So then, I have seen the wicked buried, those who used to go in and out from the holy place, and they are soon forgotten in the city where they did thus. This too is futility. [Ecc 8:10](#)
Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil. [Ecc 8:11](#)
Although a sinner does evil a hundred times and may lengthen his life, still I know that it will be well for those who fear God, who fear Him openly. [Ecc 8:12](#)

Again, can't a king do anything against wicked people doing evil deeds and lengthening their lives?

If the ruler's temper rises against you, do not abandon your position, because **composure allays great offenses.** [Ecc 10:4](#)

Again a tip about how to deal with superiors.

Men prepare a meal for enjoyment, and wine makes life merry, and **money is the answer to everything.** [Ecc 10:19](#)

It sure seems that way.

Furthermore, in your bedchamber do not curse a king, and in your sleeping rooms do not curse a rich man, for a **bird of the heavens will carry the sound** and the winged creature will make the matter known. [Ecc 10:20](#)

Apparently the kings and rich folk have their little birdies everywhere, so watch your mouth.

The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. [Ecc 12:13](#)
For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil. [Ecc 12:14](#)

Much as I'd like to believe that the author believes this, he's been saying exactly the opposite until now. It's a pity, because he was an honest man.

Hezekiah and Sennacherib

In the Ecclesiastes text, kings couldn't decide about oppression and injustice, or about the time for killing and war. Were wars managed then as they are now? It would again be the "god" perspective: Rulers have always claimed war, victory and defeat to be the will of their respective gods. The same theme is used in the Bible: God drives out enemy nations before the Israelites, but also occasionally gives the Israelites into the hands of their enemies.

We also get hints that money could be a decisive factor in wars, then as now:

He **hired** also 100,000 valiant warriors out of Israel **for one hundred talents of silver.** [2 CHRON 25:6](#)

Even divine wonders sometimes emulate *hired* mercenary armies, and their wargear, with entire kingdoms apparently being for hire.

For the Lord had caused the army of the Arameans to hear a **sound of chariots and a sound of horses**, even the sound of a great army, so that they said to one another, "Behold, the king of Israel has **hired against us** the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us." [2 KINGS 7:6](#)

Weapons are also traded: Although chariots are described as superweapons ([JOSH 17:16](#), [JOSH 17:18](#), [JUDG 1:19](#), [JUDG 4:3](#), [2 KING 18:24](#)), they are happily imported and exported around, and even hired out to foreign nations.

They **imported chariots from Egypt** for 600 shekels of silver apiece and horses for 150 apiece, and by the same means they **exported them** to all the kings of the **Hittites** and the kings of **Aram.** [2 CHRON 1:17](#)

So they hired for themselves 32,000 chariots, and the king of Maacah and his people, who came and camped before Medeba. And the sons of Ammon gathered together from their cities and came to battle. [1 CHRON 19:7](#)

It was probably less than 32,000. Still I'm reminded of today's world, where Western deep staters first arm a Middle Eastern country to the teeth, and then have it attacked by their own armies, milking both countries' treasuries.

Since we'll be visiting the Assyrians again, let's first have a look at their elaborate tank-like siege engines, complete with wheels and turrets. They had more gadgetry and gimmicks under their hood. Imagine what one of these would cost. And you'd need iron and durable wood to build them, not found in resource-poor central Mesopotamia. Think of the business opportunities! There's another relief about a siege tower being grappled and burned by the defenders. So they are used up in wars. Good for whoever produces them. Of course the Assyrians had chariots as well, also destroyed in wars, like the expensive horses.



War machinery – before and after

Even enemy leaders are described in the Bible as knowing their God-given victory beforehand, such as the Egyptian king Neko, who warns the Judean king Josiah not to enter his war with Charchemish, since God has already sorted it out ([2 CHRON 35:21](#)).

The central example is a war that Miles has already analyzed: The invasion of Judah under king Hezekiah by Sennacherib king of Assyria. The Assyrian leader, titled Rab-Shaqeh, taunts the Judean defenders, by claiming that their own God YHWH has sent him to destroy them.

Have I now come up without the LORD'S approval against this place to destroy it? The LORD said to me, 'Go up against this land and destroy it.' [2 KING 18:25](#)

He also openly claims that the smashing of altars in Judah was not about purging foreign religions, but about destroying the altars of God himself to centralize worship in the capital.

But if you say to me, 'We trust in the LORD our God,' is it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away, and has said to Judah and to Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem'? [2 KING 18:22](#)

His full derisive rant could be [read at Wikipedia](#) but [has been deleted](#). If the Wiki authors wouldn't leave this in, why did the Bible authors? It's as if they [weren't Israelites](#).

As Miles has discussed, the Assyrian king Sennacherib was later assassinated "in obscure circumstances" once again. Sadly, I cannot fully solve that puzzle here. But I can give further evidence that the war was faked, and *records have been forged on both sides*. In pursuit of that, let's look at the siege of Jerusalem again. *Both kingdoms* claim to have won it in their chronicles. In the Bible, a tribute of 300 silver talents is said to have been paid *before* the war by Hezekiah ([2 KING 18:14](#)). When the invasion is ordered nonetheless, God's messengers destroys the Assyrian army in a single night ([2 KING 19:35](#)). God promised that no siege mound would be erected against Jerusalem ([2 KING 19:32](#)). But the Assyrian [Annals of Sennacherib](#), inscribed on three prisms stored in the US, UK and Israel, give a [different account](#): Hezekiah's mercenaries flee, Jerusalem is [besieged with a mound](#), but the city is not taken here either. Hezekiah pays tribute *after* the invasion, but [via messenger only](#).

The "tribute" is the largest from the entire campaign and includes luxuries that do not chime with the humble Judah from Bible accounts. An anecdote about Hezekiah's *later* life mentions his immense treasures ([2 KING 20:13](#)), but doesn't state where they came from, much less why they're still there after [a "tribute" like this](#):

...30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, choice antimony, large blocks of carnelian, beds inlaid with ivory, armchairs inlaid with ivory, elephant hide, ebony, boxwood, garments with multi-colored trim, linen garments, blue-purple wool, red-purple wool, utensils of copper, iron, bronze, tin and iron, chariots, shields, lances, coats of mail, swords on belts, bows and arrows, equipment, instruments of war without number...

This is from the prism called **Rassam cylinder**, said to have been [written closer to the events](#), and more detailed than the other two (Taylor and Oriental Institute). And there's one bit of information on at least the [Rassam](#) and the [Oriental Institute](#) cylinders that is *absent* from most books and Wiki pages: Hezekiah didn't only send luxury items, but also [his own daughters](#), "palace women" and entertainers to Sennacherib's capital Nineveh.

...together with [his daughters](#), his palace-women, his male and female musicians (which) he had (them) bring after me to Nineveh, my royal city.

The few books that discuss this speculate a lot about the status of the princesses as hostages, and a Jewish exile before the Babylonian one. But to me this doesn't look like war booty any more, not even like regular tribute. It looks like Hezekiah and Sennacherib are forging an alliance, and part of Hezekiah's entire family is *migrating to Nineveh, together with their personal items*, to inhabit new palaces there, built with the spoils looted off common people on the Assyrian campaigns. There is one final clue that the princesses and luxury items were not a "tribute" from a subdued king. It is said that the Rassam cylinder has never been fully translated, apparently [because it differs so little](#) from the other Two. That is false, it differs significantly! Not only does it have this very [detailed description](#) of [the booty](#) from Judah, but remember the list starting with "...30 talents of gold"? Well, *that is perhaps not the start of the tribute list*. Rather, it's preceded by a conjunction, indicating that the gold [is just a continuation](#): "...**along** with 30 talents of gold".

Most historians translate this as the start of the phrase: “**Along** with 30 talents of gold [he sent all those other items]”. But that doesn’t make sense, because then you wouldn’t need a conjunction. And there is actually something important preceding it, usually translated away. Now what did Hezekiah send to Nineveh, **along** with gold and luxury items and princesses?

(As for) him, Hezekiah, the fear of the radiant splendor of my lordship overwhelmed him and he sent after me to Nineveh, my capital, ambushers and his select troops whom he had brought in to strengthen Jerusalem, his royal city, and whom he had acquired as auxiliary troops, (as well as) 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, choice antimony...

According to these few straightforward translations, he sent **soldiers**. Soldiers! And not just any soldiers, he sent his selected elite troops! Of course, most historians try to separate the soldiers into the preceding phrase. The few that actually use “along” as a conjunction (soldiers **along** with gold) try to explain the soldiers away as “deserters” or being of “no further need”. But this breaks the entire narrative. Why would a victorious king Sennacherib accept *enemy soldiers* being sent into his capital, even if they were unarmed, or deserters, or auxiliary? How could he conquer so many kingdoms if he did? The only explanation is the usual banal yet hurtful truth: *He wouldn’t, he couldn’t, and he didn’t*. It was likely the bodyguard of the princesses, just like the luxury items were their personal endowments. This would make Sennacherib and Hezekiah not enemies, but agents and members of the same manufactured-war machine that has plagued our planet in the millennia ever since. Wars are scams by the elites, now as then. The skirting around the Rassam cylinder and this passage indicates that major historians know this, and play along.

Was Sennacherib then killed by his elder sons, because he favored his youngest? I think not. The date given is 681 BC, and we will later see that by this period, the Global Hoax was already in full swing. For the alleged conspiracy, it would be interesting to know if any of Hezekiah’s daughters were among Sennacherib’s wives. However, I think any stories about subversion of kingdoms by marriage likely originate from the Book of Esther and are just that: stories. If this was the great secret of the spooks, they wouldn’t give it away like that. Rather, we’ll see that the Ancient Spooks *never* operated from a position of weakness, but *always* possessed great power and global reach. In any case, I couldn’t find more details about Hezekiah’s daughters, so I have given up here. Still we can deduce larger patterns from what happened afterwards. First note that a lot of looted wealth from the campaigns was amassed in Nineveh, including Hezekiah’s “tribute”. That city had existed before, but Sennacherib made it a new capital, in a massive building project which included his legendary “Palace Without Rival”. Many reliefs I cited are from there. There are some about the work on the palace itself. Much of the work is done by prisoner slaves, but I bet a lot of money still changed hands for it. So some of the wealth from the campaigns went somewhere else again, and to someone else.

Also note what happened right before and after Sennacherib’s death. Miles cited the complete destruction of Babylon by Sennacherib in 689 BC:

Sennacherib put an end to the “Babylonian problem” by utterly destroying the city and even the mound on which it stood by diverting the water of the surrounding canals over the site.

What then did his son Esarhaddon do? He [rebuilt Babylon](#) eight years later. Maybe the destruction hadn't been that complete? [Also note the number 8.]

He was formally declared king in the spring of 681 BC. His brothers fled to the land of Ararat and their followers and families were put to death. In the same year Esarhaddon [began the rebuilding of Babylon](#), including the well-known Esagila and the Ekur at Nippur (structures sometimes identified with the Tower of Babel).

You may say that Sennacherib was evil and Esarhaddon was good, like many historians frame it, or that Esarhaddon was a Babylonian mole. I personally see a different pattern here: Every other decade or century, the cryptocrats seem to **shift their global administrative center** around, mopping the old place up and building a new one, but often later rebuilding the old one as well. We will encounter this pattern again and again. One advantage of this is obvious: It is very expensive. Public expenses are private profits for the people who own the quarries, woods, mines, art workshops, means of transportation. We will see that all these things were monopolized by the Ancient Spookians. If some artifacts weren't really destroyed but merely hidden, they could even bag the profit without giving anything in return. Other reasons might be a shift of their business to new regions, and possibly a sort of exploitative crop rotation: They let commoners slowly rebuild an area they destroyed, until the amount of local wealth is large enough to be skimmed off by another war. This is all speculation on my part, though we will encounter some clues when we get to Rome and Carthage in the next part.

As for the fact that the governors are simply migrating to a new administrative center, we can get that clue right from the Bible. Nineveh, the city where all the loot was amassed, was itself mopped up half a century later. A strange migration pattern is noted in the Book of Nahum, which is three chapters of wailing over Nineveh's destruction, addressing the city as "you".

You have [increased your traders](#) more than the stars of heaven – The creeping locust strips and flies away. [NAHUM 3:16](#)

...and seeks a new host body, we might add. The author points out the fact that Nineveh-based merchants, like maturing locusts, are abandoning the city and seeking out new hosts. While his likening of merchants to locusts isn't flattering, he doesn't seem to mind, or at least is aware, that they don't share the fate of lesser citizens. We can induce from this that the elites by and large weren't affected by wars, which were likely arranged to be net profitable to them.

Guess what other kind of people proliferated in Nineveh, and are always able to leave the sinking ship? *Nazir-ed* people. There's only this one occurrence of the word, but they're translated as "from the crown", written M-NZR (מנזר), with the *Nazir* root from Part I.

Thy [crowned](#) are as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they are . [NAHUM 3:17](#)
מנזריך כארבה וטפסריך כגוב גבי החונים בגדרות ביום קרה שמש זרחה ונודד ולא־נודע מקומו
אים

Most versions try to hide this by assuming a Šade misspelled as Zayin and translate as "[guardsmen](#)", but he really means the very top. If you speak Hebrew, you'll appreciate that he found three different words for locusts, to insult each group individually.

So, it was well known that the elites don't go down with their cities and kingdoms, even though officially divine punishment was brought down on these cities and kingdoms because of them. If they're all assumed to be spared in Nineveh, we may assume they were spared in all wars.

How did it work? We'll see later with Nebuchadnezzar II that *foreign soldiers* in capitals were not the exception, *but the rule*. Perhaps aristocrats were only ever allowed to be "captured" by such "foreign elite troops" (!), which were really globalized campaign units of princelings and spookings. [We'll have to watch out for this trope in future research.](#)

To conclude, we've seen that the Assyrian invasion of Judah seems to have been resolved through a pact between *allies*, and could even have been a project between many allies from the start. And while there is no direct proof, the economic setup at the time would already allow for wars to be not about actual conquest, but all about profiteering, just like today!

Rembrandt and the Mene Tekel

The famous Mene Tekel writing on the wall has spawned many silly websites where people go all Kabbalah and Gematria on it to predict the reign of George Bush or something. Instead, I wish to reference this story as evidence that the spooks have their own version of the Bible, and that it's likely not about magic or Satanism or anything sinister, but simply full of puns, inside-jokes, and direct messages.

The story is about one of those "mysterious" deaths: When Babylonian king Belshazzar drinks from cups that were looted from Jerusalem, a hand magically appears and writes the phrase "Mene Tekel" on the wall. The Jewish courtier Daniel (Belteshazzar) interprets it as predicting the end of Belshazzar's reign, and the king dies that night. I'd never have guessed that there's again another riddle within that solved riddle, but more modern spooks left us a clue. It is also a clue that many more of their silly riddles might have been hidden in earlier versions of the Bible, but we'll never be able to find or solve them, because they've been censored over in our version. In this case, the spook version of the text was included by 17th century painter Rembrandt in his work "[Belshazzar's Feast](#)".



The painting is Rembrandt's attempt to establish himself as a painter of history paintings. Why did he chose this particular topic? It seems he [lived in the Jewish Quarter of Amsterdam](#), hint, hint. He even got help from a friend and fellow inhabitant of that Jewish Quarter.

[Rembrandt derived the form of Hebrew inscription from a book by his friend, the learned Rabbi and printer, Menasseh ben Israel, yet mistranscribed one of the characters and arranged them in columns, rather than right to left, as Hebrew is written. Specifically, the final character (at the bottom of the leftmost row) is shown as a ז (zayin) instead of a final ך (nun).

So, he got help from a rabbi who was also a publisher and [allegedly invented the Hebrew printing press](#). Yet Rembrandt still failed to write Hebrew in proper rows, and misspelled one letter for another, which isn't even very similar. Still that letter looks very clean, with all those little serifs. So, it might not be a mistake, but rather the spook version of the text. Let's see how that spells out (using A for Aleph here, to make it more legible.)

MMTWSNNQPYAALRZ
 ממתוסננקפיאלרז

Almost no authors ask what you'd get when you read these lines in a normal way. The few that do claim that "[attempting to read the inscription normally, i.e. in horizontal lines right-to-left, produces nonsense](#)". That is wrong. I couldn't get a great sentence out of it, but vowel-less Semitic script is so concise that most combinations of letters spell some word or another. In our case, if you read the first line properly, right-to-left, it starts with MMT (מת), which means "death", as a [prefixed form in Hebrew](#) and apparently [unprefixed in Aramaic](#). The third line, where Rembrandt changed the last letter from N to Z, now ends with RZ (רז), Aramaic for "[secret](#)". So, these words even fit the context. Is there a "secret" about the king's "death"?

The middle line spells NQP (נקף) which means “[follow, adhere to](#)” or “[completing a cycle](#)”. Must the king adhere to some principle, or complete a cycle?

Having read Miles’ research, I would have guessed he “secretly” faked his “death” after completing his “cycle” as an actor. To confirm this, I tried to find word breaks that match the letters up with Aramaic vocabulary, which is very similar to Hebrew. I also changed one additional letter: Rembrandt used almost-closed, seemingly [sofit Ms](#). Why? Perhaps it was to match the leftmost [Samekh](#) in the first row, which looks edgy at the lower corners, again almost like a sofit M. Other people have [noticed this before](#). I replaced it with another M. We then have a sentence, sort of.

[die]	[he	who]	[complete	cycle]	[O]	[lord]	[secret]
MMT	WMN	NQP	YA	AL	RZ		
ממת ומן נקף יא אל רז							

So, the secret sentence could read like “Die must he who completed the cycle, O secret lord.” We can get some confirmation that at least the last word is correct though. The last row ends in AL-RZ, which spells out El-Raz, a “secret lord” or “God of Mystery”. There’s a Hebrew name [Elraz](#), which has exactly this meaning and is fairly common in Israel, yet doesn’t seem to occur in Bible or Talmud. People who look like spooks use it as well: An Israeli chemicals “businessman” named [Hanan Elraz](#) invented a herbal treatment for cancer patients that the [Health Ministry warned against](#), and an anti-pollutant for a Guatemalan lake which [made the pollution worse](#). A former Israeli intelligence officer [Jean Elraz](#) allegedly joined Arab terrorists and murdered a kibbutz security officer to steal 60 guns and sell them to Palestine authorities. Why would he do that? No reason, he’s simply one of those crazy “[psychopaths who serve in the security forces](#)”. And of course, those people “[disappear](#)” in Israeli jails “under a false name”, and “no one knows where they are”. Well, I don’t know where that guy is either, but likely not in jail: It looks like another case of fake terror and fake prison terms.

So Aramaic words *can* be formed out of Rembrandt’s three lines, and the fact that no one discusses this is suspicious in itself. I’d say the fact that he changed N to Z is more evidence that the spooks have some special version of the Bible with all silly puns of their ancestors intact. The Z doesn’t appear to be a mistake. If substitutions like that are allowed to make some pun or secret message work, then nearly everything is allowed, and the spook version of the Bible could be very different from ours.

I don’t think that Belshazzar’s story literally happened, neither the official nor the spook one. In any case, if my answer is somewhat close, then Belshazzar had to “die” not as punishment, but because some cycle had been completed, perhaps that of the Babylonian empire, which had been marked for mop-up by some overlord committee. Did Belshazzar die, or did he just fake it? I suppose the latter, as this riddle message doesn’t seem to be a grand or terrible secret, but simply yet another spook joke of sorts. We can analyze that out of Rembrandt’s painting. First look at Belshazzar’s face. Many analysts attest an expression of horror and guilt. I see nothing of the sort. he looks merely dumbfounded. The same goes for the 2 people at the table. Real horror looks different.



The woman seems to be Rembrandt's wife [Saskia van Uylenburgh](#) who is also used in [his Samson painting](#). The models for the old guy with the Rabbi-like beard, and Belshazzar himself, might also be friends of Rembrandt. There's nothing wrong with including your friends in a painting. But the mood that Rembrandt sets with his models here is definitely not one that inspires great reverence for religion or history.

There's even a more obvious joke here. Look at Belshazzar's ear: he's wearing a moon-shaped earring. But it's not a mythical-symbolic crescent, but a funny moon face with a thick nose, like a baby crib mobile. How's that for setting a mysterious, terrifying mood? It's not on all [images of the painting](#), so it might be a later joke, but a spook joke nonetheless.



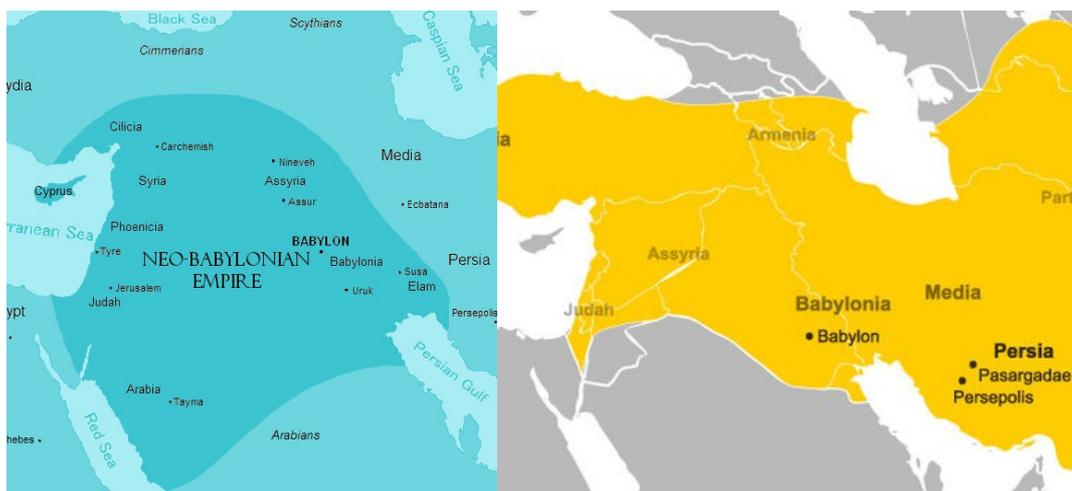
And while I couldn't construct a Nazir phrase out of the three lines, I think we still have a Nazir clue in the painting. Look at Belshazzar's giant turban, with the tiny crown sitting askew on top. That looks silly as well. But we may have more insider references here. The ancient Levites were decreed to wear a turban with a crown ([Ex 29:6](#), [Lev 8:9](#)), [nezer](#) (נִזְרִי) in Hebrew, same as a vowel-less Nazir.

So, what really happened? Was Belshazzar killed according to the prophecy, or as part of a conspiracy? Just like before, it seems even the spook version doesn't chime with real history, where we have hints for a manufactured war again. The historical Belshazzar governed Babylonia, but never as king, only as crown prince in the absence of his father Nabonidus, who for some reason [spent the 10 years of 553–543 BC in Arabia](#). It's even unclear how the two were related: Belshazzar is described as a grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, but Nabonidus as [not being Nebuchadnezzar's son](#). Nabonidus claims to be of "[of unimportant origins](#)", and his mother "does not mention her family background".

The Book of Daniel seems to conflate Nabonidus with Nebuchadnezzar, and explains his absence as [soul-cleansing in the wilderness](#). However, the place where the historical Nabonidus stayed for 10 years wasn't wilderness. It was [Tayma](#), a wealthy merchant city lying on an ancient trade route, identified to be [Biblical Tema](#). It later became "[a principally Jewish settlement](#)", and it's unclear whether those Jews were even exiles. What did Nabonidus do there for 10 years? There's no explanation.

Then, just 4 years after he had returned, king Cyrus of Persia suddenly "[entered Babylon without a battle](#)" in 539 BC. After that non-battle, "Nabonidus was captured and his life apparently spared", as usual. The fate of Belshazzar is not known. The Persians then took over the entire Neo-Babylonian empire and regions beyond. But for some reason, [Cyrus did not conquer North Arabia](#) and Tayma, even though that region had indeed [been a part of the Neo-Babylonian empire of Nabonidus](#).

It's not hard to guess what happened here: The top merchant families were carving up and reshuffling their properties for a new hoaxing cycle, and Nabonid was preparing his retirement hangout, and perhaps his clan's next enterprise. The official accounts from all sides, and any message on the wall about a real death, are merely the usual inside jokes.



Left the Babylonian Empire, with Tayma (lower left).

Right the subsequent Persian Empire, without Tayma and the surrounding region.

Conclusion

Okay, we're done for today. What do we get out of all this? We learned that the maintenance of their family trees might have been a prime occupation for the top families even in antiquity. That's not new. But we also learned that it was apparently something of a religion to them, and an international phenomenon with shared symbolism, which they don't like to admit. That was new to me. We saw that rulers and their succession were apparently decided from above even in ancient times. And we got a very long text, where the narrator is a king and repeats over and over again that he cannot change anything. I had not expected that either.

Most disturbingly, we encountered much evidence that wars were managed in ancient times as they are now. Presumably this was done by those people who had combined their family trees,

and who also appointed the kings. As usual, it appears these wars were less bloody than officially stated, as with the Persian armies entering without a battle.

I invite you to the dramatic climax in our next installment, where I'll link Ancient Israel to Ancient Spookia. Have you guessed it yet? In case you like riddles: The word "pun" itself is a clue...