

Nebuchadnezzar

- I. Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible/Old Testament
- II. Judaism
- III. Christianity
- IV. Islam
- V. Literature
- VI. Visual Arts
- VII. Music
- VIII. Film

I. Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

1. Ancient Near East. Nebuchadnezzar II (r. 605–562 BCE; his Akk. name is Nabû-kudurri-ušur, “may Nabû protect my first born”; in the HB/OT variably known as *Nēbūkadneššar* and *Nēbūkadreššar*) is widely attested in the cuneiform record, in economic and administrative texts, chronicles, king lists, as well as royal inscriptions. He is already mentioned in the Etemenanki cylinder composed to commemorate the reopening of Babylon’s main temple and ziggurat (C31 no. 1 III 4–24), in 620 BCE, during the rule of his father Nabopolassar, the founder of the Neo-Babylonian Empire (Da Riva 2008: 14–18, 117–24). Nebuchadnezzar II’s name is probably programmatic as it recalls Nebuchadnezzar I who ruled in the late 12th century BCE and who is remembered as having recovered the statue of the supreme god Marduk from Elamite “exile” (see Nielsen: 3–5 and esp. 61–64). As crown prince Nebuchadnezzar was on campaign against a joint Egyptian and Assyrian army at Carchemish when his father died (Wiseman 1985: 14–19; 1991: 230–33). Nebuchadnezzar interrupted his military campaign and travelled to Babylon in order to succeed his father on the throne. For the rest of his extraordinarily long reign, Nebuchadnezzar continued the strategy of military campaigns, territorial expansion, and the rebuilding of the Babylonian heartland in general and Babylon itself in particular. Nebuchadnezzar is well attested in cuneiform sources, particularly in royal inscriptions (Da Riva 2008; the Babylon 7 project) and the Babylonian Chronicle covering the years 605–594 BCE (Grayson: 99–102; Glassner: 226–31). No royal archives have been found for any Neo-Babylonian ruler, which leaves many details unclear. Because Nebuchadnezzar besieged and destroyed Jerusalem and its temple in 587/86 BCE he gained notoriety exceeding that of other Mesopotamian rulers of the 1st millennium BCE and acquired the status of an anchor of memory, attracting traditions that are not originally connected to him in Mesopotamia and in the Mediterranean Coast (Ben Dov; Da Riva 2018; Waerzeggers).

After consolidating his power by subduing a number of smaller Levantine kingdoms and possibly a revolt in the Babylonian heartland during the early years of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar attacked Egypt in 601. While Nebuchadnezzar appears to

have won the battle, he needed time to rebuild his army, and did not campaign in 600 (Streck). It is likely that Jehoiakim used this power vacuum to rebel against Babylonia (2 Kgs 24:1). After a campaign against Arabia in 599, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in 598/597 for the first time (Grayson: 102; Glassner: 230–31). He exiled the recently installed King Jehoiachin, some courtiers, craftsmen, and warriors, and installed Jehoiachin’s uncle Matthanah, with the throne name Zedekiah (2 Kgs 24:10–17; 2 Chr 26:9).

The Babylonian Chronicle breaks off in 594 BCE so that there is no narrative source in Akkadian reporting on Nebuchadnezzar’s subsequent activities. According to the HB/OT (2 Kgs 24:20–25:21; 2 Chr 36:11–21; Jer 52:1–23), Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem a second time in 587/586 BCE as punishment for a revolt against him. Babylonian troops led by general Nebuzaradan plundered Jerusalem, burned the temple, and exiled many Judeans. Biblical texts disagree with regard to how many Judeans were exiled. As indicated by the *āl Yāhūdu* texts (Wunsch/Pearce) many exiles from the Levant were brought to the Southeast of Babylonia in the Nippur region in an effort to redevelop this area. Other exiles were brought to Babylon (e.g., King Jehoiachin) and lived there (see Weidner).

In his royal inscriptions, Nebuchadnezzar boasts about his considerable building works, particularly in Babylon but also in Borsippa, Ur, Kish, Isin, Uruk, Larsa, and Sippar (Czichon). In most cities, his building activities focused on the temple complexes. In Babylon he also rebuilt a number of the fortifications, palaces, and the processional street.

The Garden of Babylon, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, is said to have been constructed by Nebuchadnezzar (van der Spek), but no archaeological traces of it have been found in ancient Babylon (Czichon). It is possible that the building was ascribed to Nebuchadnezzar as a site of memory (Stökl), as it is strongly attested among the Greek historians, and by the 2nd century, the tradition appears to have become accepted also in Mesopotamia (Berossus, *Babyloniaca* [ed. Jacoby]; Sack: 83). Whether or not it was originally located at Nineveh as suggested by S. Dalley remains open (Czichon). Berossos also suggests (*Babyloniaca*, ed. Jacoby: F 8c–e) that Nebuchadnezzar was married to Amyitis, the daughter of Astyages, the last king of the Medes. Also in the extant cuneiform tradition, Nebuchadnezzar was used as a name for the famous verse account, which is likely not about him but about Nabonidus.

2. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. In the biblical corpus, Nebuchadnezzar has a double role, namely that of a divine servant (Jer 25:9; 43:10) and that of the arch-villain who destroyed Jerusalem (2 Kgs 25; Vanderhoof). In the Prayer of Azariah 1:9 (= Dan

3:32, LXX) he is identified as the “unjust king, the most wicked in all the world.” He becomes a cipher used to refer to other kings who are perceived as villains. A case in point is the Nebuchadnezzar of Dan 3 who is a thinly veiled reference to Antiochus IV Epiphanes (q.v.).

The invention of the literary figure of Nebuchadnezzar as the dreaming king and madman is probably the result of the merging of the literary Nebuchadnezzar with the literary Nabonidus, the last Babylonian king before the Persian conquest of Babylonia. The Verse Account of Nabonidus and the Harran 2 inscription already contain the idea of Nabonidus’s seven-year sojourn in Teima. The correspondence to the seven years of Nebuchadnezzar’s madness in the wilderness is striking (Waezegggers). The correspondence is confirmed by the observation that in Dan 5 Belshazzar is a son of Nebuchadnezzar, while in reality he was a son of Nabonidus. This literary merger with Nabonidus afforded Nebuchadnezzar the persona of the repentant king that became so important in later reception.

The historical King Nebuchadnezzar was undoubtedly one of the most accomplished military strategists and political leaders of the ancient world, including his commission of acts that today would be classified as war-crimes. The complex literary characterization of King Nebuchadnezzar in the HB/OT combines the qualities of a “servant of YHWH” (Jer 27:6), the most wicked king (Dan 3:32, LXX), and the repentant sinner (Dan 4).

Bibliography: ■ *Babylon 7* (<http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu>). ■ Ben-Dov, J., “Nebuchadnezzar: Seeing Twice Double in Babylonia and the Levant,” *HBAI 7* (2018) 3–16. ■ Czichon, R. M., “Nebukadnezar II. B: Archäologisch,” *RIA 9* (Berlin 1998) 201–16. ■ Dalley, S., “Ancient Mesopotamian Gardens and the Identification of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon Resolved,” *Garden History 21* (1993) 1–13. ■ Da Riva, R., *The Neo-Babylonian Royal Inscriptions* (Münster 2008). ■ Da Riva, R., “Neo-Babylonian Rock-Cut Monuments and Ritual Performance: The Rock Reliefs of Nebuchadnezzar II in Brisa Revisited,” *HBAI 7* (2018) 17–41. ■ Glassner, J.-J., *Mesopotamian Chronicles* (Atlanta, GA 2004). ■ Grayson, A. K., *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (TCS 5; Locust Valley 1975). ■ Jacoby, F. (ed.), *FGH*, vol. 3 (Leiden/Berlin 1958) 364–97. ■ Nielsen, J. P., *The Reign of Nebuchadnezzar I in History and Historical Memory* (London 2018). ■ Sack, R. H., *Images of Nebuchadnezzar: The Emergence of a Legend* (Selinsgrove 2004). ■ Spek, R. J. van der, “Berossus as a Babylonian Chronicler and Greek Historian,” in *Studies in Ancient Near Eastern World View and Society*, FS M. Stol (ed. R. J. van der Spek et al.; Bethesda, MD 2008) 277–318. ■ Stökl, J., “Nebuchadnezzar: History, Memory and Myth-Making in the Persian Period,” in *Bringing the Past to the Present in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Period* (ed. E. Ben Zvi/D. Edelman; Oxford 2013) 257–69. ■ Streck, M. P., “Nebukadnezar II. A: Historisch,” *RIA 9* (Berlin 1999) 194–201. ■ Vanderhooft, D. S., “Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, My Servant’: Contrasting Prophetic Images of the Great King,” *HBAI 7* (2018) 93–111. ■ Waezegggers, C., “The Prayer of Nabonidus in the Light of Hellenistic Babylonian Literature,” in *Jewish Cultural Encounters in the Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern World* (ed. M. Popović et al.; Leiden 2017) 64–75. ■ Weidner, E. F.,

“Jojachin, König von Juda, in babylonischen Keilschrifttexten,” in *Mélanges syriens offerts à Monsieur René Dussaud*, vol. 2 (Paris 1939) 923–35. ■ Wiseman, D. J., *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon* (Oxford 1985). ■ Wiseman, D. J., “Babylonia 605–539 B.C.,” in *The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires and Other States of the Near East: From the Eighth to the Sixth Centuries B.C.* (ed. J. Boardman et al.; CAH 3.2; Cambridge 1991) 229–51. ■ Wunsch, C./L. E. Pearce, *Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia in the Collection of David Sofer* (Bethesda, MD 2015).

Jonathan Stökl

II. Judaism

■ Second Temple and Hellenistic Judaism ■ Rabbinic Judaism ■ Medieval Judaism

A. Second Temple and Hellenistic Judaism

Nebuchadnezzar II is the Babylonian king (r. 605–562 BCE) who twice besieged Jerusalem into surrender (2 Kgs 24:10–17; 25:1–10; 2 Chr 36:10; 17–20). In the rehearsal of Israel’s history in 1 Esdras, Nebuchadnezzar is portrayed as the king who carried the men of Judah to Babylon (5:7) and, more emphatically, as the king who stole the Jerusalem temple’s sacred vessels and stored them in his “temple of idols” in Babylon (1:41, 45; 2:10; 6:18, 26).

Nebuchadnezzar is remembered both positively and negatively. Jeremiah calls Nebuchadnezzar “God’s servant” who played a role in God’s historical intentions for Israel (Jer 25:9; 27:6; 43:10). The Damascus Document shares Jeremiah’s opinion that Nebuchadnezzar had a part in the divine plans, stating that God delivered Israel into “the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon” (CD I, 1–7; cf. 1 Esd 6:15). In the short Greek text of Tobit (G¹), Nebuchadnezzar is the Median king who destroyed Nineveh (Tob 14:15), although in reality it was his father Nabopolassar who captured the Assyrian capital in 612 BCE. For Tobit, the king is God’s instrument for punishing the wicked and for fulfilling the prophecy and the divine purposes.

Jeremiah reports that when Jerusalem was taken captive, Nebuchadnezzar ordered Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, to look after Jeremiah, who opted to remain with the poor in the land (Jer 39:11–14; 40:1–6). Baruch, Jeremiah’s secretary, requests prayer for the life of Nebuchadnezzar and his son Belshazzar so that Jews may live under their protection (Bar 1:11–12; cf. Jer 29:7); the names are likely codes for the Seleucid rulers.

Other texts have a negative view of the king. Though Daniel’s narrative frame portrays Nebuchadnezzar positively, the king represents the harsh rulers in Hellenistic times brought under God’s power. Daniel applies traditions associated with Nabonidus, the last king of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, to depict Nebuchadnezzar. In Dan 4, God banishes the king to the domain of the wild until he acquires the wisdom to recognize Israel’s God as the true ruler of kingdoms who gives them to whom he wills. Some of the Additions to Daniel

portray Nebuchadnezzar as wicked and idolatrous (Pr Azar 9).

In Judith, Nebuchadnezzar is an “Assyrian ruler” (Jdt 1:1, 7), making him an 8th-century enemy of the Israelites. In fact, Judith describes Nebuchadnezzar as “the great king, the lord of the whole earth” (Jdt 2:4–5; 3:8; 6:2), in effect portraying the Babylonian king as the lord of Nineveh who battles the God of Jerusalem; the king has become God’s eschatological enemy defeated by the hand of Judith.

Bibliography: ■ Henze, M., *The Madness of King Nebuchadnezzar. The Ancient Near Eastern Origins and Early History of Interpretation of Daniel 4* (Leiden 1999). ■ Lundbom, J. R., “Builders of Ancient Babylon: Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar II,” *Int* 71 (2017) 154–66.

Francis Macatangay

B. Rabbinic Judaism

The depiction in rabbinic literature of Nebuchadnezzar, the infamous destroyer of the first temple who sent the people of Judah into exile, builds upon the extensive biblical accounts and offers some new narrative details as well as varied assessments of the legacy of this character.

Rabbinic texts present Nebuchadnezzar as having a storied pedigree: he is said to descend from Nimrod (bHag 13b = bPes 94), was a descendant and/or scribe of Merodach-Baladan (PesRab Buber, ii. 14a; bSan 96a), was among the few members of Sennacherib’s camp to survive being smitten by the angel (Isa 37:36; bSan 95b), and possibly also Sennacherib’s relative (some versions of Targum to Isa 10:32). Later sources assert that he was a product of King Solomon’s relationship with the Queen of Sheba, as well, i.e., according to the first riddle of the *Alphabet of Ben Sira*.

Some rabbinic texts portray Nebuchadnezzar as a defiant, evil figure set on attacking God and Israel and pursuing glory, while others paint a more sympathetic picture. Nebuchadnezzar is regularly denoted as “Nebuchadnezzar the wicked” in rabbinic literature. Several texts deride his pretension to divinity and his hopes to ascend to heaven (MekhY Shirah 8; bPes 94a–b = bHag 13a; bHul 89; see Isa 14:14; see Lowin: 281–86). Jeremiah 25:9 and 43:10 refer to Nebuchadnezzar as a servant of God, which bSan 105a interprets to mean that, while Israel was captured by Nebuchadnezzar, it remained under God’s overall control.

Some texts depict Nebuchadnezzar undertaking immoral and cruel activities, including raping the mother of King Hiram of Tyre, while slowly torturing the latter to death (YalqShim, Ezekiel 367), as well as raping various kings he had captured (bShab 149b). At times, this cruelty is connected to the exile to Babylonia: Nebuchadnezzar drove the exiles to Babylon without rest, imposing on them extra burdens, fashioned from Torah scrolls (PesRab 28). He also ordered the temple singers to provide music,

which motivated them to maim their musical fingers rather than indulge his vain indiscretion (PesRab 31; see Ps 137), and ordered the killing of a group of beautiful Israelite youths in the Dura valley and the subsequent trampling of their bodies (bSan 92b).

Nebuchadnezzar received recompense for his actions, as his son Evil-Merodach dragged his dead body through the city (Targum Sheni, beginning; SOR 28) and his antagonist, Darius, was born the day that he entered the temple (SOR 28).

Nebuchadnezzar is depicted in other sources as reluctant to undertake the war against Jerusalem and the destruction of its temple, but followed the encouragement of others. One tradition presents Nebuchadnezzar as attacking Jerusalem only after a divination ritual pointed to Jerusalem as the next place to attack (EkhR, introduction; 23; and parallels); another relates that Ammon and Moab undertook many efforts, ultimately successful, to convince him to attack Judah (bSan 96b).

Yet another text paints an episode where Nebuchadnezzar stood up in honor of the God of Israel; the rabbis imply that he received great reward for his actions, and among his descendants are said to be Shemayah and Avtalion, the teachers of the great Hillel (bSan 96a).

The rabbis thus offer a complicated and mixed portrayal of Nebuchadnezzar, both as the powerful and arrogant destroyer of Jerusalem, and as the reluctant implement of God’s retribution.

Bibliography: ■ Ginzberg, L., *Bible Times and Characters from Joshua to Esther*, vol. 4 of id., *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia, NJ 1917). [Esp. chs. 9–12] ■ Hirsch, E. G. et al., “Nebuchadnezzar,” *JE* 9 (New York 1901–05) 200–203. ■ Lowin, S. L., “Narratives of Villainy: Titus, Nebuchadnezzar, and Nimrod in the ḥadīth and midrash aggadah” in *The Lineaments of Islam: Studies in Honor of Fred McGraw Donner* (ed. P. M. Cobb; Leiden 2012) 261–96.

Shlomo Edmond Zuckier

C. Medieval Judaism

The exegetical, legal, poetic, and folk literature of the medieval period largely emphasize, and even expand on, Nebuchadnezzar’s villainy. For example, Maimonides (1138–1204) names Nebuchadnezzar as the prime example of a wicked king who outlaws the observance of Jewish law, in which case a Jew should choose death over violation (MishT, *Yesodei ha-Torah* 5:3).

Many of the villainous expansions appear in *Pesiqta Rabbati*, an exegetical text with an early medieval redaction date. In ch. 28, for example, Nebuchadnezzar is said to have extensively tortured the kings of Judea. Chapter 31:4 reports that Nebuchadnezzar allowed the Israelite exiles no rest until they reached Babylon, for fear that if they rested, they would repent, and God would forgive them. The Karaite Yefet ben Eli (10th–11th cent.) rejected the sincerity of Nebuchadnezzar’s conversion, insisting

that he continued to worship idols even afterward (on Dan 4:5–6). Abraham ibn Ezra (1089–1167) too sees Nebuchadnezzar as so inured to idolatry that when Daniel successfully interpreted his dream, the king bowed before him and made offerings because he thought Daniel a god (on Dan 2:46).

As in the rabbinic texts, medieval writers took vengeance on the destroyer of God's house by humiliating him. Nebuchadnezzar appears frequently in both exegetical texts and liturgical poems as *hanannas*, the dwarf. Other exegetical texts report that when the mad Nebuchadnezzar began behaving like a beast, the beasts recognized him as the female of their species, insinuating that Nebuchadnezzar either willingly engaged in bestiality, or was raped by the animals (e.g., ShemR 8:2). In the pseudo-historical *Chronicles of Jerahmeel*, Evil-Merodach disinters Nebuchadnezzar and, on the advice of Jehoiachin, feeds the corpse to 300 vultures. The 9th–10th century folk-tale/parody *Alphabet of Ben Sira* identifies Nebuchadnezzar as the son of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon, who refused to sleep with the queen until he invented a depilatory for her disgustingly hairy legs (Yassif: 217–18; cf. *Targum Sheni*). In some homiletical texts, “Nebuchadnezzar” appears as the acronym N”N (e.g., Alshikh: 70–71 on Dan 4:25); Nissan (2009: 63) notes this is the European acronym for *Nullius in Nomine*, a bureaucratic term for unknown paternity.

The grammarian Jonah ibn Janāḥ (990–ca. 1055) and his followers identified the *notserim* of Jer 4:16 as a sect of Babylonian sun-worshippers who took their name from Nebuchadnezzar (Ibn Janāḥ: 315). Later, Menahem ben Solomon Meiri (1249–after 1314) applied this etymology to the *notserim* in the Talmud (e.g., bAZ 7b), universally understood as Christians, with whom commerce was prohibited. In so doing, Meiri legitimized commerce with Christians (Zalcmān: 413–14).

Perhaps the most famous reference to Nebuchadnezzar appears in *Ma'oz tsur*, a 13th-century *piyyut* sung during Hanukkah and written possibly as a reaction to the Crusades. Here Nebuchadnezzar is referred to by the epithet *nogēš* (the oppressor; Sacks: 900–901). The *piyyut* ultimately attributes his destructive success to God's punishing the Jews for violating God's laws, following a common disempowering of Nebuchadnezzar by making him an unwitting agent of God's will rather than an independent actor.

Bibliography: ■ Alshikh, M., *Sefer Havatsalet ha-Sharon* (Vilna 1897). ■ Fleischer, E., “Prayer and Piyyut in the Worms Maḥzor,” in *Worms Maḥzor: Introductory Volume* (ed. M. Beit-Arié; Vaduz/Jerusalem 1985) 36–78. ■ Ibn Janah, J., *Sefer ha-Shorashim* (ed. W. Bacher; Jerusalem 1966). ■ Nissan, E., “On Nebuchadnezzar in Pseudo-Sirach,” *JSP* 19.1 (2009) 45–76. ■ Sacks, J. (trans./ed.), *The Koren Siddur* (Jerusalem 2009). ■ Stinchcomb, J., “Ben Sira as a Baby: The Alphabet of Ben Sira and Authorial Personae,” *Ancient Jew Review* (January 16, 2018; www.ancientjewreview.com). ■ Yassif, E.,

The Tales of Ben Sira in the Middle Ages (Jerusalem 1984). [Heb.]

- Yefet ben Eli, *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel by Jephth ibn Ali the Karaite* (ed./trans. D. S. Margoliouth; Oxford 1889).
- Zalcmān, L., “Christians, Nošerim, and Nebuchadnezzar's Daughter,” *JQR* 81.3/4 (1991) 411–26.

Shari Lowin

III. Christianity

Several features of Nebuchadnezzar's story recorded in Daniel have piqued the interest of Christian interpreters. Nebuchadnezzar's dream has long been interpreted ecclesiologically, with the stone signifying Christ and the mountain the church (Stevenson/Gluerup). For Origen of Alexandria, Jerome of Stridon, and Cyril of Alexandria, Nebuchadnezzar and his conquest of Judah signify Satan and his opposition to Christians in the spiritual sense. Since Judah was handed over to the king for its sins, so believers are handed over to Satan for theirs. For Maximus the Confessor, Nebuchadnezzar signifies the “law of nature”: humanity did not cherish the “spiritual law” and so must learn to live under this law in order to be restored (*Questions addressed to Thalassius* 26). For John Damascene, that Daniel venerated Nebuchadnezzar was an a fortiori demonstration for image veneration. Nebuchadnezzar has often been a symbol of the abuse of authority. Martin Luther King Jr. referred to the “civil disobedience” of the three young men Nebuchadnezzar cast into the furnace (King: 86–87). Others have compared anti-Christian or heretical authorities to Nebuchadnezzar, as Gregory of Nazianzus did with the Emperor Julian (*Or.* 5) and the Council of Florence with Antipope Felix V (Session 9; 1440).

Bibliography: ■ Jerome of Stridon, *Commentary on Jeremiah* (Ancient Christian Texts; Downers Grove, IL 2011). ■ King, M. L., Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” in id., *Why We Can't Wait* (New York 1964) 77–100. ■ Maximus the Confessor, *On Difficulties in Sacred Scripture: The Responses to Thalassius* (FC 136; Washington, DC 2018). ■ Origen of Alexandria, *Homilies on Jeremiah and Homily on 1 Kings* 28 (FC 97; Washington, DC 1998). ■ Origen of Alexandria, *Origen: Homilies 1–14 on Ezekiel* (ACW 62; New York/Mahwah, NJ 2010). ■ Stevenson, K./M. Gluerup (eds.), *Ezekiel, Daniel* (ACCS; Downers Grove, IL 2008).

Kevin Clarke

IV. Islam

Nebuchadnezzar I (r. ca. 1125–1104 BCE) and Nebuchadnezzar II (r. 605–562 BCE) are the names of two Babylonian kings which are conflated and confused in the Islamic tradition with Bukhtinašsar, Bukht-Nāšir or -Naš(š)ar, or Bukhtrashah, another king of Babylon, namely, Nabonassar (r. 747–734 BCE). The Qur'an does not mention Nebuchadnezzar (II) or Daniel (Dāniyāl), though a possible reference to the fall of the First Temple, or perhaps the Second, appears in S 2:114 and 17:7.

In the commentarial literature on the latter verse, Daniel eschatologically interprets Nebuchad-

nezzar's dream (*ru'yā bukhtnaṣṣr*) about a great idol (*ṣanam 'azīm*) with a head of gold, a chest of silver etc., and feet of baked clay, while at once explaining metallurgy to the king (al-Ṭabarī: 4.61–65; cf. Dan 2:1–48). On S 3:39, John the Baptist appears in adled tales about the reasons why Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem, carrying the Jews away in captivity to the rivers of Babylon (cf., the song “Rivers of Babylon” produced by Frank Farian et al. and covered by Boney M. in 1978). In one story, the Israelite king Josiah kills John because the latter disapproved of the former marrying his own niece. In a related story, the conspiracy of the niece's mother (to have her daughter wed to the king) leads to John's murder (cf. Matt 14:1–11; Mark 6:16–29). In both accounts Nebuchadnezzar avenges John's death by destroying Solomon's Temple (Rippin: 52; al-Ṭabarī: 4:104–107). Nebuchadnezzar reappears along with two other potentates who immolated God's believers, namely, the Hellenistic king Antiochus III of Syria (r. 222–187 BCE) and the Jewish king Dhū-Nuwās of Yemen (d. 525 CE), as one of the “Ditch Companions” (*aṣḥāb al-ukhdūd*) in commentaries on S 85:4–7 (cf. Dan 3:15). Nebuchadnezzar is also included with Nimrod, Solomon, and the qur'anic Dhū-l-Qarnayn (He of the Two Horns; S 18:83; cf. Dan 8:5–8), who is often identified with Alexander the Great in the Islamic tradition, as one of only four kings who ruled the world; the former two sovereigns are described as unbelievers while the latter two as believers (al-Ṭabarī: 2.50, 109).

In Muslim historical sources, the biblical Nebuchadnezzar appears as a satrap (*marzubān*) who governed Iraq in the name of the Persian king, from al-Ahwāz to the lands of Byzantium (*ard al-Rūm*) lying to the west of the Tigris, or (also) the province of Fārs (al-Ṭabarī: 2:110; 4:44; Ibn Khaldūn: 1:17; cf. Ezra 7:21; Neh 2:9). Described as an orphaned son of a Babylonian widow, Nebuchadnezzar appears as an instrument of God's wrath against the Israelites, who do not heed Jeremiah's admonition to repent of their evil deeds, leading to the Babylonian exile (cf. Jer 27), and also against the Arabs, who have taken other deities apart from him and denied his prophets and messengers, killing many an Arab merchant and settling others in the Sawād (arable or black lands) in southern Iraq (al-Ṭabarī: 4:44, 66–70; cf. S 21:24; 25:3). As regards the Jews, Nebuchadnezzar deprived them of their royal sovereignty by destroying their temple, as well as burning the staff of Moses and the Torah, or alternatively by throwing the latter into a well (the Israelites are reported to have recovered that Torah from the well on their return from exile; Ibn Khaldūn: 1:475; 2:260).

Nebuchadnezzar is said to have married an Israelite virgin named Dhīnāzād (the name of the younger sister of Shahrzād, the storyteller in the frame narratives of *The Thousand and One Nights*),

who then persuades him to repatriate her people (cf. Esth 2:17; 7:3). Apropos of the numerical symbolism or topos of seven (*tasbī'*): Job was stricken with misfortune for seven years, Joseph languished in prison for seven years, and Nebuchadnezzar was punished by being transformed into an animal for seven years (al-Ṭabarī: 2:163; cf. “And when [the Israelites] turned in disdain from that forbidding, We said to them, ‘Be you apes, miserably slinking!’” S 7:166). Lastly, the imperial chronography leading to the *anno Hegirae*, the year of Muḥammad's flight from Mecca to Medina (Yathrib) and the founding of a Muslim polity (*umma*) 622 CE, that is, year one of the Islamic lunar calendar, includes the reign of Nebuchadnezzar and the destruction of the First Temple followed penultimately by the accession to royal power of Alexander the Great (r. 330–323 BCE; al-Ṭabarī: 5:416–17).

Bibliography: ■ Arberry, A. J. (trans.), *The Koran Interpreted* (Oxford 1955). ■ Conrad, L. I., “Seven and the *Tasbī'*: On the Implications of Numerical Symbolism for the Study of Medieval Islamic History,” *JESHO* 31.1 (1988) 42–73. ■ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, 3 vols. (trans. F. Rosenthal; Princeton, NJ 1967). ■ Pauliny, J., “Islamische Legende über Buhtnaṣṣar (Nebukadnezar),” *Graecolatina et Orientalia* 4 (1972) 161–83. ■ Rippin, A., “John the Baptist,” *EQ* 3 (Leiden 2001) 52. ■ Rubin, U., “‘Become You Apes, Repelled!’ (Quran 7:166): The Transformation of the Israelites into Apes and Its Biblical and Midrashic Background,” *BSOAS* 78.1 (2015) 25–40. ■ Rubinstein, J., *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream: The Crusades, Apocalyptic Prophecy, and the End of History* (Oxford 2019). ■ Schützinger, H., “Die arabische Legende von Nebukadnezar und Johannes dem Täufer,” *Der Islam* 40 (1964) 113–41. ■ al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn-Jarīr, *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, 40 vols. (ed. E. Yarshater; Albany, NY 1989–2007). ■ Tottoli, R., “People of the Ditch,” *EQ* 4 (Leiden 2004) 44. ■ Tottoli, R., “Daniel,” *EF* 3 (Leiden 2012) 72–73.

Ahmed H. al-Rahim

V. Literature

Nebuchadnezzar is a major property in the repertoire of biblical figures recycled in literature. Medieval literature is ambivalent. From around 700–720 CE the Old English *Exodus* provides the most sympathetic treatment, concentrating on the tree vision to present Nebuchadnezzar as a model convert, a St. Paul avant la lettre. The Old English *Daniel* from the same period on the other hand dichotomizes the spiritual blindness of Nabuchodonosor and the faith of the Hebrew youths in the fiery furnace. The *Ordo Prophetarum* (late 11th cent.) treats the Babylonian king as a pagan transformed by Christ in the fiery furnace but other works such as *Cleanness* (late 14th cent.) treated him above all as an example of one who had been judged. However, as we find in the contemporaneous *Pearl*, he at least became a reformed character, unlike his son Belshazzar.

In Chaucer's “The Monk's Tale” (possibly in its original form written in the late 1370s) the tale is condensed into one of a series of versified warnings

from history. In John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (ca. 1390) Nebuchadnezzar's descent into bestiality as he eats grass marks the onset of a psychomachia in which the king makes the transition from vainglorious tyrant to penitent. Alongside such rewritings there developed an analogue of the Nebuchadnezzar story in the shape of the legend of King Robert of Sicily, a short version occurring in the *Gesta Romanorum* and a much more elaborate version in the Middle English poem *King Robert of Sicily*, where the repentant monarch admits that he has "acted like Nebuchadnezzar and Holofernes." A play of around 1612, *Nebuchadnezzars Fierie Furnace*, turned the story into an extremely witty court burlesque. Later on Solero's libretto for Verdi's opera *Nabucco* (1842) bowdlerized the story, turning the main protagonist into a Macbeth figure before subsuming him within the romantic love plot figuring his daughter Ferena and the Captain of the Guard. Pirandello in his great play *Enrico Four* (1922) used the biblical paradigm to form the basis of the story of a deranged aristocratic fantasist who actually remains imprisoned in his mental fixation.

Salvador Espriu's short story, "Nebuchadnezzar" (1935), part of a collection of baroque tales about characters with exotic names, recounts the life of a proud artisan who professes caution about taking a wife but then to his shame marries Evangelina, who within six months gives birth to the first of three daughters by another man, a local grandee. Nebuchadnezzar is however blessed by God in that his daughters prove adept at commerce, enabling him to spend more time than ever in the local bars. By the time he dies, comforted by his adoring family, a new generation has come to regard his story with admiration, though the tale's well-to-do audience regard the story as vulgar.

In S. Y. Agnon's novel *Only Yesterday* (1945, *Temol shilshom*) the main protagonist Isaac Kumer emigrates from Galicia to the Hebrew homeland in the 1930s and discovers the strange propinquity of the past in Jerusalem where on the Sabbath people stroll around such places as the Gate of Flowers "where Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon camped when he came to destroy Jerusalem." (Agnon: 241) Friedrich Dürrenmatt's play *An Angel Comes to Babylon* (1957, *Ein Engel Kommt Nach Babylon*) is an exuberant romp on the theme of tyranny, with Nebuchadnezzar finally becoming the builder of the tower of Babel. In Amir Gilboa's Holocaust poem "Under Siege" (1973) there is the temporary fantasy of a vain appeal to the prophet Jeremiah to assassinate Nebuchadnezzar (Hitler) before the full effects of his policies are brought to bear.

Bibliography: ■ Agnon, S. Y., *Only Yesterday* (trans. B. Harshav; Princeton, NJ 2000); trans. of id., *Temol shilshom* (Tel Aviv 1945). ■ Espriu, S., "Nebuchadnezzar," in *Ariadne in the Grotesque Labyrinth* (trans. R. C. Phillips; Champagne, IL 2012) 31–37. ■ Fox, M./M. Sharma, *Old English Literature and the Old Testament* (Toronto, ON 2012). ■ Jacobson, D. C.,

"The Holocaust and the Bible in Israeli Poetry," *Modern Language Studies* 24.4 (1994) 63–77. ■ Swindell, A. C., *Rewriting the Bible* (Sheffield 2010).

Anthony Swindell

VI. Visual Arts

The historical King Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon reigned from 605 to 562 BCE, but any existing depictions of him were lost, as they were of no use for the Persians who conquered Babylon shortly after his death. But proof of his reign does survive in one example of Babylonian architecture, namely the Ish-tar gate, part of the walls of Babylon and one of the original Seven Wonders of the World. Its original inscription, in which "Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, prince appointed by the will of Marduk" explains his motives for building the gate, can be admired in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin.

The biblical Nebuchadnezzar is generally depicted in one of three ways: as a tyrant, a man having prophetic dreams, or a madman. By the 14th century, Nebuchadnezzar had become a symbol of despotic leadership, and it comes as no surprise that he appears on the fourth capital of the Palazzo Ducale in Venice, which is dedicated to "Virtue and Vice," as a representative archetype of the tyrant ruler. Ruthless and cold is also how Gustave Doré chose to portray him in his illustrations for *La Grande Bible de Tours*, published in 1866. Nebuchadnezzar features in two of Doré's wooden engravings, *Slaughter of the Sons of Zedekiah before their Father* (Jer 39), and *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the Fiery Furnace* (Dan 3), which have the punishment of Judeans by Nebuchadnezzar as their theme. In both pictures Nebuchadnezzar appears almost detached from what is happening; he hovers above his suffering victims, looking on with the neutrality of a man for whom inflicting pain and misery has become routine.

The imagery of Nebuchadnezzar having prophetic dreams is primarily based on Dan 2. These depictions tend to be more neutral towards the Babylonian king, as they often also include the council he seeks of Daniel. One early visualization of this occurs in Beatus of Liébana's *Las Huelgas Apocalypse* from 1220, the largest surviving medieval manuscript of Spanish tradition which contains, amongst others, a commentary on the book of Daniel. The illumination of Nebuchadnezzar's council with Daniel and the other wise men and his dream of the statue show the Babylonian king as a dignified ruler with European attributes rather than Oriental ones. It is also interesting to note that the illustrator of the work chose to give the statue in the dream Nebuchadnezzar's features, which has no precedent in the Bible, where the statue is a symbol of Nebuchadnezzar's ultimately doomed kingdom rather than himself (see → plate 16).

Nebuchadnezzar's dream of himself going mad to "live with the wild animals [and] eat grass like

the ox” (Dan 4:32) and its subsequent fulfillment is certainly the most iconic and recognizable image associated with the Babylonian king. In the late 1790s, William Blake adapted his previous etching of Nebuchadnezzar from his book *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* to be a monotype print. The Nebuchadnezzar of the prints has lost all dignity; he is naked, crawling on all fours like an animal, his nails having become claws, his beard bushy and overgrown. His horrified facial expression suggests that he is slowly realizing his own dismal state. Almost two centuries later, in the 1960s, Australian painter Arthur Boyd made the figure of Nebuchadnezzar the central piece of a series of expressionist paintings. The madness that befalls Boyd’s Nebuchadnezzar moves away from the biblical text and is instead inspired by the real horrors of the time period, in particular the senseless violence of the Vietnam War.

Works: ■ Beatus of Liébana, *Nebuchadnezzar Dreams of a Statue*, illustration in *Las huelgas apocalypse* (1220, New York/USA, The Morgan Library & Museum, MS M.429, fol. 151). ■ Blake, W., *Nebuchadnezzar* (1790s, colour monotype print, copies in Tate Britain, London/UK; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston/USA; Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis/USA). ■ Boyd, A., *Fallen Nebuchadnezzar on Fire* (ca. 1966–68, oil on canvas, private collection). ■ Boyd, A., *Nebuchadnezzar Being Struck by Lightning* (1969, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra/Australia). ■ *Capital IV* (14th cent., Istrian stone, Palazzo Ducale, Venice/Italy). ■ Doré, G., *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the Fiery Furnace* (1866, wooden engraving in *La Grande Bible de Tours*). ■ Doré, G., *Slaughter of the Sons of Zedekiah before their Father* (1866, wooden engraving in *La Grande Bible de Tours*). ■ *Ishtar Gate* (ca. 575 BC, brick, Pergamon Museum, Berlin/Germany).

Bibliography: ■ Griffith, M., “William Blake and His Impact on the Literary, Artistic and Religious Imagination in Australia: Report on a Research Project in Progress,” *SySR* (1996) 80–87. ■ “Las Huelgas Apocalypse,” *Apocalypse Then: Medieval Illuminations from the Morgan* (The Morgan Library & Museum Website, 2019; www.themorgan.org). ■ Marzahn, J., *Babylon und das Neujahrsfest* (Berlin 1981).

Tijana Zakula and Elisa Barzotti

VII. Music

The character of Nebuchadnezzar seems to have intrigued artists in most Western arts traditions, and the Babylonian king receives attention in various musical genres. Most significant is probably Verdi’s opera *Nabucco* (premiered in 1842; cf. fig. 32) which, even if it were not performed regularly in the modern era, would be notable even if only for the fact that Verdi called it “the opera with which my artistic career really begins” (Werfel/Paul: 92). Musical reception at every level of renown, including such lesser-known works as American composer James Monroe Deems’s oratorio *Nebuchadnezzar* (1850) and George Dyson’s four-part 1935 composition, *Nebuchadnezzar*, for orchestra, choir, and bass-baritone and tenor soloists (Foreman), most often focuses on the story of Nebuchadnezzar’s decree to



Fig. 32 “The Hebrew Slaves” from *Nabucco* (1842)

worship a golden idol, the refusal, attempted punishment, and divine rescue of three Hebrew youths, and the madness of the king described in Dan 4. Both the Dyson composition and Benjamin Britten’s *The Burning Fiery Furnace* (1966) also highlight the “Benedicite” – a hymn of praise included in the Septuagint version of the book of Daniel, various musical prayers in Orthodox, Catholic, and Anglican services, and the Protestant Apocrypha (see also “Daniel [Book and Person] VIII. Music” and “Fiery Furnace VI. Music,” both mentioning further musical reception).

In the realm of modern popular music, specifically rap and hip hop, Kanye West surprised fans and critics alike by writing and staging a hybrid opera or cantata focused on King Nebuchadnezzar. West’s *Nebuchadnezzar* premiered on November 24, 2019 at the Hollywood Bowl and combined opera singers and gospel choir, segments of his own hip hop and R&B songs, narration from the book of Daniel, and assorted staging with masks, costumes, and props.

A prominent example of the musical reception of Nebuchadnezzar in jazz is the opening piece on pianist Marcus Roberts’s 1990 album *Deep in the Shed*. However, other than using the name as the title of the song, and a vaguely “Middle Eastern” evocation of a minor blues tonality, the connection to the biblical figure is unclear. The most widely heard jazz reception, however, is probably the Louis Armstrong performance of the song “Shadrack” (composed by Robert MacGimsey) on his 1958 album *Louis and the Good Book*. The lyrics paraphrase the story of Nebuchadnezzar and his attempts to execute Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Dan 3 – substituting trombone, clarinet, and horn (trumpet) for the “horn, flute, zither, lyre, and harp” which were to signal the command to worship the king’s golden idol in the biblical account.

Bibliography: ■ Deems, J. M., “James Monroe Deems Manuscript Musical Scores,” *David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University* (2018; <https://archives.duke.edu/>).

lib.duke.edu/catalog/deemsjamesmonroe). ■ Foreman, L., “Dyson, Sir George,” *Grove Music Online* (www.oxfordmusic-online.com). ■ Grosinger, M./E. Minkser, “Here’s what happened in Kanye West’s Opera Nebuchadnezzar,” *Pitchfork* (November 25, 2019; <https://pitchfork.com/news>). ■ Werfel, F./S. Paul, *Verdi: The Man and His Letters* (New York 1973).

David Wilmington

VIII. Film

The silent two-reel *Daniel* (dir. Fred Thomson, 1913, US), features Daniel’s interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, the worshipping of a monstrous golden image, an account of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego surviving a fiery furnace (with a phantom-like fourth person; see Dan 3:19–30), and finally Nebuchadnezzar’s praising of the Israelites’ God.

The low-budget *Slaves of Babylon* (dir. William Castle, 1953, US) begins with a close-up of a Bible being opened to the book of Daniel and the narrator describing how King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, and then transported the enslaved Israelites to Babylon to build his hanging gardens and the temple of Bel Marduk. The Israelites (wearing pronounced Star of David symbols) defy worshipping the pagan idol for “fifty years” before the aging Nebuchadnezzar (not Darius – Dan 6:1) decrees exclusive worship of Bel Marduk for “thirty days” (Dan 6:7).

Daniel repeatedly refuses compliance and is thrown into the lion’s den. Later, Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar are stunned to find purring lions surrounding an unharmed Daniel bathing in a shaft of white light. Erroneously, Belshazzar (not Nebuchadnezzar – Dan 3:19–21) throws “Azariah, Hananiah, and Mishael” into a fiery furnace (containing an angelic “fourth”), and they survive unharmed. Later, a feeble-minded Nebuchadnezzar eats grass like an animal (Dan 4:33), humbly seeks forgiveness from Daniel (who petitions God on his behalf), and then promptly dies.

The telefilm *Jeremiah* (dir. Harry Winer, 1998, IT/DE/US) features the self-crowned, all-powerful king of Babylon, a stocky, red-headed Nebuchadnezzar, who defeated the Egyptians and now wants Jerusalem. God’s warnings (via Jeremiah and Baruch) about “the King of Babylon” are repeatedly rejected by King Jehoiakim. Nebuchadnezzar’s army marches to Jerusalem, Jehoiakim dies, Jehoiachin succeeds, submits, and becomes Nebuchadnezzar’s “lifelong guest.” Nebuchadnezzar craftily crowns Mattaniah-renamed-Zedekiah, the new King of Judah, demands gold tribute, and relocates many of Jehoiakim’s ministers to Babylon. Later, Nebuchadnezzar’s army destroys Jerusalem, captures Zedekiah’s fleeing entourage, takes them to Babylon, and kills them, but Nebuchadnezzar only blinds and enslaves Zedekiah, and then frees the imprisoned Jeremiah in Jerusalem.

The low-budget *The Book of Daniel* (dir. Anna Zielinski, 2013, US) stars an elderly Daniel/Belteshazzar recounting to Cyrus the Great the story of four kings starting with (an unimpressive looking) Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, who grants wise-man status to “Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.” A dream troubles Nebuchadnezzar, who summons his astrologer, magician, and sorcerer to reveal it, but Belteshazzar preempts them (contrary to Dan 2:12–13) and describes a large statue: “The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay,” and it was subsequently destroyed by a “rock” (cf. Dan 2:32–34). Belteshazzar reveals that “the God of heaven” has made Nebuchadnezzar “the king of kings” (symbolically, the “head of gold”). Belteshazzar’s three Hebrew companions become royal “administrators.”

The mighty Nebuchadnezzar has a “90-feet high” gold statue of himself constructed, which all are commanded to worship; but the three companions refuse, are bound, and are cast into a furnace heated “sevenfold.” They miraculously survive unharmed (alongside a “fourth,” looking like “an angel of God”). Later, Nebuchadnezzar dreams of an impressive tree and a heavenly messenger ordering it cut down. Belteshazzar sees the tree as Nebuchadnezzar reduced to a grass-eating animal until he acknowledges the “Most High as sovereign over the kingdoms of men.” A heavenly voice deems it so, and Nebuchadnezzar’s beast-like “insanity” lasts “seven years” until he finally praises the “Most High” and both his sanity and rulership are restored.

A subtextual Nebuchadnezzar features in part two of the historical biopic *Ivan the Terrible* (dir. Sergei Eisenstein, 1958, RU, *Ivan Groznyy*). As Tsar Ivan IV watches a miracle play, *The Fiery Furnace*, an innocent child in the audience recognizes Ivan (subtextually Stalin) as the play’s “terrible pagan tsar” (Nebuchadnezzar), but instead of this causing embarrassment, Ivan identifies with Nebuchadnezzar and menacingly vows future terror.

The satirical comedy *Barton Fink* (dirs. Joel and Ethan Coen, 1991, US/UK), depicts successful Broadway playwright, Barton Fink (subtextually Daniel), reluctantly relocating from New York to Los Angeles. He is contracted to movie mogul Jack Lipnick (subtextually Nebuchadnezzar), the tyrannical head of Capitol Pictures, and the king of Hollywood (subtextually Babylon), who enthusiastically proclaims: “I am bigger and meaner and louder than any other kike in this town” (cf. Dan 2:37). Jack tells Barton: “The writer is king here at Capitol Pictures” (cf. Dan 2:48), as reflected in his weekly paycheck (cf. Dan 2:6), and subsequently instructs him to interpret his movie dream about “a wrestling picture. Wallace Beery.” “I wanna know his

hopes, his dreams” (cf. Dan 2:26). Further scriptural incidents occur, notably, a Gideon Bible quote from “Daniel 2 ... the king’s dream”; psychotic Charlie Meadows as a subtextual Shadrach/Meshach/Abednego composite; a hotel fiery furnace; W. P. Mayhew’s autographed *Nebuchadnezzar* novel; a visual allusion to Belshazzar’s writing-on-the-wall incident when Fink’s hand slowly wipes smooth a mysteriously peeling piece of wallpaper, and later, when it peels again, Meadows softly exclaims, “Christ”; and W. P. Mayhew portrayed as a gold-class literary idol with feet-of-clay.

Within the short animation *VeggieTales: Rack, Shack & Benny* (dir. Phil Vischer, 1995, US), three hardworking factory workers, Rach/Shadrach (tomato), Shack/Meshach (asparagus), and Benny/Abednego (cucumber), make chocolate bunnies for their white-haired company owner, Mr. Nebby K. Nezzar/Nebuchadnezzar (zucchini). He makes all three of them into tie-wearing junior executives. A “90-foot high” bunny is built, and all employees must bow down to it and sing “The Bunny Song.” Our faithful trio repeatedly refuse, are bound, are deemed “bad bunnies,” and are fed to the factory furnace, but they miraculously survive alongside a “real shiny” fourth guy. Mr. Nezzar repents and seeks and receives forgiveness, and then a pro-church/Sunday School/Bible song is performed. Afterwards, “2nd Thessalonians 2:15” is highlighted.

Echoes of the biblical Babylon occur within the science fiction classic *The Matrix* (dirs. the Wachowskis, 1999, US) wherein “Nebuchadnezzar” (aka the “Neb”) is the name of the rebel’s grimy hovercraft. In the sequel, *The Matrix Reloaded* (dirs. the Wachowskis, 2003, US/AU), the ship’s captain, Morpheus, witnesses its destruction and despondently paraphrases the scriptural Nebuchadnezzar: “I have dreamed a dream ... but now that dream is gone from me” (cf. Dan 2:2–3).

Opera films about the reign of Nebuchadnezzar include *Nabucco* (dir. André Flédéric, 1979, FR), *Nabucco* (dir. Brian Large, 1985, IT), and *Nabucco* (dir. Pierre Cavassilas, 2000, IT).

Bibliography: ■ Adams, J., *The Cinema of the Coen Brothers: Hard-Boiled Entertainments* (New York 2015). ■ Brenneman, T. M., *Homespun Gospel: The Triumph of Sentimentality in Contemporary American Evangelicalism* (New York 2014). ■ Campbell, R. H./M. R. Pitts, *The Bible on Film: A Checklist, 1897–1980* (Metuchen, NJ 1981). ■ Chattaway, P. T., “Bible movie of the week: *Slaves of Babylon* (1953),” *Patheos* (November 27, 2013; www.patheos.com). ■ Conrad, M. T., “Heidegger and the Problem of Interpretation in *Barton Fink*,” in *The Philosophy of the Coen Brothers* (ed. M. T. Conard; Lexington, KY 2009) 179–94. ■ DiMauro, G. G., “The Church and the Cult of Imperial Humility: Icons and Enactment of the Muscovite Furnace Ritual,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 28.1–4 (2006) 415–28. ■ Jordan, J., *Showmanship: The Cinema of William Castle* (Boalsburg, PA 2014). ■ Kirk, J. R. D., “Serious Men: Scripture in the Coen Brothers Films,” in *The Bible in Motion: A Handbook of the Bible and its Reception in Film*, pt. 2 (ed. R. Burnette-Bletsch; HBR 2; Berlin/Boston, MA 2016) 729–37.

■ Neuberger, J., *Ivan the Terrible* (London 2003). ■ Stefan, M., “That ‘Barton Fink Feeling’ and the Fiery Furnace: The Book of Daniel and Joel and Ethan Coen’s *Barton Fink*,” *Journal of Religion & Film* 12.1 (2008) 1–24. [Available at https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu] ■ Worthing, M. W., *The Matrix Revealed: The Theology of the Matrix Trilogy* (Millswood 2004).

Anton Karl Kozlovic

See also → Babylon; → Belshazzar; → Daniel (Book and Person); → Jeremiah (Book and Person); → Nabonidus

Nebushazban

Nebushazban (MT *Nēbūšazbān*) is one of three Babylonian army officers who were sent by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in Jer 39:11–14 to take charge of Jeremiah the prophet following the fall of Jerusalem, see to his needs, and turn him over to the custody of Gedaliah ben Ahikam ben Shaphan, who would serve as the Babylonian-appointed governor of Judah. Nebushazban is the Rab-Saris (MT *rab-sāris*), “chief eunuch,” and the other two are Nebuzaradan, the chief of the slaughterers (MT *rab-ṭabbāḥīm*), i.e., chief of the guards, and Nergal-sarezer, the Rab-Mag (MT *rab-māg*), possibly a chief economic officer (Lundbom: 85). Nebushazban is not the same chief eunuch, who stood in the gate of the city in Jer 39:2–3 with the other two officers mentioned here. That officer is named Sarsechim (MT *šar-sēkim*), which appears to be a garbled form of Nebusarchesim (cf. LXX; Lundbom: 85). Perhaps this officer was killed, demoted, or reassigned in the aftermath of the fall of the city and replaced with Nebushazban. Alternatively, the rank of chief eunuch might have been held by more than one person, much like the ranks of Navy Chief or Army Master Sergeant in the modern U.S. military. It is not entirely clear what the chief eunuch does. It seems unlikely that he would serve as head of the royal harem, although it is not entirely impossible for Nebuchadnezzar to want some of his wives along for the expedition in western Asia. More likely it is a term for the chief of the royal servants (cf. the roles of Daniel and his friends in Dan 1). The designation of chief eunuch would then not entail that he was actually castrated; rather it would indicate his subservience to the king (cf. Fox: 196–203, esp. 201–2).

Bibliography: ■ Fox, N. S., *In the Service of the King: Officialdom in Ancient Israel and Judah* (HUCM 23; Cincinnati, OH 2000). ■ Lundbom, J. R., *Jeremiah* 37–52 (AB 21C; New York 2004).

Marvin A. Sweeney

Nebuzaradan

Nebuzaradan (MT *Nēbūzar’ādān*; LXX *Ναβουζαδαν*) refers to a Babylonian high court official *Nabūzer-iddinam* (meaning “Nabū has given [me] off-