

Feasting in the Garden of God: Ramat Rahel and the Origins of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur?¹

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Introduction

Ramat-Rahel is a small settlement near Jerusalem. Archaeological excavations under the direction of Oded Lipschitz discovered there the remains of a Judean fort, which, after the campaign of Sennacherib to Judah, was rebuilt as a garden palace in which archaeological evidence indicates that a ritual was performed.² Apparently, there was a feast in the garden involving the king³ and, to judge from the available space, his notables, at the end of which the remains of the meal were buried in a ritual pit discovered in excavation.⁴ Above this garden palace was a second, somewhat larger, garden palace dating to the Persian period, into the floors of which a further set of ritual pits had been dug.⁵ Remains of pollen in the plaster on the pool in the garden also gave precious evidence for what was planted there in the Persian period. We have olives and Lebanon cedar from the west, birch from the north, grapes, myrtle, poplar, willow, fig, and Persian walnut from the center and south, and lemons from the east.⁶

¹ Abbreviations:

ARM VII = Jean Bottéro, *Textes économiques et administratifs* (Archives Royales de Mari 7; Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1957).
ARM IX = Maurice Birot, *Textes administratifs de la salle 5 du Palais* (Archives Royales de Mari 9; Imprimerie Nationale, 1960).
ARM XI = Madeleine Lurton Burke, *Textes administratifs de la salle 111 du Palais* (Archives Royales de Mari 11; Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1963).

ARM XII = Maurice Birot, *Textes administratifs de la salle 5 du Palais* (Archives Royales de Mari 12; Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1964).

ARM XXI = Jean-Marie Durand, *Textes administratifs des salles 134 et 160 du Palais de Mari* (Archives Royales de Mari 21; Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1983).

ARM XXIII = Guillaume Bardet, et alia, *Archives Administratives de Mari 1* (Archives Royales de Mari 23; Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1984).

ARM XXIV = Philippe Talon, *Textes administratifs des salles Y et Z du Palais de Mari* (Archives Royales de Mari 24; Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1985).

ARM XXVI/2 = Dominique Charpin, et alia, *Archives Épistolaires de Mari I/2* (Archives Royales de Mari 26/2; Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1988).

ARM XXX = Jean-Marie Durand, *Le nomenclature des habits et les textiles dans les textes de Mari* (Archives Royales de Mari 30; Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2009).

FM III = *Recueil d'études à la mémoire de Marie-Thérèse Barrelet* (eds. Dominique Charpin and Jean-Marie Durand; Florilegium marianum 3; Mémoires de N.A.B.U. 4; Paris: Société pour l'Étude du Proche-Orient Ancien, 1997).

FM XI = Grégory Chambon, *Les archives de Vin à Mari* (Florilegium marianum 11; Mémoires de N.A.B.U. 12; Paris: Société pour l'Étude du Proche-Orient Ancien, 2009).

FM XII = Antoine Jacquet, *Documents relatifs aux dépenses pour le culte* (Florilegium marianum 12; Mémoires de N.A.B.U. 13; Paris: Société pour l'Étude du Proche-Orient Ancien, 2011).

MARI 3 = *MARI Annales de Recherche Interdisciplinaires 3* (Paris, Éditions Recherches sur les civilisations, 1984).

OECT 11 = Oliver R. Gurney, *Literary and Miscellaneous Texts in the Ashmolean Museum* (Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Texts 11; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

² Dieder N. Fulton, et alia. 'Feasting in Paradis: Feast Remains from the Iron Age Palace of Ramat Rahel and Their Implications,' *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 374 (2015): 30-31.

³ A sherd showing a royal figure on a throne turned up at Ramat Rahel in Aharoni's excavations (Fulton et al.; 'Feasting in Paradis,' 40-41).

⁴ Fulton et alia, 'Feasting in Paradis,' 31-33.

⁵ Dieder N. Fulton, 'Feasting in Iron Age Judah: A View from Ramat Rahel,' Paper given at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature (San Antonio, 2016), Session S21-142.

⁶ Dafna Langgut, 'The Migration of Plants Within the Persian Empire,' Paper given at the Society of Biblical Literature Meeting, Boston, 2017, Session S18-233.

This represents a botanical tour of the world centered on Persia. Analysis of the animal bones from the sacrificial pits reinforces this impression. There were pigs and dogs (representing the cultivated land), camel (representing the desert), gazelle (representing the steppe) and ibex (representing the mountains).⁷

From what we know of ancient Persia, this structure may plausibly be identified as a Paradise garden. According to Bruce Lincoln, these gardens were places of feasting for the king and his nobles and part of a projection of Persian soft power. In addition, the presence of such gardens reinforced a crucial nexus between the imperial god, The Wise Lord Ahuramazda, on the one hand and his chosen Shahanshah, King of Kings, and the empire on the other. They were known as Paradise gardens because they represented a gathering together of plants and animals, as the empire was of peoples, from all quarters of the world, the object being for The Wise Lord to use this collection to restore his original Creation consisting of one plant, one animal and one male Persian.⁸ This desire for gathering the scattered is directly referenced in the plants planted in the Ramat Rahel garden and in the animals put into the sacrificial pits, which collectively represent flora and fauna of all regions and climatic zones known to Persia.⁹

It would be hard to argue, in view of the striking parallels of feasting activity involving the king and ritual pits being dug in a garden palace, that there is no connection between the Persian period ritual for which there is textual evidence and the Judean forerunner for which there is none. There are, however, clear differences as well--most strikingly the contents of the Judean ritual pits that do not have the same variety of mammals, that have an exceedingly unusual focus on immature animals,¹⁰ and that have a wide variety of birds and fish,¹¹ all in contrast to earlier levels at the site¹² as well as to the Persian period equivalent pits.¹³

We do not know what was in the Judean garden, but it is exceeding improbable that there was any reference to the four quarters, let alone the entire Mazdean creation narrative. It is not, however, impossible that there is some connection, however, tenuous, between the Persian ritual and its Judean counterpart. Judah, too, had a divinity considered to be the original Creator and was not the king his anointed? Judah had once been part of a multi-national empire and Josiah apparently had dreams of a restoration of rule from the Nile to the Euphrates. There was thus room in Judah for soft power reaffirmation of the relationship between king and notables that could profit from divine imprimatur in the form of celebration of original creation, when the earth brought forth the birds and the seas the fish and Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden.

The immature animals¹⁴ indicate autumn as the time chosen for this celebration, which raises a very interesting question. Could this be the origin of Rosh Hashanah, the seventh month New Years' Festival that to this day celebrates original Creation? This seems impossible at first

⁷ Fulton, 'Feasting in Iron Age Judah'.

⁸ See Bruce Lincoln, *'Happiness for Mankind': Achaemenian Religion and the Imperial Project* (Acta Iranica 53; Leuven: Peeters, 2012), especially pp. 3-104.

⁹ See above.

¹⁰ Fulton et alia, 'Feasting in Paradis', 34-35.

¹¹ Ibid., 36-37, 42.

¹² Ibid., 37, 39.

¹³ See above.

¹⁴ Fulton et alia, 'Feasting in Paradis,' 34-35. At three to six months, we have spring and summer lambs and we are in the fall.

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blush. What does this festival have to do with human kings as opposed to the coronation of God as King and, for some, the celebration of a sacred marriage?¹⁵

Admittedly fish is on the menu for Rosh Hashanah, as apparently also for the feasting at Ramat Rahel to judge from the large number of fish bones recovered from the site,¹⁶ but there is so much else to account for. What was the original motivation for the blowing of ram's horns at Rosh Hashanah? Why a whole fish, leeks and other vegetables, plus dates and pomegranates, to mention only the most obviously Near Eastern of the foods? Also demanding explanation is the symbolic casting of sins into a river or canal.

And then there is the mysterious connection between Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and the Day of Judgment that ultimately allows for one more year of life inextricably mixed up with an even more mysterious Azazel ('goat of God') to whom a scapegoat was to be released in the steppe as an offering, according to Lev. 16.20-22, 26. Apart from the name, we know only that Azazel was one of the watchers, that is, a constellation, and that there is some connection to giants imprisoned at Babylon, either right side up or more usually upside down.¹⁷ With Yom Kippur, a whole new set of problems opens up--how old is this festival and what, if any is/was its relationship to the ritual performed at Ramat Rahel?

We need more evidence. Fortunately, it is, in fact, ready to hand. The garden palace at Ramat Rahel dates to after Sennacherib's invasion, there being a completely different structure there in the preceding period.¹⁸ This suggests the possibility of Assyrian influence here. It so happens that Sennacherib renovated a Middle Assyrian structure outside of Aššur and in the same relationship to that city as Ramat Rahel is to Jerusalem. This structure has been excavated, and it turns out to be a garden palace meaning that it did not simply have an attached garden, as was standard for Assyrian palaces, but that it actually centered around an enclosed garden. The excavator Andrae studied this garden and discovered that it consisted largely of pomegranate trees dug into the bedrock.¹⁹ Pomegranates bloom twice a year, once in Spring and once in Autumn, and a long known Middle Assyrian Ritual of Kingship provides the obvious text for the performances of both seasons.²⁰ The Autumn festival involved feasting between the king and his nobles and the burial of food offerings in sacrificial pits. I think we have a match.

As luck would have it, the excavations at Mari turned up what appears to be the ultimate original of the Autumn ritual,²¹ unfortunately fragmentary but with supplemental information

¹⁵ For details on this, and all other aspects of Rosh Hashanah, see https://en.wikipedia/Rosh_Hashanah.

¹⁶ See above.

¹⁷ John C. Reeves, 'Some Parascriptural Dimensions of the "Tale of Hārūt wa-Mārūt," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 135 (2015): 827, 829, 831-832, especially 829 which adds: 'Therefore Israel brings offerings and casts one lot for the Lord, so that He might accept atonement for all the sins of Israel, and one lot for Azazel, so that he might bear the burden of the sins of Israel.'

¹⁸ Fulton, 'Feasting in Paradis,' 30.

¹⁹ Walter Andrae, *Das wiedererstandene Assur*, 2nd edition (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1977), 219-224. For illustrations, see Laura Kataja and Robert Whiting, *Grants, Decrees and Gifts of the Neo-Assyrian Period* (State Archives of Assyria 12; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1995), 105, 107 figs. 19-20.

²⁰ See below.

²¹ With Daniel E. Fleming, 'Chroniques bibliographiques 1. Recent Work on Mari,' *Revue d'Assyriologie* 93 (1999): 159-160, following Jean-Marie Durand and Michaël Guichard, 'Les rituels de Mari,' in *Recueil d'études à la mémoire de Marie-Thérèse Barrelet* (eds. Dominique Charpin and Jean-Marie Durand; Florilegium marianum 3; Mémoires de N.A.B.U. 4; Paris: Société pour l'Étude du Proche-Orient Ancien, 1997), 19-23, this ritual is not 'literary'. The reason the word is in quotes is that when it is used to describe a work of actual literature, say Shakespeare, it means something beautifully crafted and original. When used by cuneiformists, it usually means that the text is either a pack of lies or copied mindlessly with no thought of ever putting it to any practical use, or both at the same time. So historical texts are propaganda, not

from administrative texts and letters as well as one unexpected source. The Amorite king Šamši-Adad I had this (and others of his festivals)²² celebrated on cylinder seals that were used by his officials to seal official documents, palace doorways, etc. Combined with later Assyrian (and, as we shall see, Babylonian) evidence from ritual texts and hemerologies, we are in a position to sketch the bare outlines of the history of a ritual. This will be a long journey, visiting cultic ceremonies performed in the same calendar month but in different times and places over the course of several millenia. All of these ceremonies have their own distinctive features; nonetheless there persists, as we shall see, a common core that sings a common tune.

The Invention of a Ritual of Kingship

There is archaeological evidence that Upper Mesopotamia experienced colonization from the overpopulated cities of Southern Mesopotamia in the pre-historic Uruk period.²³ This created a sort of Mesopotamian koiné, wherein parts of what is now Syria, including the ancient cities of Mari and Ebla, show clear signs of Sumerian cultural and even linguistic influence.

Šamši-Adad was an Amorite adventurer who, at the beginning of the 2nd millennium BCE, conquered for himself an extensive Upper Mesopotamian empire stretching across northern Mesopotamia from the Zagros mountains in the east to the Euphrates in the west, including not only Assyria, but bits of Babylonia and the Middle Euphrates region. With a view to cementing his rule, he instituted a ritual of kingship,²⁴ the full performance of which involved a community-wide celebration timed to coincide with a month that, from earliest Sumerian times, referenced original creation at Nippur, seat of the Sumerian Enlil of whom Šamši-Adad believed the god Aššur to be the Assyrian equivalent.

He was helped in this endeavor by the fact that this seventh month of the Nippur Calendar that was eventually adopted as the standard for all of Mesopotamia was also the month of the setting of *astal Dumuzi* (the constellation Aries), the first king and the favorite of the goddess Inanna/Ištar, in whose gift kingship lay. Last, but by no means least, the Autumnal Equinox was literally the turn of the year (ZAG.MUG) marked, in Sumerian times, by the heliacal rising of what we call *Lyra* but which was referred to as the ‘Goat Star’ and associated with the goddess Gula, mistress of the city of Isin, famous for its Sacred Marriage rites.²⁵ At Aleppo, under its

descriptions of historical events, laws written in stone more propaganda to show what a good king the king was and to cover the fact that he was nothing of the kind. In the case of ritual texts, ‘literary’ means that they were ‘copied without intent to perform them’. We should not be having to fight this fight 100 odd years into this discipline.

²² With Fleming, ‘Chroniques bibliographiques,’ 161, there is no reason that all of the ritual texts found at Mari cannot be dated to the reign of Šamši-Adad.

²³ A nice summary is given in ‘Uruk Period,’ *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uruk_period).

²⁴ The seals of the Šakanaku period at Mari are typical presentation seals. They hint at some sort of relationship of the local king with Deritum in having an Inanna type figure presenting the king to her father Nanna with the symbols of Deritum’s husband, presumably Ištaran, between them (See Oya Topçuoğlu, ‘Emblems of Power: Ideology and Identity,’ [PhD dissertation; University of Chicago, 2016], nos. 2-3 = Adelheid Otto, *Siegel und Siegelabrollungen* [Tell Bi’a—Tuttul 4; Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orientgesellschaft 104; Saarbrücken: Saarbrucker Druckerei, 2004], 31-32, Tafel 40 a-i [M9]; 32-33, Tafel 41 a-d [M10]). When it comes to the Great Eštar, however, the king is shown being presented by an Inanna figure not to her father but directly to the month of her festival itself, represented by right side up and upside down figures (Topçuoğlu, ‘Emblems of Power,’ no. 5 = Otto, *Siegel*, 33-35, Tafel 42 [M12]). For more on this image, see below.

²⁵ Pirjo Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage in the Light of Comparative Evidence* (State Archives of Assyria Studies 15; Helsinki: Helsinki University, 2004), 50-54, nos. 34-44.

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Amorite rulers, the Autumnal Equinox was a time of determining destinies;²⁶ in Anatolia, Fall was the season for the celebration of the local divinity, a hunting god named Kurunta.²⁷

In a polytheistic system, where cooperation between divinities is the norm, and outright equations of even the most implausible sort are also the norm, it was possible to create a kingship ritual in which everybody within the borders of a multi-ethnic empire could feel included, whether or not the gods whom they worshipped actually had their cult centers within the empire. Furthermore, some of Šamši-Adad's subjects were merchants residing in neighboring states. It will have been politic to ensure their safety by sending offerings to the neighbors' gods and by extending invitations to participate in a ritual in which they could be made to feel included.

Key to the system was the presence in all cultures of the Ancient Near East of goddesses of the Ištar type, spoiled brat daughters of the chief god of the pantheon with a decided tendency to play the field even when they were already married. For Mesopotamians, the shenanigans of Ištar had a great deal to do with the appearances and disappearances of the planet Venus, the goddess's astral manifestation. The festivals of Ištar in the cultic calendar were timed to coincide with key events in her life. This was not where these points fell in the calendar in any particular year, but the points at which these events will have occurred for the first time.²⁸ In this reconstructed first year ever, Venus appeared in the East in Ulūlu, remained visible in Tašritu and Araḥšamna (months 6-8, i.e. the Fall) and then disappeared. She reappeared on the opposite horizon in Addaru and remained visible for Nisannu and Ayyaru (months 12-2, i.e. the Spring). In between, Ištar was in occultation.

The Festival of the Great Eštar at Mari: The Ritual Text

The key section of Šamši-Adad's festival of the 'Great Eštar' was recorded on a tablet of which a sizeable chunk is preserved. This begins on the night before the main body of the ritual, with a bed being set up in Eštar's house upon which the king may, if he wishes, sleep, a sort of optional pre-marital quickie. He had better make it quick, since he is roused before his usual wake-up time so that the goddess can get her breakfast.²⁹

Everybody else in the temple has to get up, too, and they are ranged with Ninigizibara³⁰ facing Eštar, with lamentation priests to her left and a choir of male and female singers (the women behind the men) to her left and right. Also in attendance are brewers, carpenters, leather workers, carpet makers and weavers, expert craftsmen who lay out their tools, presumably to be blessed. Similarly, we have barbers with their razors.³¹

We are now ready for a curious rite involving a platter for *maṣḥatu*-flour, which is placed opposite Eštar. Not surprisingly, *maṣḥatu* flour is scattered on it, along with *sasqu*-flour moistened with

²⁶ Mark E. Cohen, *Festivals and Calendars of the Ancient Near East* (Baltimore: CDL Press, 2015), 15.

²⁷ For details, see Gregory McMahon, *The Hittite State Cult of the Tutelary Deities* (Assyriological Studies 25; Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1991).

²⁸ The movements of planets follow a cyclical pattern that repeats every so many years (different for each planet). If you wish to worship astral divinities that are not fixed stars, you either have festivals that dance round the calendar or you choose a particular cycle to which you peg your festivals, as later Astrologers would say, the planet's preferred points. We know from the actual cultic calendar that the latter choice was made.

²⁹ Durand and Guichard, 'Les rituels de Mari,' 52, 57 no. 2 i 1'-6".

³⁰ For this goddess, see Durand and Guichard, 'Les rituels de Mari,' 47. She was apparently a by-form of Gula.

³¹ Durand and Guichard, 'Les rituels de Mari,' 52/54, 57 no. 2 i 7'-19'.

water. All around, bowls of water are set on the floor.³² Meanwhile, in the countryside, as we know from the letters, bethels were being lain down (*ramû*) in the countryside.³³

The next rite, for which the preparations are broken, is to be attended by Lатарак³⁴ and a sort of ennead of other divinities, the goddesses being represented by their emblems. These sit or stand beside Eštar. The king dresses in a *lulumtum*-garment and sits behind the lamentation priests (so facing the goddess and her party). He is seated on a sailor's throne and attended by a single servant of the king's choice, who sits on a low chair. The remaining palace servants have to stand on either side and at a distance.³⁵ In this odd arrangement, may be recognized a wedding party, a Sacred Marriage in which the kingship of the king is annually renewed. There is also to be a wedding banquet ritually enacted by a designated eater.³⁶

The lamentation Uru-am-ma-ur?!-ru-bi,³⁷ that is usually sung at the beginning³⁸ of the month,³⁹ is performed now, either in part or in its entirety depending on whether a *mahhu*-estatic (in tune with the divinities of Uruk) did (you do all of it) or did not (you do part of it) go into a trance at the beginning of the month. In either case, the choir has finished, and may leave.⁴⁰

After a short break, we find the lamentation priests engaged in a cultic race. In the course of this race, they pass out the doors of the temple and then back in again, singing all the while. On their return, they sing a greeting song.⁴¹

Once this song is finished, the king stands respectfully for the Eršemma of the god Enlil (locally, Dagan), which is performed by a standing lamentation priest to the accompaniment of a *halhaltu*-drum. Grace having been said, we are ready for the meal. A designated eater sits by the head of the goddess and eats her portion, after which her plate is taken away by a designated away-taker.⁴²

After the dishes are cleared, wrestlers engage in wrestling matches and *huppu*-acrobats turn somersaults. Dirty (garments) are exchanged (for new ones).⁴³ We have more singing before the text breaks up. This must have taken a bit of time since, partway though the singing, the king gets to sit down.⁴⁴

³² Ibid., 54, 57 no. 2 i 20'-28'.

³³ For the last rite, see Durand and Guichard, 'Les rituels de Mari,' 32-35.

³⁴ For this divinity, apparently a by-form of Nergal, see Ibid., 48.

³⁵ Ibid., 54, 58 no. 2 ii 1'-18'.

³⁶ See below.

³⁷ For this lamentation, which is known from an Old Babylonian version, see Mark E. Cohen, *The Canonical Lamentations of Ancient Mesopotamia* (Potomac: Capital Decisions Limited, 1988), 536-603. The equation was recognized already by Miguel Civil, apud Durand and Guichard, 'Les rituels de Mari,' 49.

³⁸ Durand and Guichard, 'Les rituels de Mari,' 58 unaccountably translate: 'end'.

³⁹ At Mari, this will have been precisely on the 2nd day, to judge from the ritual schedule of the temple of Anu of Uruk where this lament originates. See François Thureau-Dangin, *Tablettes d'Uruk à l'usage des prêtres du temple d'Anu au temps des Séleucides* (Textes cunéiformes de Louvre 6; Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1922) 48: obv. 2-4.

⁴⁰ Durand and Guichard, 'Les rituels de Mari,' 54, 58 no. 2 ii 19'-27'.

⁴¹ Ibid., 55, 58 no. 2 iii 6-13.

⁴² Ibid., 55, 58 no. 2 iii 14-21. For this interpretation, see Durand and Guichard, 'Les rituels de Mari,' 50-51.

⁴³ For the interpretations, see Durand and Guichard, 'Les rituels de Mari,' 51-52. At Sippar, gods and goddesses changed clothing to coincide with the months of Spring and Fall, so 15 Addaru, 7 Nisannu, 10 Ayyaru, 3 Ululu, 7 Tašritu, 15 Araššamna. In Uruk there were also changes for Summer (17 Du'uzu and 1 Abu) and Winter (26 Kislimu and 28 Tebešu). See Eiko Matsushima, 'On the *Lubuštu*-Ceremony of Bēl in the Seventh Century B.C.,' *Acta Sumerologica* 20 (1998): 111-112; Marc J.H. Linssen *The Cults of Uruk and Babylon: The Temple Ritual as Evidence for Hellenistic Cult Practices* (Cuneiform Monographs 25; Leiden: Brill/Styx 2004), 52-53.

⁴⁴ Durand and Guichard, 'Les rituels de Mari,' 55, 58 no. 2 iii 22-33.

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Finally, a series of three libations using water brought from the temple of the goddess is performed to the accompaniment of singing to honor first the goddess Eštar, then her brother Šamaš. The assembled divine guests get three libations to the right and three to the left. The king is given hand-washing water. The priests perform a further set of libations to goddess and her assembled guests. The god Šamaš receives no libations in this set. The rest is lost, apart from a note that water is to be supplied for the *mahhu*-estatics.⁴⁵

The Festival of the Great Eštar at Mari: Administrative Texts

Administrative texts from Mari allow us to place this curious ritual exactly in time and add further details. The festival of the Great Eštar at Mari took place in the ninth month of the local Mari calendar.⁴⁶ From these texts, we may see that the first day, also the first day of the month, involved a welcome for the goddess and her attendants in the garden of the palace where she was treated to a sacrifice and presented with the first of two tables of sweet things. She may also have gotten a bath.⁴⁷

After a gap on days two and three enlivened only by a possible further sacrifice in the garden of the king⁴⁸ and a mysterious issue of women's shoes to two priestesses and the king's daughters,⁴⁹ Eštar and her divine retinue moved into lodgings in the shrine of Belet-ekallim where she stayed from the 4th to the 6th.⁵⁰ The women presumably put the various garments that they had received to good use, but the men seem to have spent most of their time being bathed? with oil and drinking themselves blind, although there does seem to have been a *pagra'u* offering to Dagan, since an issue of wine 'when Dagan' and the distribution of no less than 260 quarters of beef to the cooks are mentioned on the 6th.⁵¹ This would also be appropriate to the prominent presence of an Eršemma of Enlil in the ritual.⁵² Nergal and his chariot arrived on the 5th, since he received cedar oil on that day, usually used for baths.⁵³

The busiest day, the height of the festival when everything came together was the 7th when the god Nergal got a *gibbu* in his temple⁵⁴ and his Chariot was honored with sacrifices probably, as we shall see later, outside in the open in the temple courtyard.⁵⁵ Meanwhile, there was a second round of sacrifice for Eštar in the garden of the king and she got the second of her two

⁴⁵ Ibid., 55/57, 58 no. 2 iv 1-33, TL ii 1'-3'.

⁴⁶ Bertrand Lafont, 1999. 'Sacrifices et rituels a Mari et dans la Bible.' *Revue d'Assyriologie* 93 (1999): 68 and Durand and Guichard, 'Les rituels de Mari,' 27-31 seconded by Fleming, 'Chroniques bibliographiques,' 160 follow Jack Sasson, 'The Calendar and Festivals of Mari: During the Reign of Zimri-Lim in *Studies in Honor of Tom B. Jones* (eds. Marvin A. Powell, and Ronald A. Sack; *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 203; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979), 132-133, 134, 136) in assuming that the Great Festival of Eštar on Mari 9 and the Festival of Deritum of Mari 11 are the same festival. The mess this completely untenable assumption makes in our understanding of the cultic calendar at Mari (and Assyria of the same time period) is hard to imagine.

⁴⁷ See below, Appendix 2 under Day 1.

⁴⁸ There were either two consecutive sacrifices, or accounting was done on Day 2.

⁴⁹ See below, Appendix 2 under Day 2.

⁵⁰ See below, Appendix 2 under Days 4-6.

⁵¹ See below, Appendix 2 under Day 4-6.

⁵² See above.

⁵³ See below, Appendix 2 under Day 5.

⁵⁴ This has something to do with burning and is usually translated as 'holocaust'. Some of the better documented occasions suggest, however, that a torch-lit ceremony is what was meant. On the 18 Mari 11, there was a tour of the city on the part of acrobats, craftsmen and singers (FM III 74) followed by a torch-lit performance by the same team in the *sakannu* of the palace (FM III 95). An issue for what is probably the same event is for cedar oil for a *gibbu* from above the city to below the city (Dominique Charpin, 'Nouveaux documents du bureau de l'huile à l'époque assyrienne,' *MARI Annales de Recherche Interdisciplinaires* 3 [Paris, Editions Recherches sur les civilisations, 1984], no. 39).

⁵⁵ See below, Appendix 2 under Day 7: Nergal.

tables of sweet things, this time with pistachios.⁵⁶ It is at this point that the wedding banquet will have taken place.

On the 7th, a sizeable number of sheep were contributed by the governors and tribal chieftains of the empire, giving the impression that communal feasting was contemplated.⁵⁷ This impression is confirmed by two undated issues that may be placed in this festival on several grounds. They are undated, which probably means that the described distributions were a once-a-year occurrence. Craftsmen, as in the brewers, carpenters, etc. who lay out their tools before Eštar in the ritual,⁵⁸ are among the recipients of ox shoulders, and there is a mention of the garden of the king as the point of origin of 32 sheep shoulders and who knows how many ox shoulders.⁵⁹ Sheep and cattle do not grow on trees, even at Mari. This meat must have been produced by a sacrifice in the king's garden, an uncommon venue for sacrifice in the Mari texts. These undated issues indicate that both fish and birds were also on the menu.⁶⁰

At Mari, large distributions of expensive wine were usually sooner or later accompanied by what were referred to as *puḍu*-offerings. Offerings of the same name appear in Old Babylonian Sippar where offerings of birds and fish, otherwise unusual concomitants of sacrifice, also appear. In AbB 7 159⁶¹ (a letter with the heading Šamaš and Marduk, so presumably from Sippar), an official is trying to set up the yearly *puḍum* offering for the brazier festival of Marduk and needs the recipient to buy and send him pronto 600 garlic cloves, 600 onions, 300 fresh water fish (*šarbūt*),⁶² and 300 turtledoves (TU.GUR₄) of the two shekel size. Another letter, AbB 1 108,⁶³ also mentions a private *puḍum* offering which the author is having to do for somebody else and he does not have what he needs: garlic, onions, fresh water fish (*šarbūt*) and turtledoves (TU.GUR₄).⁶⁴

And, after all this, we are still not finished yet. Nergal gets yet more oil on the 9th,⁶⁵ and a flurry of offerings on the 10th that revolve round him, beginning with the *nubattum*, a reference, as we shall see, to food offerings deliberately left out overnight to spoil and cleared away the next morning,⁶⁶ so put out on the evening of the 9th and removed on the 10th. This was followed by another sacrifice in the king's garden and by the offering by barley soup of the type offered to ghosts. The gods entered the palace and Ea, Deritum and Annunitum got offerings, the latter twice, framing a special offering for the Chariot of Nergal.⁶⁷

⁵⁶ See below, Appendix 2 under Day 7: Eštar.

⁵⁷ See below, Appendix 2 under Day 7: The Feast.

⁵⁸ See above.

⁵⁹ See below, Appendix 2 under Day 7: The Feast.

⁶⁰ See below, Appendix 2 under Day 7: The Feast.

⁶¹ Fritz Rudolf Kraus, *Briefe aus dem British Museum: (CT 52)* (Altbabylonische Briefe in Umschrift und Übersetzung 7; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977).

⁶² For references, see *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago S* (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1984), 311 s.v. *sirbittu*.

⁶³ Fritz Rudolf Kraus, *Briefe aus dem British Museum: (CT 43 und 44)* (Altbabylonische Briefe in Umschrift und Übersetzung 1; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964).

⁶⁴ For more details, see Antoine Jacquet, *Documents relatifs aux dépenses pour le culte* (Florilegium marianum 12; Mémoires de N.A.B.U. 13 (Paris: Société pour l'Étude du Proche-Orient Ancien), p. 59; ARM XXIV p. 214).

⁶⁵ See below, Appendix 2 under Day 9.

⁶⁶ The dictionaries recognize that *nubattu* is from *bātu* which means 'to spend the night' or 'to keep overnight' (see *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago B* (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1965), 169-173), but miss the references in late ritual texts where the offerings are left out overnight as in TU 39 rev. 9 (Linsens, *The Cults of Uruk and Babylon* 187, 190) where, contrary to custom, the meal is not cleared away but *ba-a-a-at i-ba-at*.

⁶⁷ See below, Appendix 2, Day 10.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES TIME MAKE?

We are now beginning to understand this festival as one which was intended to spill beyond the confines of palace and temple at Mari. Contributions of garments by the districts of Mari, Terqa and Saggaram⁶⁸ and of sheep by the governors and tribal chieftains of the empire⁶⁹ made this a festival on an imperial scale. The curious rite with the putting down of bowls of water will have been visible only to a few, by anybody could see the bethels put down (*ramû*) in the countryside.⁷⁰ Similarly, the ritual meal with its eater as enactor and the washing of the king's hands afterwards will have been private, but a sizeable number of people will have been needed to consume the mountains of mutton, beef, sheep and birds laid out in the communal feast.⁷¹

Where are we in the Calendar for this Festival?

To get any further with our interpretation, it is essential to know when this festival will have been performed. See Appendix 1 for justification in terms of the agricultural cycle of the placement of the 9th month of the Mari calendar in the Mesopotamian 7th month of Tašritu. In support of this identification, we know that the celebration in Šubat-Enlil, Šamši-Adad's capital, of the festival of Mari 8-10 was called an *elūnum*.⁷² Ostensibly, this is related to *elû*, 'to rise up'⁷³ and *elēnu*: 'above' and refers to an appearance in the sky of a star or planet. Given this context, the mysterious tray of the Mari ritual⁷⁴ will have represented the Milky Way, and the bowls and bethels that were laid down, the stars of the night sky.⁷⁵

As we have already mentioned, Venus's visibility was celebrated in Babylonian months Ulūlu, Tašritu and Araḥšamna (months 6-8, i.e. the Fall) and again in Addaru, Nisannu and Ayyaru (months 12-2, i.e. the Spring). Understanding Mari month 1 as equivalent to Mesopotamian month 1, Nisannu, as is the case currently, would place the Festival of the Great Eštar in months 8-10 of the Nippur calendar or Araḥšamna, Kislimu and Ṭebetu, simply impossible. Lining up Mari month 1 with Mesopotamian month 11, Šabaṭu, on the other hand yields an equivalency of Mari 8-10 with months 6-8 of the Nippur calendar or Ulūlu, Tašritu and Araḥšamna, a perfect match for the Eastern goddess of the Autumnal Equinox. In confirmation of this placement of the festival in Tašritu, there are further sacrifices in the garden of the king on 28-29 Mari 9,⁷⁶ that would line up with the 28th-29th of Tašritu in the Mesopotamian calendar. In Babylonia on the 29th of the month, as we shall see, lamentations with offerings were performed in open air settings to honor primordial gods.

In this context, the mysterious race and the coming in and out of doors of the Mari Eštar ritual⁷⁷ find a ready explanation. It is common around the world that rites of this sort--also tugs of war and wrestling matches--gravitate to celebrations of festivals that fall at the equinoxes, in this case the Autumnal one. We may also recognize in the acrobats turning somersaults,⁷⁸ the

⁶⁸ See below, Appendix 2, Day 1.

⁶⁹ See below, Appendix 2, Day 7: The Feast.

⁷⁰ See above.

⁷¹ See below, Appendix 2, Day 7: The Feast.

⁷² Cohen, *Festivals and Calendars*, 281.

⁷³ To note is that the term is often written very peculiarly, beginning with an 'è' (For references, see Cohen, *Festivals and Calendars*, 279-280). This is Sumerian for 'to come out', creating a pun with the Akkadian term from *elû*: 'to rise up'..

⁷⁴ See above.

⁷⁵ With Fleming, 'Chroniques bibliographiques', 161-162 and against Durand and Guichard, 'Les rituels de Mari,' 32-35, I do not see the bethels being laid down at Mari as having any funerary connotations.

⁷⁶ See ARM XXI 18 for the 28th. Note also the *pudum*-offering on the 29th (M 10636 [Jacquet. *dépenses pour le culte*, p. 217]).

⁷⁷ Durand and Guichard, 'Les rituels de Mari,' 55, 58 no. 2 iii 6-13.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 55, 58 no. 2 iii 25.

'turn of the year'. Finally, the exchange of dirty garments for new ones is the sort of thing to be expected in ancient Mesopotamia at this time of year.⁷⁹

What we have learned so far is that, at Old Babylonian period Mari around the Autumnal equinox, there was a festival which was accompanied by a communal banquet in which, among more usual fare, two unusual foods, fish and birds were served, accompanied by considerable imbibing of wine. The focal point of this rite was apparently a sacred marriage between the king and an Ištar-goddess, who was to grant him and/or to annually renew his kingship.⁸⁰ What is yet a mystery is the prominent role played by the lord of the Netherworld, Nergal, who would seem to intrude upon the proceedings like an unwelcome guest.

Insights from Comparative Material from Uruk

We may well wonder what the lamentation performed for Ištar of Uruk in Southern Iraq (in the temple of Anu at the beginning of the month) is doing being recited at Mari, of all places, in faraway Syria (in the course of the ritual of the Great Eštar).⁸¹ To answer this question, we need to have a look at Uruk. We have a number of rituals from this city which are preserved in very late copies but which may still be presumed to contain some fossilized elements from much earlier periods. As luck would have it, the chief god of Uruk, the god of the heavens, Anu, had his main *akītu*-festival in Tašrītu, the Mesopotamian month that will have corresponded to the 9th month at Mari. Even more fortunate is that this latter ritual contained a sacred marriage for Nanaya, one of the by-forms of Ištar of Uruk.

In this Uruk ritual, from 1 Tašrītu to 8 Tašrītu, Anu's silver and gold chariots bring breakfast to Anu and his wife Antu and their court in the *akītu*-house.⁸² This was the temple outside a Mesopotamian city where a god went every year with a view to celebrating his first ever establishment of a relationship with his human constituency. During this time, the sacred marriage of Nanaya is performed in the Eḫilikuga chapel, which is the bed-chamber of the Eḫiliana.⁸³

The first part of the 7th of Tašrītu is spent by Anu, his wife Antu and their court in the company of lament-singers, regular singers and cooks who supply the bread, meat, milk and various alcoholic beverages served in a variety of vessels including *namḫaru*-vats; some of these were drinking vessels in the shape of ravens in honor of Corvus. This will have been for the wedding banquet of Nanaya.⁸⁴ The king is conspicuous by his absence in the rites of 7 Tašrītu; he shows up only for the rites of 8-9 Tašrītu. Armed with our Mari evidence, we know exactly what he will have been up to. The 7th day of the 9th month at Mari, the equivalent of 7 Tašrītu at Uruk is the day for the king's sacred marriage with Eštar; what this means is that the king will have been the imagined groom for Nanaya's sacred marriage, whose wedding banquet is being shared at a distance by her parents.

⁷⁹ At Sippar, gods and goddesses changed clothing to coincide with the months of Spring and Fall. For details, see above.

⁸⁰ The majority of the administrative texts that describe this festival are not from the reign of its creator, Šamši-Adad, but from his arch-enemy Zimri-lim, who established his rule in Mari after Šamši-Adad's death.

⁸¹ Durand and Guichard, 'Les rituels de Mari,' 54, 58 no. 2 ii 19'-20'.

⁸² Linssen, *Cults of Uruk and Babylon*, 184, 188 TU 39 obv. 1-3.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 184, 188 TU 39 obv. 4-5.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 185, 188 TU 39 obv. 7-10

That done, it was time to go home. Anu, Antu and Ištar are dressed in their new clothing. A bull is brought in between the curtains of Anu's private quarters (for Anu to stand upon), and there is a procession by road and boat with the *akitu*-house either locked (in Tašritu) or opened (in Nisannu), plus we do not forget the morning and evening meal. The procession is performed as on the 7th of Nisannu.⁸⁵

On the 8th of Tašritu, the door of Anu's temple in Uruk is opened before Anu and Antu. Their vizier Papsukkal comes down to the courtyard to attend them. Anu is given his golden pole and holds a review of his weapons, suns and chariots. A host of gods including Adad, Šin, Šamaš, Ninurta and even Lugalbanda and Ninsun join forces in the courtyard to form a small army. Conspicuous by his absence is Nergal, who would normally be with Adad at the head of the pack when any killing work was to be done, and who does get to tag along in Nisannu.⁸⁶ Anu has a meal of roasted meat, and he passes the plate round for his allies to take a share. They bring Anu out into the courtyard while one of those with access to the temple, girded with a belt, carries a royal scepter before him. Anu heads to the area between the curtains, and sits on his golden seat where he receives a sacrifice of an ox and a sheep whose heart and head are put before him. A plate of *maṣḥatu* flour (our friend from the Mari ritual) is dumped on the heart and a *maqû*-vessel of wine upended over the head.⁸⁷ We are looking at a battle, the winner of which may lay claim to dominion over heaven, what ancient Mesopotamians called the Anuship. Perhaps most obvious are the chariots and the army of gods who share a pre-battle meal. More significant is the offering of the heads. This offering echoes a ritual performed by Mesopotamian kings with the heads of defeated enemies.⁸⁸ This, and the royal scepter and golden seat indicate a victory for Anu.

Meanwhile in Mari, the 7th of the 9th month (the equivalent of Mesopotamian 7 Tašritu, found the Chariot of Nergal in the temple of Nergal, where a *gibbu* was performed, and Nergal himself got cypress and cedar oil, presumably for a pre-battle bath.⁸⁹ The 8th of the 9th month was greeted with a thundering silence, and the 9th day has only an issue of oil for Nergal.⁹⁰ This would seem to suggest that things did not go so well for him.

Meanwhile in Uruk, 9 Tašritu sees several repeats of his victory ceremony as Anu pays visits to the Dias of Destinies (where the fates of human beings are decided), then to the area between the curtains where he faces East. Adad and the other gods face him, and the goddesses face his wife Antu for the heart and head sacrifice; god and goddess wash their hands at the same time. The final destination for the day is the Dias of Kingship where Anu and Antu form a court from their supporters. A figure whose name is broken, doubtless the loser of the conflict, winds up imprisoned in Antu's courtyard. Also of note is that one of the sacrificial victims is cut open and the liver is put onto Anu's dias from whence it is picked up by the diviner and the priest of Adad, presumably for the performance of extispicy on the subject of the prisoners' fate. This seems to be favorable to mercy, since the singers sing about the house coming to be at peace. In the background we are gradually winding down to dinner which is, contrary to custom, left out

⁸⁵ Ibid., 185, 188 TU 39 obv. 11-15.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 201-202, 204 KAR 132 obv. i 12, [ii 2].

⁸⁷ Ibid., 185, 188-189 TU 39 obv. 16-35.

⁸⁸ See JoAnn Scurlock, 'The Techniques of the Sacrifice of Animals in Ancient Israel and Ancient Mesopotamia: New Insights Through Comparison, Part 2,' *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 44/2 (2006), 260.

⁸⁹ For references, see below, Appendix 2 under Day 7: Nergal.

⁹⁰ For references, see below, Appendix 2 under Days 8-9.

overnight.⁹¹ In this 9th to 10th of Tašritu overnight offering we may recognize the *nubattum* of exactly the same days in the equivalent 9th month of the Mari calendar.⁹²

The 10th of Tašritu at Uruk sees the clearing away of these offerings and is otherwise a day of rest. The final day, the 11th, sees one last shared meal between Anu and Antu and the gods who supported them.⁹³

Given the timing, what we can say is going on in this Uruk ritual is that the god Anu in his astral manifestation as the planet Saturn, is having what later astrologers called his exaltation. To achieve this, he must come down from the Midst of Heaven Netherworld,⁹⁴ which will not happen without opposition. In short, Anu has to fight his way home to Uruk, and has mustered for this purpose divine allies who will form his future court.

The opponent who ends up imprisoned, with a possible release on the 10th, is most probably Nergal, lord of the Netherworld whose job it was to guard the Netherworld prison and to make sure that this truly was 'the land of no return.' We are also almost certainly dealing with the same Nergal who was having such a hard time of it in Mari, so there is a pretty direct connection between the Mari rites of the Chariot of Nergal that are attested in administrative rituals for 5-7 and 10 Mari 9 and those of Anu of Uruk in the equivalent month which accounts for the day by day coordination of cultic events in these widely separated centers.

One might, then suppose that while, in Uruk, Anu was preparing for battle on the 7th of Tašritu, Nergal was doing the same in Mari, and that the rites of the 10th of the 9th month at Mari, which included both a *nubattum* and a sacrifice in the king's garden, as well as a group of supportive gods entering the palace⁹⁵ were designed to get Nergal out of the storehouse-prison in Antu's courtyard in Uruk and back home where he belonged before the dead broke open the gates of the Netherworld, and poured out to eat the living. What is more, the divination before Adad mentioned in this Uruk ritual⁹⁶ is likely to be the very Nabrûm that gave the 9th month at Mari its name in many of the Amorite calendars.

So, every year in the Fall, there was a celebration of the Amorite king's sacred marriage to the goddess Inanna/Ištar. This reached its apogee on the 7th of Mari 9 (Liliatum = Tašritu) which featured Eštar's banquet against a backdrop of preparations for war between her father Anu and Nergal/Latarak. Before this, there was a sort of prequel when Eštar seems to have been made to feel very welcome but was otherwise left at loose ends⁹⁷ This interlude survives in the Hittite cultic calendar as a rite performed for three days of either spring or fall festival of Ištar of Nineveh. What is happening is that Ištar is being bathed by the queen and oiled and given things to eat and drink. This gives the queen the opportunity to 'drink the goddess' in private,

⁹¹ Linssen, *Cults of Uruk and Babylon*, 185-187, 189-190 TU 40 obv. 1-rev. 19, TU 39 rev. 1-9.

⁹² See above.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 2004, 187, 190-191 TU 39 rev. 10-14, 15-25.

⁹⁴ The Mesopotamian Netherworld was not actually nether at all, but lay in every direction, including up and down, from ego. For details on Mesopotamian cosmology, see JoAnn Scurlock, 'World Encircling River,' in *Irrigation in Early States: New Directions* (ed. Stephanie Rost; Oriental Institute Seminars 13; Chicago: Oriental Institute, forthcoming).

⁹⁵ See below, Appendix 2, Day 10.

⁹⁶ See above.

⁹⁷ See above.

a time when a special personal favor may be asked.⁹⁸ And perhaps not only the queen; note the shoes issued to palace women on the 2nd of the 9th month at Mari.⁹⁹

For what it is worth, later Assyrian hemerologies have the 3rd of Tašritu as a ‘no sex with the wife’ day.¹⁰⁰ This ban also falls on the 6th when, at Mari, Eštar was in the shrine of Belet-ekallim.¹⁰¹ This shrine, then, will have been the venue for the king’s optional imaginary pre-nuptial intercourse with the goddess.¹⁰²

More to be Learned from Mari Seals

More information may be gleaned from Šamši-Adad’s celebratory seals. The scenes relevant to this ritual may be recognized by representations of the Goat Star,¹⁰³ curious figures representing the turn of the year,¹⁰⁴ and a cluster of grapes,¹⁰⁵ the grape harvest being in the Fall. From these seals, we learn that the *lulumtum* garment worn by the king for the occasion was essentially girded loins, or Amorite battle dress.¹⁰⁶ The king is not, however, shown grasping a weapon but instead an upside-down ram’s horn, in other words, a shofar.¹⁰⁷ Similar horns are shown being waved about in the hands of celebrants¹⁰⁸ indicating that the object was to summon people to the wedding banquet. This battle dress and the wrestling matches¹⁰⁹ are, therefore, a battle of the sexes between the king and Eštar as well as a reflection of the conflict between Anu and Nergal that is going on at the same time. The presence of Latarak, a by-form of Nergal,¹¹⁰ at the banquet of Eštar is probably not insignificant in this regard.

⁹⁸ Maurice Vieyra, ‘Ištar de Ninive.’ *Revue d’Assyriologie* 51 (1957): 89-92, 95-96 no. 3.

⁹⁹ See below, Appendix 2 under Day 2; with the possible exception of unedited texts, there are no entries for Day 3 of the festival.

¹⁰⁰ For details, see below.

¹⁰¹ See above.

¹⁰² Durand and Guichard, ‘Les rituels de Mari,’ 52, 57 no. 2 i 2’-4’.

¹⁰³ Topçuoğlu, ‘Emblems of Power,’ 97 fig. 4.2 = no. 19 = Otto, *Siegel*, 43-45, Tafel 50a-d and 51a-c (M23) shows this Goat Star framed by Pleiades on one side and Taurus being pushed up by a Laḫmu on the other. The effect is to entrap the Sumerian Autumnal Equinox in Araḫšamna between two representations of the Sumerian Vernal Equinox in Ayyaru.

¹⁰⁴ Topçuoğlu, ‘Emblems of Power,’ seal no. 5 = Otto, *Siegel*, 33-35, Tafel 42a-f.

¹⁰⁵ Topçuoğlu, ‘Emblems of Power,’ seal no. 158.

¹⁰⁶ Compare Topçuoğlu, ‘Emblems of Power,’ seal no. 6 = Otto, *Siegel*, 53-56 Tafel 58a-d (M37) (ungirded) with Topçuoğlu, ‘Emblems of Power,’ seal no. 9 = Otto, *Siegel*, 36-38, Tafel 44a-g, 45a-g (M13) (girded). From *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* L (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1973), 244a, we learn that the *lulumtum* was a ‘battle cloak’ and that these could weigh 4 2/3 minas. An administrator of the palace at Mari charged with preparations for the Feast of Eštar (ARM XXVI/2 285 r. 27’) was having a seriously bad day. Not only did he have no *tiyāru*-cedar to make the chariot for the goddess to ride in and was having to use *šarbatu*-poplar instead (ARM XXVI/2 285 r. 18’-31’), but he was short 2 minas of wool, almost half of what he needed for the *lulumtum*-garment and, to add insult to injury, the wool was an expensive import (ARM XXVI/2 285 obv. 3-18). From this text, we learn that the garment was woven from wool that was the color of *dūšu*-leather (ARM XXVI/2 285 obv. 5, 7, 8, 12, 13, 15, 16). This would be orange, essentially imitation leather armor.

¹⁰⁷ Topçuoğlu, ‘Emblems of Power,’ seal no. 9 = Otto, *Siegel*, 36-38, Tafel 44a-g, 45a-g (M13). These are most clearly shown on Topçuoğlu no. 293 = Nimet Özgüç, *Acemhöyük—Burušhaddum I: Cylinder Seals and Bullae with Cylinder Seal Impressions* (Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları V/7; Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2015), 105 (CS 45).

¹⁰⁸ Topçuoğlu, ‘Emblems of Power,’ seal nos. 294 & 344 = Özgüç, *Acemhöyük*, 101; (CS 40) and Özgüç, *Acemhöyük*, 123-24 (CS 65).

¹⁰⁹ Durand and Guichard, ‘Les rituels de Mari,’ 54-55, 58 no. 2 ii 8’, iii 23.

¹¹⁰ See Durand and Guichard, ‘Les rituels de Mari,’ 48. He appears in Durand and Guichard, ‘Les rituels de Mari,’ 54, 58 no. 2 ii 2’.

This banquet also appears on seals, with the king standing on one side of a table and the goddess on the other.¹¹¹ The food for this imagined banquet features a fish.¹¹² We know that in Ur in the Early Dynastic period, ocean fish were particularly to be eaten in the festivities of Ayyaru, the then Vernal Equinox.¹¹³ Presumably, the then Sumerian Autumnal equinox in Arahšamna will have featured fresh water fish to make a pair. Both types of fish are attested in the sacrificial pit at Ramat Rahel.¹¹⁴

The battle of the sexes involved the king getting what he wanted without having to put up for longer than necessary with Ištar's unwifely behavior. As with more standard Sacred Marriages, then, the wedding ended in a sometimes more and sometimes less amicable separation allowing both parties to marry other partners. This is symbolized on Šamši-Adad's official seals by the king's release of a bird representing Eštar that goes off to land on the hand of one of her imagined new partners, the Anatolian hunting god, Kurunta.¹¹⁵

Subsequently, the king will have renewed his vows with his human wife, thereby consummating his relationship with the goddess. In this context, the favor solicited by the queen during her three day wedding-preparation of Eštar¹¹⁶ is likely to have been the all-important son and successor which it was her duty to provide to her husband. Both having a child and having a child of a particular sex were in Ištar/Inanna's gift.

As for the ex-wife goddess, she was, after her marriage to the king, temporarily married to other divinities--Adad of Aleppo for Amorite consumption and Kurunta for those of Anatolian origin. Both divinities are shown courting Eštar before her marriage alongside the king,¹¹⁷ and both become her spouse, Kurunta after and Adad both before and after she had her temporary marriage with the king. Since both of these divinities already had wives, we may imagine this as somewhere between a fling and disastrous first marriage(s) that quickly ended in an amicable divorce. Either way, a relationship was created between the king and the involved divinities that long outlasted the sexually incontinent Ištar's love affairs, thus making the chief gods of two important ethnic constituencies within and without Šamši-Adad's empire royal patrons.

Feasting and Identity

Apart from divine patronage, the unstated goal of this kingship ritual was to create within the boundaries of Šamši-Adad's empire a sense of community and common identity that ignored ethnic boundaries, a nationalism of brotherhood as opposed to the otherhood of modern national identity. By its very nature, then, Šamši-Adad's kingship ritual had no intrinsic connection to this monarch or his dynasty and was eagerly adopted by those who eliminated his line, both at Mari and in Assyria. Amorite Zimri-Lim's short-lived attempt at continuation perished in the flames of his palace at Mari. Fortunately, the Assyrians, despite a campaign of extirpation directed at Šamši-Adad's descendants, embraced this ritual as foundational to their national identity and found other means to create a sense of brotherhood in their much

¹¹¹ One of the seals, Topçuoğlu, 'Emblems of Power,' seal no. 324 = Özgüç, *Acemhöyük*, 161-62 (CS 97) even shows the designated eater described in the ritual as a tiny man standing before the king and mimicking his gestures.

¹¹² Topçuoğlu, 'Emblems of Power,' seal no. 321 = Özgüç, *Acemhöyük*, 160 (CS 95).

¹¹³ Cohen, *Festivals and Calendars*, 74-75. For the position of the equinox in Sumerian times, see JoAnn Scurlock 'Nippur's Galileo Problem,' in this volume.

¹¹⁴ Fulton et alia, 'Feasting in Paradis,' 36-37.

¹¹⁵ Topçuoğlu, 'Emblems of Power,' seal no. 340 = Özgüç, *Acemhöyük*, 127-28 (CS 68).

¹¹⁶ See above.

¹¹⁷ Topçuoğlu, 'Emblems of Power,' seal nos. 328, cf. no. 325 = Özgüç, *Acemhöyük*, 122-23 (CS 64) and 149-51 (CS 85).

extended empire. These means included moving people from one side of the empire to the other and drawing young men in small numbers from all over to participate in joint military campaigns and joint building projects culminating in communal dinners in which herbs and spices from every corner of the empire were put together to create a communal curry. The message was everywhere the same. Keep your gods, keep your customs, but you need to think of people with different gods and different customs as your brothers engaged in a common enterprise from which all will benefit.¹¹⁸

The Middle Assyrian Rituals of Kingship

As for the kingship ritual, fast forward from Šamši-Adad I, contemporary of and kinsman of Hammurabi of Babylon at the beginning of the 2nd millennium to its end, the Middle Assyrian and contemporary Middle Babylonian period. As we have already noted, the Middle Assyrian Ritual of Kingship provides the obvious text for the performances of the rites associated with the twice yearly blooming of the pomegranate trees planted in the garden of the *akitu*-house in the steppe outside the city of Aššur rebuilt by Sennacherib to accommodate festival banquets that had, while the Middle Assyrian structure had lain in ruins, been celebrated in a garden inside the city.¹¹⁹ The rituals in question were Sacred Marriage rites involving three separate marriages.

The first of these does not concern us. The second marriage performed annually in the Middle Assyrian period in Aššur's *akitu*-house in the steppe was between the Assyrian Enlil and Ištar by virtue of which she became Queen of Heaven. It was known as the bed ritual of the *kulilu*, a silver diadem worn by goddesses on their wedding days. This rite will have been taken over from the Vernal Equinox marriage of Enlil with Annunītu¹²⁰ celebrated in Assyria by virtue of the equation of Aššur with Enlil by Šamši-Adad.

The Assyrian king, playing the role of paronymph, brought Ištar and Aššur into the bedroom, soaked the ritual bed with the contents of a *maqû*-bowl to represent consummation and offered a midnight snack of boiled meat to Aššur and roasted meat to Ištar. The bed also considerably received roasted meat as its reward. That done, the king came out where the assembled crowd could see him.¹²¹ The rest of the ritual is unfortunately lost.

The final ritual was a marriage between the human king and the goddess which, in addition to all else, created an indirect relationship between the king and the national god. The beginning is unfortunately broken, but when we pick up the action, we have an *apu*-pit, which is receiving blood, honey and herbs, beer and wine. The prominence of this pit, used for making offerings to Netherworld and primordial gods, marks the timing of the ritual as being in the seventh

¹¹⁸ On feasting as a political tool used by the Assyrians 'to unify the conquered lands and to turn local elites into loyal clients', see also Fulton et alia, 'Feasting in Paradis,' 29; cf. 42-44 with further references. The emphasis on elites is something of an obsession with anthropologists generally as is the tendency to attribute the worst possible motives to empires generally and the Assyrian empire in particular (as in Dietler, apud Fulton et alia, 'Feasting in Paradis,' 2, 30). Those attending Aššurnaširpal II's banquet at Kalhu were anything but elite and a good reign, by Assyrian standards, was one in which the notables spoke and common people listened and viceversa. Ernst Weidner, 'Assurnasirpal in Assur,' *Archiv für Orientforschung* 13 (1939/41) 210 no. 3 obv. 12-13.

¹¹⁹ Kataja and Whiting, *Grants, Decrees and Gifts*, no. 86.

¹²⁰ This originally took place on the 10th of the month Ayyaru but was moved in Assyria to (the 10th of) the month Nisannu to accord with the progression of the equinoxes. Sennacherib states that the celebration at the beginning of the year that should take place in the *akitu*-house in the steppe outside Aššur was to take place in Nisannu (Kataja and Whiting, *Grants, Decrees and Gifts*, no. 86: 5, 14). For more, see Scurlock 'Nippur's Galileo Problem,' below in this volume.

¹²¹ Eric Ebeling, 'Kultische Texte aus Assur,' *Orientalia NS* 21 (1952) 143,145 ii 10-26.

month, Tašritu. The king is sitting on a stool waiting for meat to roast. When it has, the king skewers the flesh of the front of the neck with a small iron dagger to feed the Lisikkutu gods while singers sing: Roast Meat, Roast Meat, Roast Meat, Let them eat'. This piece of meat goes into the *apu*-pit. There is a table, which gets purified before the king makes another public appearance.¹²²

After a further lacuna, we find the king emptying a golden *maqû*-bowl belonging to the *harû*-vat whose opening symbolized the defeat of Tiamat in the Assyrian version of the Babylonian New Year's Festival.¹²³ He stands on a pedestal while the singers sing: O, *illûru*-berry, O *illûru*-berry', a reference to rouged cheeks, to the accompaniment of cymbals held by the king and magnates. The king sits down at table for the *naptunu* (a communal meal in which king and notables feast together). After the meal, the *šangu*-priest enacts a mock battle (a dim reflection of the Nergal—Anu battle seen in Uruk and Mari but probably actually meant to reference a rather different battle celebrated, if that is the word for it, at Middle Babylonian Nippur).¹²⁴ The singer performs his rites and, when he has released the francolin (the bird whose release at Mari left the goddess free to move on to other partners). The *šangu* presents water for hand-washing to Ištar and the king. In Šamši-Adad's original, there was also a ritual hand washing of the king and his ex-bride that similarly took place after the meal; you might say that the king was washing his hands of her. In the Middle Assyrian ritual, the singer finishes his rites, after which the small audience of common people who have attended the ritual leave, and they shut the gates.¹²⁵

The king takes a foreleg from the table (the word used is not Akkadian but *dura'u* = Hebrew *zerah*) and puts it on bread to feed the Lisikkutu while the singers sing: 'Who can spend the night in the Silver House?' This offering, too, ends up in the *apu*-pit with honey, herbs, beer and wine poured after it to wash it down. The singer fills in the *apu*-pit (with the rest of the remains of the meal) and the king puts his foot on the (filled in) *apu*-pit, stamping it down.¹²⁶ In the context of the seventh month, the remains in the pit represents a *kispu*-offering¹²⁷ to placate the primordial gods of original creation whose defeat in the time before time ensured the cycle of life and death in the time-bound world.¹²⁸ The rites completed, the king kisses [ground] and goes straight to the palace.¹²⁹

The Middle Assyrian Tašritu Sacred Marriage rite has room for the Mari pre-marital-sex-on-the-nearest-bed encounter in its broken section. However, as at Mari, the bed has no part to play in (what is preserved of) the rest of the ritual. Moreover, there is a ritual releasing of

¹²² Ibid., 143-144, 145-146 iii 1-28.

¹²³ 'The king who opens the *harû*-vat in the race is Marduk, who defeated Tiamat with his penis' (Alasdair Livingstone, *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea* [State Archives of Assyria 3; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1989], no. 37: 18).

¹²⁴ See below.

¹²⁵ Ebeling, 'Kultische Texte,' 144, 146 iv 1-14.

¹²⁶ Note that the pits at Ramat Rahel were literally beneath the floor and 'not distinguishable above the courtyard level' (Fulton, et alia, 'Feasting in Paradis,' 31). The holes deliberately pierced at the base of some of the buried vessels is not a feature of feasting events (so Zuckerman, apud Fulton et alia, 'Feasting in Paradis,' 34) but a clear indication, attested round the world, of offerings intended for otherworldly recipients. Ditto the horse and rider figurines found with the vessels.

¹²⁷ For these funerary offerings for the ghosts of humans and gods, see Akio Tsukimoto, *Untersuchungen zur Totenpflege (kispum) im alten Mesopotamien* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 216; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1985), and for this set of such offerings, note especially pp. 201-217.

¹²⁸ Is it completely irrelevant that Ramat Rahel is situated in the Rephaim Valley (Fulton et alia, 'Feasting in Paradis,' 30)?

¹²⁹ Ebeling, 'Kultische Texte,' 144, 146 iv 15-29.

the francolin, which, in the original Šamši-Adad ritual, allowed Ištar to go where she pleased. Most interestingly, the answer to the singer's question: 'Who can spend the night in the Silver House?' seems to be 'Not the king', since afterwards he 'goes straight to the palace.' The obvious conclusion is that the king's relationship with the goddess was consummated with his queen after his return home at the end of the rite. This, as we have already suggested, will have been the ultimate finish to the original rite at Mari.

Battles in Middle Babylonian Nippur

The Mari rites of the seventh month crossed the battle of the sexes with a cosmic conflict centered around Anu of Uruk and the Chariot of Nergal. In Babylonia in the Middle Babylonian period, the seventh month was also associated with battles in the sky, but over a rather different issue that pitted the city of Nippur against Babylon.¹³⁰ We find ourselves in the seventh month in the middle of three confrontations between Ninurta (as the planet Mercury) and Marduk (as the planet Jupiter) over which of them would be Lord of Time.¹³¹ As Nippur understood things, Ninurta won round one in the second month, Ayyaru, and Marduk round three in the ninth month, Kislimu. The middle seventh month, Tašrītu, was serious bad news, since both parties lost and wound up in the Netherworld to be rescued by the goddess Gula, to whom offerings were correspondingly to be made.

These rites of Nippur have to be pieced together using an actual Middle Babylonian Offering List from Nippur paired with a Neo-Assyrian text known as the Nippur Compendium and a late Cultic Commentary. The Nippur Compendium's cryptic entries for the later activities for the seventh month are: Chariot of Enlil, Foremost Weapon of (Ninurta and) Enlil = For the rising of Šamaš (Renewal) and Urunakku = Reed hut¹³²

The Middle Babylonian offering list may be lined up with these entries with the help of the preceding lines in the Nippur Compendium which refer to the Festival of Ištar involving a 'Long River Ordeal.'¹³³ This corresponds to the Offering List's final entry for the sixth month, 28 Ulūlu: 'She puts her garment down on the dias and (goes to) the River Ordeal.'¹³⁴

The following entry in the Offering List is unfortunately broken, but it gives 7 Tašrītu as the date for the rite described in the Nippur Compendium in which the Chariot and Weapon were renewed by being left out overnight for the sun to rise over them.¹³⁵ We may perhaps assume that this is also what happened to the Chariot of Nergal at Mari. In any case, we are preparing for a battle. The opponent is revealed in the Offering List's next entry for 8 Tašrītu which records the issue to the Temple of Marduk of offerings appropriate to a procession to coordinate with the Nippur Compendium's Reed Hut rite.¹³⁶ The next day, 9 Tašrītu in the

¹³⁰ For more on this see Scurlock, 'Nippur's Galileo Problem,' below in this volume.

¹³¹ This is fallout from Nippur's Galileo Problem for which see below. To note is that the 3rd millennium Lagash/Girsu calendar has an Ayyaru to Simanu festival and an Ulūlu to Tašrītu festival in which offerings are made to the planet Jupiter (Cohen, *Festivals and Calendars*, 62-63, 64-66).

¹³² Nippur Compendium § 13 29'-30' (Andrew R. George, *Babylonian Topographical Texts* [Orientalia Lovaniensia Analectia 40; Louvain: Peeters, 1992], 154-155).

¹³³ Nippur Compendium § 13 26'-28' (George, *Topographical Texts*, 154-155).

¹³⁴ Jonathan S. Tenney, 'The Elevation of Marduk Revisited: Festivals and Sacrifices at Nippur,' *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 68 (2016), 165, 166 rev. 6. This is reading BĀRA TÚG.GAR.RA rather than Tenney's DŪR.GAR.RA. It is her garment that is going on the dias and not her posterior.

¹³⁵ Tenney, 'Elevation of Marduk,' 165, 166 rev. 7 = Nippur Compendium § 13 29' (George, *Topographical Texts*, 154-155).

¹³⁶ Tenney, 'Elevation of Marduk,' 165, 166 rev. 8 = Nippur Compendium § 13 30' (George, *Topographical Texts*, 154-155).

Offering List, has issues identical to those given to the Temple of Marduk at Marduk's *akitu* festival in the first month, Nisannu, but they go instead to the Temple of Gula.¹³⁷ The 26th of Tašritu brings offerings described as the ŠUK LUGAL, the 'royal portion'.¹³⁸ The quantities and destination are comparable with Ninurta's release of captive gods on the 26th of the second month,¹³⁹ the triumphant finish to Ninurta's Ayyaru battle with enemies about which we will hear much more later.¹⁴⁰ The resulting reaffirmation of the kingship of Ninurta's father Enlil also reaffirmed the kingship of his human counterpart, which is why he receives a portion. The final rite of the month, on 29 Tašritu, is an offering to the Primordial Mound, about which more presently.¹⁴¹

The Cultic Commentary, OECT 11.69+70, is unfortunately fragmentary but it adds in the crucial details. It, too, has the 28 Ulūlu entry about Ištar and her River Ordeal.¹⁴² The following entry, the first for Tašritu, is missing its date but this can, with confidence, be restored as the 7th. On this day, there was a lament for Lugaldukuga, 'king of the Primordial Mound' a forefather of Enlil, who was honored with a ritual *apu-pit*. This is the Nippur equivalent of the pits in the Middle Assyrian Kingship Ritual and of those whose archaeological remains we have been studying.¹⁴³ On the next day, which may be restored as the 8th, there was a purification rite for the people and Lugaldukuga was seated, presumably in the reed hut mentioned in the Nippur Compendium.¹⁴⁴ The 8th was also the day for the procession from the Marduk Temple, one would think taking Marduk to his *akitu*-house as in the Babylonian New Years' Festival in the first month of the year.¹⁴⁵ The procession was indeed followed on the 9th by offerings appropriate to an *akitu* of Marduk but they were made instead to the Temple of Gula which suggests that Marduk's journey was to Gula's house.¹⁴⁶ As to why this was necessary, the Cultic Commentary originally gave an explanation of which what survives is Gula and 'their ghosts',¹⁴⁷ quite enough to tell us that both Ninurta and Marduk wound up at the end of their battle in the Netherworld and were only rescued from this predicament by a goddess of healing whose Sumerian name, Nindinugga, means 'mistress who brings the dead to life.' The final entry in the Cultic Commentary for the month, 2[9] Tašritu, has a lamentation, presumably to accompany the *kispu*-offerings to the Primordial Mound.¹⁴⁸

In the Neo-Assyrian period, our information about the final version of the Babylonian celebration becomes more or less complete. From a Neo-Assyrian letter to the king, we learn that, in Babylon, Bel (Marduk) was dressed on the 7th of Tašritu in a special garment. We also hear that the gate of the Esagila temple was left open on the 8th and that the divine statue went in procession 'as in the month Nisannu.'¹⁴⁹ What the king was not told, although he will certainly have known this, is that Marduk was being readied on the 7th for his ill-fated battle

¹³⁷ 40/40/2 for the Nisannu *akitu* of the Marduk Temple (Tenney, 'Elevation of Marduk,' 165, 166 obv. 12') and 40/40/2 for the Temple of Gula on 9 Tašritu (Tenney, 'Elevation of Marduk,' 165, 166 rev. 9).

¹³⁸ Tenney, 'Elevation of Marduk,' 165, 166 rev. 10.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 165, 166 obv. 18'.

¹⁴⁰ See below, Scurlock, 'Nippur's Galileo Problem,' in this volume.

¹⁴¹ Tenney, 'Elevation of Marduk,' 165, 166 rev. 11. See below.

¹⁴² OECT 11.69+70 ii § 7'.

¹⁴³ OECT 11.69+70 ii § 8'.

¹⁴⁴ OECT 11.69+70 ii § 9'.

¹⁴⁵ Tenney, 'Elevation of Marduk,' 165, 166 rev. 8.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 165 rev. 9.

¹⁴⁷ OECT 11.69+70 ii § 10'.

¹⁴⁸ OECT 11.69+70 ii § 12'.

¹⁴⁹ Simo Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars* (State Archives of Assyria 10; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1993), no. 253 rev. 2-7.

with Ninurta and that the procession of the 8th was indeed as in the month Nisannu, only it was to gain the intercession of Gula for his release from the Netherworld prison. We may also recognize in the garment of the 7th of Tašritu, the *lulumtum*, Amorite battle dress for an Amorite god.

The Late Babylonian (so Neo-Assyrian or Neo-Babylonian) ritual for the Esagila complex for the third encounter in the ninth month, Kislimu, adds further details. On the [15th of Ayyaru], the 8th of Tašritu and 4th of Kislimu, Ninurta and the image of Bel got up from their cella's and took up a station before the [...] gate.¹⁵⁰ For Tašritu, this will have been in the night preceding the eighth day in the open under the night sky to allow the sunrise to 'renew' the participants. The same will have been true of the 15th of Ayyaru and the 4th of Kislimu.¹⁵¹ The *lillisu*-drums that have been going on all night are relieved in the morning by *alû*-drums arranged as on 8 Tašritu, when the gate before Bel is opened. With a brief interruption so that Marduk does not miss his morning meal, the rite of the *alû*-drums arranged as on 8 Tašritu is performed. A golden *namḥaru*-vat is placed between them. This was destined to be filled from four *namzîtu*-vats lurking in the left of the courtyard. These *namzîtu*-vats are used to make beer by pounding beer mash and adding water, the distant ancestor of Budweiser.¹⁵² This was, of course, to be allowed to ferment in the *namzîtu*-vats. In the actual 8 Tašritu equivalent, given the timing to coincide with the grape harvest, the participants could instead have used wine with grapes and brewers' yeast substituted for the beer mash. In any case the effect was similar to the bowls of water of the original Šamši-Adad star summoning ritual.¹⁵³

For his son Šamaš-šum-ukin, Esarhaddon formalized royal participation by the king of Babylonia in the rites of the seventh month in Southern Mesopotamia. Although the destruction of Assyria was unspeakably violent, this Assyrian ritual continued to be performed by Neo-Babylonian kings. Our latest copy of the ritual instructions is from the reign of Artaxerxes.¹⁵⁴

This festival, like its Assyrian counterpart celebrated in the seventh month in Northern Mesopotamia, was a pair with the rites of the first month of the year¹⁵⁵ as well as being part of what was originally a Sumerian festival honoring the Primordial Mound of Creation,¹⁵⁶ to which, as we have seen, offerings were still being made. Indeed, the end of the seventh month found late Babylonian householders making propitiatory offerings to primordial gods such as Lugaldukuga ('king of the primordial mound') and Enmešarra.¹⁵⁷ This Primordial Mound corresponds to the first stage in the evolutionary process described in the Babylonian Creation Epic in which there appear suddenly, by spontaneous generation, creatures neither living nor exactly dead but more or less both at the same time and located, if that is the word for it, somewhere and nowhere in infinite time and space. After the god Marduk got through battling with them, they became what we call the constellations. The constellations were forced by

¹⁵⁰ G. Čağırğan and Wilfred G. Lambert, 1991-93. 'The Late Babylonian Kislimu Ritual for Esagil,' *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 43-45 (1991-93): 100: 164-166.

¹⁵¹ There was an offering on this date at Nippur (Tenney, 'Elevation of Marduk,' 165, 166 rev. 18) which is broken, but has the same amounts as on the 9th of Tašritu (40/40/2) when Gula got her thank-you offerings.

¹⁵² Čağırğan and Lambert, 'Kislimu Ritual,' 95-96: 55-62.

¹⁵³ See above.

¹⁵⁴ Claus Ambos, *Der König im Gefängnis und das Neujahrsfest im Herbst: Mechanismen der Legitimation des babylonischen Herrschers im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr. und ihre Geschichte* (Dresden: Islet Verlag, 2013), 195.

¹⁵⁵ For a chart of the events of what he styles The New Years' Festival of the Fall, see Ambos, *Der König im Gefängnis*, 54.

¹⁵⁶ For details, see Blahoslav Hruška, 'Zum 'Heiligen Hügel' in der altmesopotamischen Religion,' *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 86 (1996) 161-175.

¹⁵⁷ René Labat, *Hémérologies et Ménologies d'Assur* (Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, 1939), 120-123: 18-21.

Marduk to move along tracks laid out for them, being killed and brought back to life in a yearly cycle that produced and maintained the flow of time.¹⁵⁸ At each repeated cycle, however, these primordial beings were given a chance, in the mutually destructive conflict between Ninurta and Marduk of the seventh month, to stop the clock, preventing the creative process that disturbed their sleep from ever having happened.¹⁵⁹ Since humans were part of that process, it was obviously in their interest to make sure that every time was like the first time.

On the 4th of Tašritu, the king was to release seven marsh birds. The householder in the know also captured and released a bird on the 3rd or 4th, depending on which hemerology he consulted.¹⁶⁰ The accompanying recitation in Esarhaddon's ritual indicates that these were birds of heaven created by Anu whose release was meant to produce a similar release of the king at the hands of the Sungod, Šamaš.¹⁶¹ This is a rather dramatic re-interpretation of the original bird release, but it quite suits its new context. We are here seeing a rather different side of the god of heaven, Anu. In the *Enuma eliš*, he is a creation of AN.ŠĀR,¹⁶² representing the outermost of the spherical three heavens and earths that separated bounded space from infinity, and started the process of active Creation.¹⁶³ The date of Anu's birth, however, remains in the same month, Tašritu, as Saturn's imagined exaltation.¹⁶⁴ Active creation as procreation produces successive generations of noisy, rambunctious gods. Anu's children and grandchildren are soon in need of champions, being in danger of being eliminated by the reactionary primordial gods whose greatest ambition is to spend eternity asleep. Unfortunately, in Tašritu, the god Marduk was, depending on how you look at it, either not yet born or out of commission, and so the human king had to go to the Netherworld along with Marduk, hopefully both to be released with the intercession of the healing goddess Gula.

In preparation for this hazardous journey, the king underwent rituals of cleansing and purification seconded in both Assyria and Babylonia, by popular house cleanings. In the Cultic Commentary, these are mentioned only for 8 Tašritu and associated with Lugaldukuga and the reed hut. Elsewhere, in both Assyria and Babylonia, house cleaning began already with the first day of the month and involved increasingly onerous taboos culminating in what is called in Hebrew the *shebat shebatin* (the seventh day of the seventh month) when just about any conceivable activity was forbidden.¹⁶⁵

The calculation works well with seven days of Creation, but the Jewish Sabbath that this story justifies has its likely origins at the chthonic end of Yahweh's activities as Lord of She'ol. At Mari, the seventh month was at the Summer solstice, a time when funerary offerings were made to the ghosts of the dead. It seems obvious that food taboos of one kind or another would accrue

¹⁵⁸ See JoAnn Scurlock, 'The World Encircling River,' in *Irrigation in Early States: New Directions* (ed. Stephanie Rost; Oriental Institute Seminars 13; Chicago: The Oriental Institute, forthcoming).

¹⁵⁹ As Astrolabe B puts it, the seventh month is the month when the Anunnaki gods receive the sacrifices of the land, the gates of the Apsû are opened, and *kispu*-offerings are made to Lugaldukuga, Enki and Ninki, the forefathers of Enlil (Tsukimoto, *Totenpflege*, 201: 25-29; 33-38).

¹⁶⁰ Labat, *Hémérologies*, 112-113: 22-24 or 170-171: 34-41.

¹⁶¹ Ambos, *Der König im Gefängnis*, 216: A₂ 16'-18'; 217: B₁ 2-4. For the prayer, see Ambos, *Der König im Gefängnis*, 226-227: B₂ 25'-31'.

¹⁶² For more on this divinity, see Scurlock 'Nippur's Galileo Problem' in this volume.

¹⁶³ See Scurlock, 'World Encircling River'.

¹⁶⁴ According the omen series *iqqur ipuš*, Tašritu was the month of the heliacal rising of Libra and the month of the planet Saturn (Tsukimoto, *Totenpflege*, 202: 6).

¹⁶⁵ Labat, *Hémérologies*, 168, 169: 8-174, 175: 40 (Assyria); 176, 177:48 -178, 179: 53, 1-34 (Akkad). Another text simply forbids fish on the 2nd and 4th (Labat, *Hémérologies*, 112-113: 20-21, 25-26; 114, 115: 32-116, 117:66 and just about anything you would care to do or eat on the 7th.

to this double seven day to avoid the possibility that the dead might just take somebody living back with them. The complete absence of any activity in the seventh day of the Babylonian seventh month among the common people of the Neo-Assyrian and neo-Babylonian periods also relates to the confrontation between Mercury and Jupiter taking place in that particular month in which they kill each other. With no planet to force them to move, the stars (and time) stand still, and so should you until sunrise of the 8th brings with it the resurrection of the Lords of Time.¹⁶⁶ Already in Mari, the end of the local equivalent of the Babylonian seventh month of Tašrītu was marked not only by a visit of the dead but a sort of joint *akītu*-celebration in which all of the gods of Mari were imagined as leaving for the Netherworld and then returning to their temples to re-establish their relations with the human community.¹⁶⁷

On this 7th day of the 7th month in Babylonia, a canal is dug in the courtyard of the palace. This is filled with water, and a *makurru*-boat floated on it to facilitate the arrival of the starry participants invoked with sacrifice during the following night. This is fairly certainly the origin of the Rosh Hashanah canal into which sins are ritually to be thrown,¹⁶⁸ but curiously had its ultimate origin in the bowls of water and sailor's throne of Šamši-Adad's original Autumnal ritual.¹⁶⁹

The Babylonian king of the Neo-Assyrian ritual goes out to a specially constructed structure in the steppeland. It was literally a 'place of imprisonment,' curiously the original meaning in Persian of the term Paradise, and was a walled space with a gate to the East and another gate to the West, leading to the Netherworld. The gate to the East and home is shut fast and the entrance blocked by a *namzītu*-vat. Inside the pallisade was a hut, and both the pallisade and the hut were made of reeds. The king is stripped of his regalia and given a throne special to this ritual.¹⁷⁰ We are seeing here the reed hut of the Nippur Compendium but in the Babylonian version, complete with Bel's *namzītu*-vats.

The king spends the night of the 8th¹⁷¹ in this hut, hopefully protected by a series of sacrifices to the gods of Nippur and Babylon and various stars including the planet Jupiter, astral manifestation of the god Marduk, the planet Saturn, astral manifestation of the god Anu, the Wagon Star (our Big Dipper), the Arrow Star (Sirius), Orion the three stars of whose belt formed the Bow Star, and the Pleiades.¹⁷² In the morning of the 8th of Tašrītu, before sunrise, the king gets up on a pedestal set out on a reed mat and a linen cloth in the eastern gate of his prison and watched the sun rise over his head to the accompaniment of appropriate sacrifices.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁶ It should go without saying that no enlightenment is to be gleaned from statements such as: 'when the ancients looked at their ten fingers or considered the number 10 when counting, their brains instinctively envisaged 10 as three plus a remainder (7). Their brains subconsciously divided reality into 3 and 7. Three was the innate natural number, 'the human number', and the remainder, 10-3, seven, therefore was the non-human number, the number of the 'Other', of the divine' (Cohen, *Festivals and Calendars*, 428). That 'humans', defined as people like 'moderns' (aka Christians) and allegedly Sumerians, who organize their world around the number 3 consider those who organize their world around the number 7 (Zoroastrians, Jews and Muslims) to be 'other' and to operate not by rational thought, of which they are incapable, but by 'instinct' and 'subconscious' processes is well known. We do not need to be reminded of this fact.

¹⁶⁷ This will have been the motivation for the sacrificial tour of temples on 27 Mari 9 described in Georges Dossin, 'La Panthéon de Mari,' in *Studia Mariana* (ed. André Parrot et al, Leiden: Brill, 1950), 43-45.

¹⁶⁸ For details, see 'Rosh Hashanah,' *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/Rosh_Hashanah).

¹⁶⁹ See above.

¹⁷⁰ Ambos, *Der König im Gefängnis*, 216: A₂ 19'-25'; 217: B₁ 4-17.

¹⁷¹ The night of the 8th will have preceded the day of the 8th by Mesopotamian reckoning.

¹⁷² Ambos, *Der König im Gefängnis*, 217-218: B₁ 17-52; 219-221: C 1'-23'; A₁ iii 1-21; D1'-8'.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 221-222: D9'-14'; 222-223: A₂ 1-11; B₁ 1'-8'. This is not proof that the Assyrian king performed an annual ritual to equate himself with the Sungod (so Eckart Frahm, 'Rising Suns and Falling Stars' in *Experiencing Power--Generating*

While this was going on out in the steppeland, the god Marduk, as we have seen, was himself dressed in a special garment and standing on a pedestal confronting Ninurta at the gates of their respective cellae, echoing the renewal at sunrise of the Chariot of Enlil and the Weapon of Ninurta at Nippur according to the Nippur Compendium as well, presumably, as the Chariot of Nergal at Mari, but with a different hero. What was supposed to be happening, then, was that Marduk was fighting his way home to the upper world. As the king, impersonating Marduk, stood on his pedestal armed with quivers, he and his assisting *āšipu* grasped *mulmullu*-arrows. The king is given his rod of justice, his gold ring crown, his mace, his bow, his ring of power and his stones. He continues to wear or carry all of these except for the bow, the mace and the ring of power, which are taken back by the *āšipu* and put on the royal throne. This done, the king goes home and enters the palace.¹⁷⁴ This return journey corresponds to Marduk's procession of 8 Tašritu, when he went off to seek the intercession of Gula for which, according to the Nippur Offering List, he had to pay dearly.¹⁷⁵

All may have been doom and gloom in Babylonia, but in Assyria, the king's annual marriage to Ištar had its denouement after the seven days of abstinence (including an explicit no-sex rule for the 3rd and 6th)¹⁷⁶ in a public celebration in which everybody feasted and renewed their wedding vows in the hopes of engendering a son, a gift from Ištar in which common people could also participate.¹⁷⁷

It is, in my view, this day that is represented in the famous Aššurbanipal relief of feasting in the garden.¹⁷⁸ The timing is perfect--the campaign against Teumman began in the sixth month. The king is shown feasting with his queen, mandatory, as we have seen for the 8th of the seventh month. She wears the *kulilu/kililu*, the mural crown worn by the goddess Ištar on her wedding day that made her Queen of Heaven,¹⁷⁹ just as Aššurbanipal's wife became Queen of the Empire by virtue of her marriage.

The crown as represented on the relief looks like a miniature set of city walls, complete with towers. This is not what the actual crown looked like, but is a metaphorical representation based on the use of the word for diadem to describe the battlements of a city, you might say its crowning glory. The actual crown is described in cult inventories of the goddess Ištar of Uruk as being a diadem with 30 gold rosettes and 27 precious and [semi-precious] stones as fill.¹⁸⁰

Authority: *Cosmos and Politics in the Ideology of Kingship* [ed. Jane A. Hill, et alia; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2013], 110-112). It is the Babylonian king who was to perform this ritual, and the purpose of having the Sun rise over him was, as the prayer to the birds at the commencement of the ritual clearly indicates, to ensure his release from his Netherworld prison. 'You, bird of heaven, the creation of [Anu], I, a human being, the creation of N[inmenanna] (Ea), ca[ll] upon you. The fowler caught [you] but I saved your [li]fe and let yo[u] see [the light]. You Shamash, protect [my] li[fe]. Just as I g[ave a gift] of life to this bird, give me the gift of my life' (Ambos, *Der König im Gefängnis*, 226-227: B₂ 25'-31').

¹⁷⁴ Ambos *Der König im Gefängnis*, 224-226: A₂ 12-18; A₁ 1'-4'; B₂ 9'-20'.

¹⁷⁵ See above.

¹⁷⁶ Labat, *Hémérologies*, 170, 171: 27-33; 172, 173: 7-17.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 174, 175: 41-176, 177:46

¹⁷⁸ This is mentioned as a comparand for Ramat Rahel feast in Fulton et alia, 'Feasting in Paradise,' 44.

¹⁷⁹ Such a crown with its encrusting stones was donned by the goddess Antu, wife of Anu on the 16th of Ayyaru for a joyous visit to the Ekur because the (eternal) Á.SIG₄ (sheep) had been put in her lap (OECT 11.69+70 i § 6). The sheep was eternal because this was the part of a woman's dowry that the husband could only use if he replaced it, and it was put into her lap as a sign that she was engaged to be married, which is why she put on the *kililu*.

¹⁸⁰ Paul Alain Beaulieu, 1999. 'Un inventaire de joaillerie sacrée de l'Eanna d'Uruk,' *Revue d'Assyriologie* 93 (1999), 144: 69.

As luck would have it, we have actual examples of such crowns from the Queen's Tombs at Nimrud. It would seem that, as with Arab women of North Africa to at least my days, it was the custom to bury a woman in her wedding dress. Of the preserved examples, one is comparatively quite plain with just the band and attached rosettes.¹⁸¹ It was quite flimsy, and probably simply intended to hold on the bridal veil.¹⁸² The other crown is quite spectacular with its circular ribbons of metal holding together rows of gold rosettes inlaid with stones, some of which still have their settings¹⁸³ and was, I would argue, the type of crown actually worn by the Queen for the 8th of Tašritu. I base this on the fact that this crown is also decorated with pomegranates¹⁸⁴ and clusters of grapes glued together with what can only be described as the longest lasting glue ever.¹⁸⁵

In any case, on Aššurbanipal's relief, we find the royal couple feasting together in the garden. The head of Teumman hanging in the tree overhead, a positive obsession with Western scholars, if taken in an 8 Tašritu context represents a *momento mori* that evokes the darker side of this month's activities--the continual propitiation of primordial gods in the absence of the two divinities, Ninurta and Marduk, capable of defeating them, the turn of the year's deciding of destinies as to who would live and who would die. In this context, the head of the dead Elamite king represents those who chose death by opposing Assyria in contrast to the life-choosing tamed lion, a symbolic representation of the Elamite visitors at the edge of the scene.

A special ritual allowed the common people of Babylonia to join with the priests in exorcising this fearful time of year. Offerings in the temple of Gula on the 9th of Tašritu ensured next years' restoration of Marduk and Ninurta and the continuance of what we call the space-time continuum. For more private needs, common people went out into the steppe on that same day and made offerings to the Goat Star accompanied by a prayer quoted in the hemerologies. It asked, quite simply, for another year of disease-free life.¹⁸⁶ I believe we have found Azazel.

It should by now be obvious that the seventh month of the Hebrew cultic calendar owes not a little to borrowings from Assyria (and later Babylonia in which they lived in exile). These are not, and should not be, seen as adversarial borrowings. Assyria made it possible to believe that brothering could result in unity, and Judah had a brothering problem of the first order, even without the Nile to the Euphrates, in the form of Israel vs. Judah not to mention individual tribes, one of which was allegedly almost wiped out by the others. Besides, as with Šamši-Adad, there was nothing that prevented somebody besides Assyrians taking this daft idea and running with it with or without the acknowledging footnote, even after the Assyrian Empire was nothing but a memory. The modern festivals of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur preserve so many of the elements of the Amorite, Assyrian and Babylonian rituals: the seventh month setting that references original creation, the ram's horns, the fish, the pomegranates, the canal for sins, the *shebat shebatin* taboos, and even Azazel, that it is hard to believe that there is no connection between them.

¹⁸¹ This is illustrated in John E. Curtis, et alia (eds.), *New Light on Nimrud: Proceedings of the Nimrud Conference 11-13th March 2002* (London: British Institute For the Study of Iraq, 2008), 106 fig. 14a.

¹⁸² Suggestion of MD (Muayyad Said Damerji) apud Dominique Collon, 'Nimrud Treasures: Panel Discussion,' in Curtis, *New Light on Nimrud*, 107.

¹⁸³ This is illustrated in Curtis et al., *New Light on Nimrud*, pl. 5.

¹⁸⁴ MD (Damerji), apud Collon, 'Nimrud Treasures,' 106 wanted these to be opium capsules rather than pomegranates, but the roundness of the seed pods clearly indicates that pomegranates were meant.

¹⁸⁵ Donny George Youkhanna, 'Precision Craftsmanship of the Nimrud Gold Material,' in Curtis, *New Light on Nimrud*, 104.

¹⁸⁶ Labat, *Hémérologies*, 180, 181: 41-44. By the Neo-Assyrian period, the Goat Star's heliacal rising was no longer at the Autumnal Equinox. However, when it did rise, this could be seen as a positive answer to your prayers.

The Persians Persianized our ritual, transforming the garden into a Persians-only preserve that referenced the time before creation in a uniquely Persian manner that made it difficult for it to be adapted by others for their own use. In the Spring, Nowrūz and in Fall, Mihragān, will have been celebrated in such a garden.¹⁸⁷ It is generally acknowledged that Nowrūz was adopted from the Babylonians.¹⁸⁸ I would argue that so, too, was Mihragān but in a dramatically altered way. A day honoring original creation makes sense in a Babylonian context but the addition of the End of the World certainly does not.¹⁸⁹

The Persian festival, besides involving a lot of dancing and an opening of vats more in tune with the Ugaritic version of Autumnal Equinox in Araḥšamna,¹⁹⁰ had the king impersonating Mithra complete with a solar crown.¹⁹¹ The rule that nobody was to look worried or sad and the massive sacrifice of horses, an animal associated in Mesopotamian tradition with Šamaš, god of the sun, mark a time that is apotropaic as well as celebratory, and the importation of dragon-slaying Faridun from Nowrūz not only serves to link the Autumn with the Spring but also to indicate that some sort of conflict is afoot.¹⁹²

At this time of year, the sun is at a low ebb, in Astrology its nadir,¹⁹³ and a Sumerian etiological myth preserved in an Autumnal eclipse ritual still performed in Babylonia in the Seleucid period¹⁹⁴ imagined the Sungod in cahoots with his sister Inanna/Ištar attacking the moon and winding up in defeat, so the Persian complex, if a bit original, still referenced the Babylonian version of the Autumnal equinox ritual with the king ensuring the eventual triumphal comeback of the sun by impersonating Mithra. As for the Assyrian version with its sacred marriage, it is possible that Mithra was imagined as marrying his sister Anahita at Nowrūz and then the king impersonating Mithra married her at Mihragān, thus creating an indirect relationship between the king and Mithra. If so, the only trace in the continuing performance in Iran and India is a custom of eating pomegranates and wishing for 1,000 years of life.¹⁹⁵

On the other hand, there is the evidence of the Aramaic papyrus in Demotic script found in Egypt in which the Sacred Marriage aspects of the Assyrian ritual are strikingly represented, but in a late antique context that reflects the arrival of Persians and Greeks onto the scene. The authors are apparently people originally moved by Aššurbanipal to Samaria from Raši in the borderlands between Babylonia and Elam (both of whom they hated viscerally). At first, they made themselves at home in Bethel but then were forced to flee to Syene in Egypt where they still dreamed of a return to Raši at the end of time.

Their New Year, celebrated in Tišri, had as its officiant a 'king' who was presumably elected for this purpose. We begin at the gate leading to the courtyard of the New Years' chapel erected for the occasion next to a graveyard. The king stops and recites a blessing; a voice from within

¹⁸⁷ Matthew Canepa, 'The Spatial Cosmology of the Iranian Expanse: Transforming Iranian Identity Through Landscape, Architecture and the Built Environment (550 BCE-642 CE),' a lecture given at the Oriental Institute on February 19, 2018.

¹⁸⁸ J. Calmard, 'Mihragān,' *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New edition, 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 16.

¹⁸⁹ For the cosmic associations, see *ibid.*, 16.

¹⁹⁰ JoAnn Scurlock, 'Whirling (*šadu*) in the Month of Marzaḥani at Emar or Why did El get, so to speak, drunk as a Lord in KTU 1.114?,' *Ugarit Forschungen* 24 (2013) 285-308.

¹⁹¹ For more details, see Robert Haug 'The Gifts of Mihragān' in this volume. Boyce, apud Calmard, 'Mihragān,' 16 claims that the inspiration was a Babylonian Autumnal festival under the aegis of Šamaš. This is not the case.

¹⁹² Calmard, 'Mihragān,' 16-17.

¹⁹³ Hemerologies mark the 23rd of Tašritu as the 'eclipse' of the Sungod Šamaš (Labat, *Hémérolgies*, 120, 121: 4-5).

¹⁹⁴ For details, see JoAnn Scurlock, 'Eclipse of a King: A New Interpretation of the Bull-headed Lyre' in *Proceedings of the 63e RAI Philadelphia July 2016* (forthcoming).

¹⁹⁵ EI VII 18.

invites him to enter the courtyard. He enters and washes his hands. The statue of Marah (Nanaya),¹⁹⁶ the Queen of Raši, is brought into the assembly of the gods. The gods rise from their thrones and order that she be seated among them; each of the assembled gods is asked to bless the king. We see here a distant echo of Šamši-Adad's goddess Ištar, surrounded on all sides by a sort of ennead of other divinities among whom is included her brother sungod Šamaš, now 'Our Lord', that is, Nanaya's Mesopotamian husband Nabû who has been syncretized with sungod Apollo/Mithra.¹⁹⁷

In the Aramaic ritual, sheep are offered in holocaust while 60 singers sing and 60 temple servants burn myrrh and frankincense. The chief god is invited to feast on lamb and to get drunk on wine to the accompaniment of the sweet harp and lyre; force fed-ducks are brought to the table on ivory platters. The king declares: 'Nana, you are my wife' and a priest sings: 'In the bridal chamber, Nana, bring near to me thy lips!'. The king and the goddess keep a vigil outside the bridal chamber with music from a nearby grave to keep them from falling asleep. At the appointed hour, the king invites the goddess to enter the bridal chamber: 'My beloved, enter the door into our house. With my mouth, consort of Our Lord,¹⁹⁸ let me kiss thee!' They enter the perfumed hideaway where the goddess is laid upon an embroidered bedspread. Finally, Nanaya and Ba'al of Heaven¹⁹⁹ exchange blessings and the king promises to rebuild the ruined chapel of Raši.²⁰⁰

None of this Persianized ritual was going to play well in Judah, before or after the exile. What I would argue to be the Judean distant descendant of Šamši-Adad's kingship ritual, by contrast, lived on, surviving even the removal of the Judean king from the equation, continuing to symbolically brother widely scattered fellow members of the same religious community across ethnic and even sectarian boundaries to this day.

Appendix

Mari studies are arguably among the most exciting in the field of Assyriology. However, in some areas, particularly religion, they suffer from a fatal combination of too much and too little information. Too much because a surprisingly large number of days seem to have something cultic happening, because the typical sacrifice is not directed to a single divinity but to any number of gods and goddesses whose relevance to the day of sacrifice is more often than not unspecified and because the most popular divinities seem to get sacrifices all the time and not just in their festivals, when these can be discerned. Too little because there are only a few fragmentary ritual texts and no cultic commentaries to help provide the requisite road map, not to mention the fact that you have to deal with a change of dynasty with only a scatter of texts from any given regnal year.

¹⁹⁶ Originally a biform of Ištar of Uruk also revered in Elam, she was by this period a super-goddess worshipped all the way to Afghanistan. For details see JoAnn Scurlock, 'Whose Truth and Whose Justice?: The Uruk and Other Late Prophecies Revisited,' in *Orientalism, Assyriology and the Bible* (ed. Steven W. Holloway; Hebrew Bible Monographs 10; Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2006), 456-462.

¹⁹⁷ F. Pomponio, 'Nabû A', *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* 9 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 23-24.

¹⁹⁸ This is her husband, originally the Babylonian god Nabû who was, in late antiquity, equated with Apollo/Mithra. The Babylonian Sungod, Šamaš was Ištar's brother, so you wound up with a brother/sister marriage into the bargain.

¹⁹⁹ This is the pair's father, originally the moon god Sîn.

²⁰⁰ Richard C. Steiner, 'The Aramaic Text in Demotic Script: The Liturgy of a New Years' Festival Imported from Bethel to Syene by Exiles from Rash,' *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 111 (1991): 362-363.

Not to despair, since help is actually readily to hand. Since literally Sumerian times, Mari was a part of the Mesopotamian umkreis and many of the gods revered in Mari are Mesopotamian divinities about whom much more is known both from earlier and from later periods including both rituals and cultic commentaries. It may be presumed that at least some of the cultic activities attested at Mari have ancestors and descendants in Mesopotamia. In order to find these ancestors and descendants, however, it is essential to coordinate the respective calendars. Unfortunately, this has not been done correctly, with results that are, to my mind, somewhere between quite hilarious and enough to make one cry.

In fact, the Mari Calendar as currently understood is a major disaster area, as one who has spent several months rearranging the published references to accord with the actual dates on the tablets can testify. Even armed with an equivalency chart for the alleged sequence of the Šamši-Adad Reichskalander, which is certainly in sync with the accepted sequence of the calendar of Ešnunna,²⁰¹ it is difficult to keep references to the same cultic events together, and this not only for non experts. It is also completely unhelpful to present the material by regnal year which predisposes one to assume that any given set of sacrifices is unique to a particular year, with reasons to justify that assumption groped for in the dark. My rearrangement rejoins identical rites on the same calendar dates that have been artificially separated due to one of the entries being dated to the reign of Zimri-lim whose calendar is alleged to have begun in Nisannu and the other to a limmu of Šamši-Adad whose calendar allegedly bizarrely began in Du'uzu.

When the rearrangement has been completed, it is immediately apparent that Mari numbered months are somehow out of kilter with their Mesopotamian equivalents. Take, for example, the cultivation of sesame,²⁰² a Summer crop for which the land was prepared in Mesopotamia in Ayyaru by ploughing the wet areas left over by the flood. In Mari, as we know from a legal case involving a positively modern level of embezzlement, the feed for the plow oxen that our rascally administrator ran off with, preventing their going to work, should have been delivered in Mari 4 (ARM VII 263 ii 14-15). This would make Mari 4 equivalent with Mesopotamian Ayyaru (month 2).

Continuing with Mesopotamian evidence, the early planting (that is, of sesame rather than barley) took place in Du'uzu (month 4). Sesame ripens in from 2 to 6 months, depending on conditions. There will have been a careful irrigation at the heliacal rising of Sirius (Abu [month 5]) which should have resulted in a harvest in Tašritu (month 7) or Araḥšamna (month 8), preferably the former, since the latter month needed to be dedicated to ploughing for the all-important barley crop. When the returns for newly harvested sesame at Mari are examined, they range from 23-29 Mari 9 (ARM XXI 135-138). This would make Tašritu (month 7) equivalent to Mari 9.

In short, both pre-planting plowing and harvest of sesame more than suggest that Mari months are 2 months later in the calendar than their Mesopotamian counterparts. Similarly there is barley on the threshing floors in Mari 3 (ARM VII 263) having been harvested in Magrattum (Mari

²⁰¹ For Ešnunna see Cohen, *Festivals and Calendars*, 262.

²⁰² For details on this and all agricultural products and their seasons, see Hervé Reculeau, 'Lever d'astres et calendrier agricole à Mari,' in *Recueil d'études à la mémoire d'André Parrot* (Florilegium marianum 6; Mémoires de N.A.B.U 7; Paris: SEPOA, 2002), 523-524.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES TIME MAKE?

2) long etymologized as meaning ‘threshing floor’ or ‘grain pile’,²⁰³ as would be appropriate for Addaru (month 12). With the current equations, that give Mari 1 as equivalent to Mesopotamian Nisannu (month 1), the Mariots would be harvesting sesame in Kislimu (month 9), a month after the ground had all been ploughed up for planting barley. They would also be bagging 231 gazelles in ʾEbeṭu (ARM XXI 73), not to mention celebrating festivals throughout the year identical with, but 2 months later than, their Mesopotamian counterparts. I think not.

The only possible conclusion to be drawn from this reassessment is that Šamši-Adad’s Reichskalander and that of Zimri-Lim and indeed all Amorite calendars, whatever their names for the months might be, began the year in the Mesopotamian month of Šabaṭu, the Winter Solstice of early Sumerian times (see below pp. 167-68). The following chart gives the equivalencies between the Reichskalander months, the Zimri-Lim months with the allegedly corrected dates now almost universally followed by the Mari scholars in parentheses which add, to my mind, nothing but confusion that consistently gets in the way of proper analysis of the documents.

Nippur Calendar	Mari Calendar	Reichskalander	Eshnunna
11. Šabaṭu	1. Uriaḥum	1. Niqqalu(viii)	1. Niqqalu
12. Addaru	2. Malkanum	2. Magranum(ix)	2. Magrattum
1. Nisannu	3. Laḥḥum	3. Dumuzi ²⁰⁴ (x)	3. Elunum
2. Ayyaru	4. Abu	4. Abum ²⁰⁵ (xi)	4. Abum
3. Simanu	5. Ḥibirtum	5. Tirum ²⁰⁶ (xii)	5. Zibnum
4. Duʾuzu	6. Ḥubur	6. Nikmum ²⁰⁷ (i)	6. Nikmum
5. Abu	7. Kinunum	7. Kinunum(ii)	7. Kinunum
6. Ulūlu	8. Dagan	8. Tamḥirum(iii)	8. Tamḥirum
7. Tašritu	9. Liliatum	9. Nabrum(iv)	9. Nabrum
8. Araḥšamna	10. Belet-biri	10. Mammitum(v)	10. Mammitum
9. Kislimu	11. Kiskissu	11. Mana(vi)	11. Kiskissu
10. ʾEbeṭu	12. Eburum	12. Ayyarum(vii)	12. Kinkum

²⁰³ See Cohen, *Festivals and Calendars*, 285.

²⁰⁴ The reference is to the heliacal rising (*elānum*) of astral Dumuzi, the constellation we call Aries, sometimes represented on Mesopotamian cylinder seals as a ram.

²⁰⁵ The name means ‘father’ and is a reference to ‘old man’ Enmešarra.

²⁰⁶ The name means ‘return’ and is a reference to the return of Dumuzi to the Netherworld.

²⁰⁷ The name means ‘binding’ and is a reference to the ‘captivity of the shepherd’

Appendix 2

The Festival of the Great Eštar Day 1:

1 Mari 9 (Tašritu) textiles and headdresses contributed by the notables and by the *muškēnu* of the districts of Mari, Terqa and Saggaratum when Eštar entered, received by Mukannišum (M 12334+12266 [ARM XXX p. 371-372])

cf. x Mari x garments including one made from ostrich feathers plus shoes issued to Dariš-libur when Eštar (FM XII, p. 22 = M 11909 [ARM XXX p. 236])

cf. x Mari x garments including one red one plus shoes received by [NP] when Eštar (FM XII, p. 22 = M 5199 [ARM XXX, p. 483]; cf. FM XII, p. 227)

1 Mari 9 (Tašritu): bittersweet *alappanu*-beer for the king and men when (there is) a sacrifice of Eštar in the garden of the king (ARM XII 267-268;²⁰⁸)

1 Mari 9 (Tašritu) bittersweet *alappanu*-beer for the meal of the king and men when (there is) a sacrifice in the garden (M 10149 [FM XII, p. 181-182])

1 Mari 9 (Tašritu) *isqūqum* and *sasqum* flours and *tiktu* (date-drippings) for the table of sweet things (M 10579 [FM XII, p. 158])

1 Mari 9 (Tašritu) [*isququ*-flour], *tiktu* (date-drippings), *sasqum*-flour for the table of sweet things (ARM XI 112)

cf. x Mari 9 (Tašritu) superior oil and cedar oil for the bath of Eštar of [...] (RA 69 no. 3²⁰⁹; cf. FM XII, p. 160-161)

The Festival of the Great Eštar Day 2:

2 Mari 9 (Tašritu) women's shoes issued to Inib-šina and Baḥlatum, 2 *ugbaltu*-priestesses and the daughters of the king when Eštar (enters the palace) (M 18164 [ARM XXX p. 332-333])²¹⁰

2 Mari 9 (Tašritu): bittersweet *alappanu*-beer for the king and men when (there is) a sacrifice of Eštar in the garden of the king (ARM XII 271; cf. FM XII, p. 182)

2 Mari 9 (Tašritu) bittersweet *alappanu*-beer for the king and men when (there is) a sacrifice of Eštar (ARM XII 270; cf. FM XII, p. 182)

2? Mari 9 (Tašritu): *buru*-offering, *halluru*-chickpeas and emmer wheat, sourbread for the *zurrayu* jar when Eštar enters the palace (ARM IX 90)

The Festival of the Great Eštar Day 3: ??

²⁰⁸ Cf. Durand and Guichard, 'Les rituels de Mari,' 29.

²⁰⁹ Georges Dossin, 'Tablettes de Mari,' *Revue d'assyriologie* 69 (1975): 26.

²¹⁰ Cf. Durand and Guichard, 'Les rituels de Mari,' 29.

The Festival of the Great Eštar Day 4:

4 Mari 9 (Tašrītu) [...] when Eštar is made to go up(?) into the shrine of Belet-ekallim; service of Dariš-libur in Mari (ARM XXIV 306²¹¹).

4 Mari 9 (Tašrītu) x jars for the Babylonian messengers on 29 Mari 8; x jars (expenditures) for the *kannu* [...]; x jars (expenditures) for the *kannu* when Šub-ram, Yarim-lim, Yasmaḥ-Addu, the messengers and *sugagu*'s of the Hanneans sat before the king in the courtyard of the House of the Palms on 4 Mari 9; x jars (expenditures) for the *kannu* when the gods were brought into the temple of Belet-ekallim [on 5 Mari 9] (FM XI 166; cf. FM XII, p. 216)

The Festival of the Great Eštar Day 5:

5 Mari 9 (Tašrītu) superior oil and cedar oil for Nergal when (there is a sacrifice for) his Chariot (ARM VII 28)

5 Mari 9 (Tašrītu) superior oil, superior Mari oil, cypress oil, myrtle oil, *kanaktu* oil and *diqaru*-bowl oil to anoint those attending the throne before the king and the section chiefs (ARM VII 27)

5 Mari 9 (Tašrītu) 15 jars of wine when Kabiya, king of Kaḥat and Yamraṣ-El, man of Abi-ili came when Eštar stayed in the shrine of Bēlet-ekallim (FM XI 57²¹²)

[5] Mari 9 (Tašrītu) x jars for the Babylonian messengers on 29 Mari 8; x jars (expenditures) for the *kannu* [...]; x jars (expenditures) for the *kannu* when Šub-ram, Yarim-lim, Yasmaḥ-Addu, the messengers and *sugagu*'s of the Hanneans sat before the king in the courtyard of the House of the Palms on 4 Mari 9; x jars (expenditures) for the *kannu* when the gods were brought into the temple of Bēlet-ekallim [on 5 Mari 9] (FM XI 166; cf. FM XII, p. 216)

The Festival of the Great Eštar Day 6:

6 Mari 9 (Tašrītu) a *massilatum* garment for Sametar when Eštar stayed in the shrine of Belet-ekallim (FM XII, p. 22); clothing for Maši-ilum; shoes for Zimri-Adad the cook; shoes for Abu-El; expenditures of Dariš-libur at Mari (M 6907 [ARM XXX p. 333]²¹³).

6 Mari 9 (Tašrītu) distribution of 4 ox carcasses in two batches to Iddin-Kakka; distribution of 260 quarters of beef to the cooks (ARM XXI 63)

6 Mari 9 (Tašrītu) 2 jars of wine issued to the lady Bazatum for when Dagan (FM XII, p. 23 = FM XI 13; cf. FM XII, p. 159)

The Festival of the Great Eštar Day 7: Nergal

7 Mari 9 (Tašrītu) oil for the *gibbu* in the temple of Nergal when (there is a sacrifice for the) Chariot (of Nergal) (M 18199 [FM XII, p. 159])

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Cf. Durand and Guichard, 'Les rituels de Mari,' 29; Jacquet, *dépenses pour le culte*, p. 183.

²¹³ Cf. Durand and Guichard, 'Les rituels de Mari,' 29.

7 Mari 9 (Tašrītu) cypress oil, *diqaru*-bowl oil, and cedar oil for Nergal when (there is a sacrifice for the) Chariot of Nergal (ARM VII 29)

7 Mari 9 (Tašrītu) *huqu*-bread for king and men when (there is a sacrifice for the) Chariot of Nergal (ARM IX 212 v 1-7; ARM XII 272-273,275²¹⁴).

7 Mari 9 (Tašrītu) bittersweet *alappanu*-beer for king and men when (there is a sacrifice for the) Chariot of Nergal (ARM XII 274²¹⁵)

7 Mari 9 (Tašrītu) bittersweet *alappanu*-beer for king and men when (there is a sacrifice for the) Chariot of Nergal (M 10153 [FM XII, p. 183-184])

7 Mari 9 (Tašrītu) bittersweet *alappanu*-beer for king and men when (there is a sacrifice for the) Chariot of Nergal (M 10610 [FM XII, p. 173])²¹⁶

7 Mari 9 the king dedicated a felt cloth and Bini-maraš, the miller, to Nergal on the day of the chariot (ARM XXI 328)

The Festival of the Great Eštar Day 7: Eštar

7 Mari 9 (Tašrītu) *hašlu*-bread, *mersu*-confection, sour bread, bittersweet *alappanu*-beer, *šipku*-snack (made with) oil, honey and sesame for the king's meal when (there is) a sacrifice of Eštar (ARM IX 131; cf. FM XII, p. 172-173)

7 Mari 9 (Tašrītu) bittersweet *alappanu*-beer for king and men when there is a sacrifice for Eštar in the garden of the king (FM XII, p. 31 = M 10595 [FM XII, p. 172])

7 Mari 9 (Tašrītu) *isququ*-flour, *tiktu* (date-drippings), *hašlu*-bread, *sasqu*-flour, and pistachios, totaled as *buru*-offering for the table of sweet things of Eštar (M 10593 [FM XII, p. 171-172])

[7] Mari 9 (Tašrītu) *isququ*-flour, *tiktu* (date-drippings), *sasqu*-flour and pistachios for the table of sweet things (M 9994 [FM XII, p. 216])²¹⁷

The Festival of the Great Eštar Day 7: The Feast

7 Mari 9 (Tašrītu) 71 sheep are contributed by the governors and tribal chieftains of the empire (ARM XXIII 222)

undated issue: distribution of 5 cattle heads, 7 cattle shoulders via Bunuma-Addu; 32 sheep shoulders and x cattle shoulders from the garden of the king via Yaššib-Dagan to Ḫaluna-Addu

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Jacquet, *dépenses pour le culte*, p. 173 alleges that the chariot of Nergal 'normally' arrived in the palace one week after the sacrifice of Eštar in the garden of the king and that a delay in the performance of the rites of Eštar unique to Zimri-Lim's 7th regnal year caused the two rites to be celebrated simultaneously.

²¹⁷ Jacquet, *dépenses pour le culte*, p. 216 restores this as [1] Mari 9 to avoid having there being any activity for Eštar on the 7th except in one exceptional year. However, this offering has pistachios as do the sweet things offered on the seventh but not on the first day in any of the references; see above. In any case, the ritual for this festival makes it very clear that not one but two meals were provided for Eštar by the king.

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES TIME MAKE?

and Yatar-Sumu; x cattle shoulders via Mamma-piḷaḥ to feed the craftsmen and Hanneans; 70 fish, 20 baskets of fish via Tamḫiriš-Ḫebat to [...] and Šunuḫruḫalu; 106 fish via Ibni-Sîn and Yaluwumu (ARM XXI 83).

undated issue: distribution of a total of 51 birds, 248 fish of which 140 fish went to Erib-Sîn and 128 fish to Ḫabdu-Kubi; 25 birds went to Erib-Sîn; 26 birds to Ḫabdu-kubi (ARM XXI 92).

The Festival of the Great Eštar Day 8:??

The Festival of the Great Eštar Day 9:

9 Mari 9 (Tašritu) superior oil for Nergal (MARI 3 12)

The Festival of the Great Eštar Day 10:

10 Mari 9 (Tašritu) 1 (fattened) ox when there is a *nubattum* (FM XII p. 51 = ARM XXI 15); 1 (fattened) ox when there is a sacrifice in the king's garden (ARM XXI 15-16); 2 (fattened) oxen for the sacrifice of the *širpitu* (barley soup) (ARM XXI 15-16); 1 (fattened) ox and its [...] which they bring from the palace (ARM XXI 15-16); 1 (fattened) ox in the temple of Ea (ARM XXI 15-16); 2 (fattened) oxen when the deities enter the palace (ARM XXI 15-16²¹⁸); 1 (fattened) ox in the temple of Annunitum (ARM XXI 15-16); 1 (fattened) ox for the censer (ARM XXI 15-16); 1 (fattened) ox in the temple of Deritum (ARM XXI 15-16); 1 (fattened) ox when (there is a sacrifice for the) Chariot (of Nergal) (ARM XXI 15-16); x (fattened) oxen in the temple of Annunitu for the second time; total 15 fattened oxen (ARM XXI 15).²¹⁹

²¹⁸ Cf. Durand and Guichard, 'Les rituels de Mari,' 29

²¹⁹ Jacquet, *dépenses pour le culte*, p. 201 would like to see this text as a recapitulatif which allows it to be taken apart into individual days that fit his understanding of the ritual activities of this month. The *nubattum*-offering he supposes, as indeed apparently does everybody including the *Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* N/2 (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1980), 207-208, that the reference is to any rite performed in the evening. For this, he is thinking in terms of the pre-nuptial sex mentioned in the ritual as occurring on the evening before day 1 with the sacrifice in the garden being on days 1 and 2 with a single chariot sacrifice for Nergal on day 7. Unfortunately for this argument, there are any number of examples of recapitulatifs in the Mari archives. The monthly recapitulatif usually and the ones for individual festivals always give you the actual day on which a given sacrifice was performed, and some of them even have intermediate subtotals. For this text, we have the ends of lines where such notes appear and we have a total all right but at the end, so all of these sacrifices were made on one day. The remaining lines of the text will have detailed what exactly became of all the bits and pieces from the sacrifices. For what a text of the sort Jacquet is hoping to see here should look like, see especially M 18095 (Jacquet, *dépenses pour le culte*, pp. 212-215). The account of sacrifices may seem like a scarily long list but it pales by comparison with the offerings made on the tour of the temples on the 27th (see above).