

The Babylonian New Year Program

(hand-copied from Ancient Near Eastern Texts, ed. James Pritchard)

On the second day of the month Nisannu, two hours of the night (remaining?), the urigallu-priest shall arise and wash with river water. He shall enter into the presence of the god Bel, and he shall ... a linen gadalu in front of Bel. He shall recite the following prayer.

*O Bel, who has no equal when angry,
O Bel, excellent king, lord of the countries,
Who makes the great gods friendly,
O Bel, who fells the mighty with his glance,
Lord of the kings, light of mankind, who divides the portions -
O Bel, your dwelling is the city of Babylon, your
tiara is the (neighboring) city of Borsippa,
Broad heaven is the "totality of your liver."
O Bel, with your eyes you see all things,
[With] your oracles you verify the oracles,
[With] your glance you hand down the law.
[With] you ... you ... the mighty;
When you look (at them), you grant them mercy;
You show them the light, (and) they speak of your valor.
Lord of the countries, light of the Igigi deities (who) bless -
Who (does not speak) of you, does not speak of your valor?
Who does not speak of your glory, does not glorify
your sovereignty?
Lord of the countries, who dwells in the temple
Eudul, who grasps the hand of the fallen.
Grant mercy to your city, Babylon!
Turn your face to the temple Esagil, your house!
Establish the "liberty" of the people of Babylon, your
subordinates.*

(Colophon:) Twenty-one lines (of writing): secrets of the temple Esagil. [Whoever rev]eres the god Bel shall show (them) to nobody except the urigallu-priest of the temple Ekua.

[After] he speaks the recitation, he shall [open the gate]. The Eribbiti-priests [shall arise] and perform their rites, in the traditional manner, [before] the deities Bel and Beltiya. [The kalu-priests and the] signers (shall do) likewise.

(Eight lines missing or hopelessly broken)

...he shall place ...; a seal ... in the tiara of the god Anu... of the second day, upon ... he shall place ... before them. Three times he shall speak...

The evil enemies ... who in their strength ... This which in ... of the exorcism ... because the enemy

and the bandit ... the great lord, Marduk ... Has uttered a curse that cannot be altered ... has decreed

a fate that cannot be withdrawn ... who the god Bel, my lord; who ... the lord of the countries, who ... the city of Babylon. In the middle of the earth ... who ... the temple Eudul, the purification of ... like heaven and earth ... who extracts ... the temples of ... the forgetting of their

rites ... who overwhelms ... the people dwelling in ... the maid servants ... of the city Babylon ... who ... the temple Eudul, he bound (all) of you ... (all) of you dwell ...

(About 75 lines missing)

on the [third] day of the month Nisannu, [at ... o'clock, the urigallu-priest] shall arise [and] wash with [... He shall speak the following] prayer to the god Bel.

(About 25 lines missing or hopeless)

...He shall open the doors. [All the eribbiti-priests] shall enter and perform [their rites in the traditional manner. The kalu-priests and the singers shall do likewise.]

(Two lines missing)

When it is three hours after sunrise, [he shall call] a metalworker and give him precious stones and gold [from] the treasury of the god Marduk to make two images for (the ceremonies of) the sixth day (of Nisannu). He shall call a woodworker and give him (some) cedar and tamarisk (pieces). He shall call a goldsmith and give him (some) gold. From the third day (of the month Nisannu) to the sixth day, (pieces of meat) from (the slaughtered sheep offered) before the god Bel (are to be distributed as follows:) the tail to the metalworker, the breast to the goldsmith, the thigh to the woodworker, the rib(s) to the weaver. These (pieces of meat) from (the slaughtered sheep offered) before the god Bel shall be delivered to the urigallu-priest for the artisans.

Those two images (which the artisans are to make) shall be 7 finger(-widths) high. One (shall be made) of cedar, one of tamarisk. Four dusu-stones shall be mounted in settings of gold weighing four shekels. [One image] shall hold in its left hand a snake (made) of cedar, raising its right [hand] to the god Nabu. The second (image) shall hold in its [left hand] a scorpion, raising its right hand [to the god] Nabu. They shall be clothed in red garments, [bound in the middle [with] a palm [branch]. Until the sixth day (of the month Nisannu), [they shall be placed] in the house of the god Madan. Food (from) the tray of the god Madan shall be presented to them. On the sixth day (of the month), when the god Nabu reaches the temple Ehuragtila, the slaughterer ... shall strike off their heads. Then a fire having been started in the presence of the god Nabu, they shall be thrown into it.

On the fourth day of the month Nisannu, three and one-third hours of the night (remaining?), the urigallu-priest shall arise and wash with the river water. A linen gadalu he shall ... in front of the god Bel and the goddess Beltiya. He shall recite the following prayer, while lifting his hand, to the god Bel.

Powerful master of the Igigi gods, exalted among the great gods,

Lord of the world, king of the gods, divine Marduk, who establishes the plan,

Important, elevated, exalted, superior,

Who holds kingship, grasps lordship,

Bright light, god Marduk, who dwells in the temple Eudul,

... who sweeps the enemy's land,

...(about three lines missing)...

Who ...s heaven, heaps up the earth,

Who measures the waters of the sea, cultivates the fields,

Who dwells in the temple Eudul; lord of Babylon,

exalted Marduk,

Who decrees the fates of all the gods,

*Who turns over the pure scepter to the king who reveres him -
I am the urigallu-priest of the temple Ekua, who blesses you.
To your city, Babylon, grant release!
To Esaggil, your temple, grant mercy!
At your exalted command, O lord of the great gods,
Let light be set before the people of Babylon.*

He shall (then) withdraw from the presence of the god Bel and recite the following prayer to the goddess Beltiya.

*Powerful, goddess, (most) exalted of the female divinities,
Sarpanitu, who shines brilliantly (among) the stars,
who dwells in the temple Eudul,
... of the goddesses, whose garment is (bright) light,
Who ...s heaven, heaps up the earth,
Sarpanitu, whose position is exalted,
Bright, Beltiya, sublime and elevated -
There is none like her among the female divinities -
Who brings complaints, who defends,
Who impoverishes the rich, who causes the poor to
become wealthy,
Who fells the enemy who does not fear her divinity,
Who releases the prisoner, grasps the hand of the fallen-
Bless the slave who blesses you!
Decree the destiny for the king who reveres you!
Grant life to the people of Babylon, who are your subordinates,
Defend them in the presence of Marduk, king of the gods!
May (the people) speak your praise, magnify your lordship,
Speak of your heroism, exalt your name.
Grant mercy to the servant who blesses you,
Take his hand (when he is) in great difficulty and need!
Present him with life when he is sick and in pain,
(So that) he may constantly walk in happiness and joy,
Speaking of your heroism to all people.*

He shall (then) go out to the Exalted Courtyard, turn to the north and bless the temple Esagil three times with the blessing: "Iku-star, Esagil, image of heaven and earth." He shall (then) open the doors. All the eribbiti-priests shall enter and perform their rites in the traditional manner. The kalu-priests and the singers (shall do) likewise.

When this is done [and after] the second meal of the later afternoon, the urigallu-priest of the temple Ekua shall recite (while lifting his hand?) To the god Bel the (composition entitled) Enuma Elish. While he recites Enuma Elish to the god Bel, the front of the tiara of the god Anu and the resting place of the god Enlil shall be covered.

On the fifth day of the month Nisannu, four hours of the night (remaining?), the urigallu-priest shall arise and wash with the water from the Tigris and Euphrates. [He shall enter into the presence of the god Bel, and] he shall ... a linen gadalu in front of the god Bel and the goddess Beltiya. He shall recite the following prayer [to Bel].

*My Lord, is he not my lord?
My Lord, ..., is not his name My Lord?
My Lord, ..., My Lord, king of the countries,
My Lord, ..., My Lord,,
Is it not My Lord who gives, My Lord who ...?
My Lord, ..., My Lord, ...,
My Lord, ..., My Lord, ...,
My Lord, ..., My Lord, who dwells in the temple Eudul,
My Lord, ..., My Lord, ...,
My Lord, ..., My Lord, who gives,
My Lord, ..., My Lord, who dwells in the chapel,
My Lord, ..., My Lord, he is my lord.
God of heaven and earth, who decrees the fates -My
Lord, be calm!
The star Musirkeshda, who carries the (royal) scepter
and circle, My Lord -My Lord, be calm!
The Eridu star, the possessor of wisdom, My Lord -
My Lord, be calm!
Asari, who grants the gift of cultivation, My Lord -
My Lord, be calm!
Planet Jupiter, who carries the sign for all, My Lord
-My Lord, be calm!
Planet Mercury, who causes it to rain, My Lord -My
Lord, be calm!
Planet Saturn, star of justice and righteousness, My
Lord, -My Lord, be calm!
Planet Mars, fierce flame, My Lord -My Lord, be calm!
The star Sirius, who measures the waters of the sea,
My Lord -My Lord, be calm!
The star Shupa, lord of the Enlil gods, My Lord -My
Lord, be calm!
The star Nenegar, who is self-created, My Lord -
My Lord, be calm!
The star Numushda, who causes the rains to continue,
My Lord -My Lord, be calm!
The Sting-of-the-Scorpion star, who ... the breast of
the ocean, My Lord -My Lord, be calm!
Sun, light of the world, My Lord -My Lord, be calm!
Moon, who brings the darkness, My Lord -My Lord, be calm!
My Lord is my god, My Lord is my lord, who,
except for you, is lord?*

To the goddess he shall recite the following prayer.

*My merciful Lady -My Lady, be calm!
My Lady, who does not become angry, who is calm,*

*My Lady, who gives, My Lady, who is so very good,
My Lady, ..., My Lady, who is so very good,
The calm lady, who does not become angry, My
Lady, who confers gifts,
My Lady, (who receives) prayer, My Lady, who confers gifts,
Damkianna, mistress of heaven and earth, whose
name is My Lady,
Planet Venus, who shines brilliantly (among) the
stars, whose name is My Lady,
The star Ban, who fells the mighty, whose name is My Lady.
The star Uz, who views heaven, whose name is My Lady,
The star Hegala, the star of abundance, whose name is My Lady,
The star Baltessa, the star of sensuousness, whose
name is My Lady,
The star Margidda, the bond of heaven, whose name is My Lady,
The star Eru, who creates sperm, whose name is My Lady,
The star Ninmah, who makes a gift of life, whose
name is My Lady,
My Lady, her name is My Lady. Is not her name My Lady?*

After the recitation has been recited, he shall open the doors. All the eribbiti-priests shall (then) enter and perform their rites in the traditional manner. The kalu-priests and the singers (shall do) likewise.

When it is two hours after sunrise, after the trays of the god Bel and the goddess Beltiya have been set, he shall call a masmasu-priest to purify the temple and sprinkle water, (taken from) a cistern of the Tigris and a cistern of the Euphrates, on the temple. He shall beat the kettle-drum inside the temple. He shall have a censer and a torch brought into the temple. [He (?)] shall remain in the courtyard; he shall not enter the sanctuary of the deities Bel and Beltiya. When the purification of the temple is completed, he shall enter the temple Ezida, into the sanctuary of the god Nabu, with censer, torch, and egubbu-vessel to purify the temple, and he shall sprinkle water (from) the Tigris and Euphrates cisterns on the sanctuary. He shall smear all the doors of the sanctuary with cedar resin. In the court of the sanctuary, he shall place a silver censer, up which he shall mix aromatic ingredients and cypress. He shall call a slaughterer to decapitate a ram, the body of which the masmasu-priest shall use in performing the kuppuru-ritual for the temple. He shall recite the incantations for exorcizing the temple. He shall purify the whole sanctuary, including its environs, and shall remove the censer. The masmasu-priest shall lift the body of the afore-mentioned ram and proceed to the river. Facing west, he shall throw the body of the ram into the river. He shall (then) go out into the open country. The slaughterer shall do the same thing with the ram's head. The masmasu-priest and the slaughterer shall go out into the open country. As long as the god Nabu is in Babylon, they shall not enter Babylon, but stay in the open country from the fifth to the twelfth day (of the month Nisannu). The urigallu-priest of the temple Ekua shall not view the purification of the temple. If he does view (it), he is no (longer) pure. After the purification of the temple, when it is three and one-third hours after sunrise, the urigallu-priest of the temple Ekua shall go out and call all the artisans. They shall bring forth the Golden Heaven from the treasury of the god Marduk and (use it to?) Cover the temple Ezida, a sanctuary of the god Nabu, from (its)... to the

foundation of the temple. The urigallu-priest and the artisans shall recite the following loud recital.

*They purify the temple,
They god Marduk from Eridu, who dwells in the
temple Eudul,
The god Kusug ...,
The deity Ningirim, who listens to prayers,
The god Marduk purifies the temple,
The god Kusug draws the plans,
The deity Ningirim casts the spell.
Go forth, evil that happens to be in this temple!
May the god Bel kill you, evil demon!
Wherever you are, be suppressed!*

All the artisans shall (then) go out to the gate.

[...hours...] the day, the urigallu-priest [shall enter] into the presence of the god Bel, and shall ... [in front of B]el. He shall [prepare] the golden tray, placing upon it roasted meat, [...], twelve of the usual loaves, a gold... filled with salt, a gold ...filled with honey, ..., four gold dishes. He shall place a gold censer ... in front of the tray; aromatic ingredients and cypress ... He shall make a libation of wine. ... He shall recite the following.

*[Marduk], exalted among the gods,
[Who dwells in the temple Esag]il, who creates the
laws,
[Who...] to the great gods,
[...] I praise your heroism.
[May] your heart [be sympathetic] to whoever seizes
your hands.
[In Esiz]kur, the temple of prayer,
[In ...], your place, may he raise up his head.*

After he recites the [recitation], he shall clear the tray. He shall summon all the artisans and shall turn the whole tray over to them to bring to the god Nabu. The artisans shall take it, and in ... they shall go. When Nabu arrives [at ...], they shall ... it to Nabu. [When] they have set the tray before the god Nabu, they shall lift up the loaves (which are on?) The tray as soon as Nabu [leaves] the ship called Iddahedu, and then on the tray ... They shall bring water (for washing) the king's hands and then accompany him [to the temple Esag]il. The artisans shall go out to the gate. When he (that is, the king) reaches [the presence of the god Bel], the urigallu-priest shall leave (the sanctuary) and take away the scepter, the circle, and the sword [from the king]. He shall bring them [before the god Bel] and place them [on] a chair. He shall leave (the sanctuary) and strike the king's cheek. He shall place the ... behind him. He shall accompany him (that is, the king) into the presence of the god Bel ... he shall drag (him by) the ears and make him bow down to the ground... The king shall speak the following (only) once: "I did [not] sin, lord of the countries. I was not neglectful (of the requirements) of your godship. [I did not] destroy Babylon; I did not command its overthrow [I did not.] ... the temple Esagil, I did not forget its rites. [I did not] rain blows on the cheek of a subordinate... I did [not] humiliate them. [I watched out] for Babylon; I did not smash its walls." ...(about five lines are missing. The

urigallu-priest is speaking when the text begins again.) "...Have no fear ... which the god Bel ...The god Bel [will listen to] your prayer ...he will magnify your lordship... he will exalt your kingship... On the day of the essesu-festival, do... in the festival of the Opening of the Gate, purify [your] hands ... day and night... [The god Bel], whose city is Babylon..., whose temple is Esagil... whose dependents are the people of Babylon... The god Bel will bless you... forever. He will destroy your enemy, fell your adversary." After (the urigallu-priest) says (this), the king shall regain his composure. ...The scepter, circle, and sword [shall be restored] to the king. He shall strike the king's cheek. If, when [he strikes] the king's cheek, the tears flow, (it means that) the god Bel is friendly; if no tears appear, the god Bel is angry: the enemy will rise up and bring about his downfall.

When (these things) have been done, at sunset, the urigallu-priest shall tie together forty reeds -each three cubits long, uncut, unbroken, straight -using a palm branch as the bond. A hole shall be dug in the Exalted Courtyard and he shall put (the bundle into it). He shall put (in it) honey, cream, first-quality oil... He shall ... a white bull [before the hole]. The king shall [set all this afire] with a burning reed. The king [and the urigallu-priest shall recite] the following recitation.

O Divine Bull, brilliant light which lig[hts up the darkness],... (The remainder of the prayer and the ritual is broken away.)